ART AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A CRITICAL READER

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PREFACE

CHARLES ESCHE

The recent expansion of *Afterall* journal, from publication of its first issue by Central Saint Martins in 1998 to the research and production of its accompanying series of books, has allowed us to begin unpacking particular developments in contemporary art in collaboration with a number of new partners. The journal has been co-published by California Institute of the Arts since 2002, and our editorial partnership now extends to MUHKA in Antwerp. Our first reader, *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, was a collaboration with the artists' group IRWIN and brought together for the first time texts about the contemporary art situation in almost all European post-communist states, as well as new essays on specific artists or aspects of the region.

Art and Social Change is produced in collaboration with Tate Publishing. Edited by Will Bradley and myself, it takes the claims of well-known and more obscure revolutionary art practices and holds them up to the light of today. The bulk of the book gathers an international selection of artists' proposals, manifestos, theoretical texts and public declarations that we hope will be of value both to the student of art and to the general reader with an interest in this particular facet of the relationship between art, politics and activism.

The approaches represented are many and diverse. They range from the socialist art theory of William Morris to the hybrid activist practice associated with the twenty-first century 'movement of movements'; from the modernist avant-gardes and their ideas of political commitment to those movements that definitively rejected artistic modernism in favour of protest, critique, utopian social experiment or revolutionary propaganda.

Some of the texts assembled here are well-known within the field of art history or are available from several sources, while others may have originally enjoyed only limited distribution or are currently difficult to find; some are presented in English translation for the first time. Six especially commissioned essays – by Geeta Kapur, Lucy Lippard, John Milner, Gerald Raunig, Marina Vishmidt and Tirdad Zolghadr – further explore both the historical context and the contemporary situation.

We have sought to be broad in our geographic and political approach, relying on the expressed intention of the artists (stated in their own words) to guide our selection. We have generally been interested in artists that have suggested or even generated alternative social models through the production of their art. Often this has been done in opposition to government and corporate policies. At moments of revolutionary success, however, there is a subtle elision between inside and outside positions that has produced some of the most powerful work effecting social change. This reader combines both possibilities in its selection, favouring those proposals that have sought to enlarge or relocate the zone of art itself, by introducing new material possibilities and by rejecting the art world's institutional structures and seeking their own. As with the *East Art Map* reader, the newly commissioned texts bring the questions of an artist's contemporary options and responsibilities to the fore, as well as visiting the situation of socially engaged art in India and Iran.

We do not attempt to suggest a unified theoretical effort at work. The texts presented here offer diverse ideological positions and levels of engagement, and were produced in widely differing situations and for a variety of ends; some are theoretical, some rhetorical, others pragmatic or calculatedly propagandist. Our purpose is to sketch a parallel history which, while closely linked to the accepted narratives of the history of modern art, is also defined against them.

INTRODUCTION

WILL BRADLEY

The conscious politicisation of art often comes about in response to the realisation that art is, in some sense, always already politicised. The category of art has been constructed differently at different times and places, and within different cultural, social and political systems. We do not attempt to offer an overarching definition of art here. Rather, we present primarily moments at which the desire for social change has led artists working within the sphere of modern art to align themselves with wider social movements, or to break with the established institutions of art.

In referring to the sphere of modern art, we mean a particular set of ideas and institutions that were definitively formed in the nineteenth century. Cultural, political and economic conditions in Europe offered artists a new sphere in which to work, as well as a new kind of freedom. The transfer of wealth that capitalist industrial organisation made possible created a new class, an expanded bourgeoisie with both disposable income and leisure time. One manifestation of the economic power of this new class was the creation of a new kind of space for the presentation and enjoyment of art – the art gallery. From the outset, this was a hybrid private/public space that usurped the existing elite institutions of the salon and the academy. The emancipation of art from the state and from religious institutions, combined with its forced removal from the sphere of everyday production, led to the possibility of a new role for art – l'*art pour l'art*. Painters or sculptors were no longer simply the servants of established religion or aristocratic patrons. They could work according to their individual desires in a new, separate field of pure art, while society, in the form of the gallery, the critic and the marketplace, would judge them on their merits.

This modern freedom depended greatly upon the institutions and mechanisms that supported it, institutions deeply embedded in a larger economic and political system. The conception of art as an activity separated from the rest of social life, which remains a guiding principle to this day, serves certain interests more than others. By positing art as somehow

outside or above meaningful political engagement, and also as dependent upon the perpetuation of existing economic conditions and social relationships, it serves conservative social and political forces, no matter how radical it might appear from a particular aesthetic standpoint.

As a result, artists in pursuit of an engagement with the possibility of real social change have found it continually necessary to work in ways that break with the dominant paradigms and established institutions of modern art. It is these situations – situations of conflict between artists and institutions, or moments at which artists have looked beyond the gallery system to ally themselves with wider social movements – that are the primary focus of this book.

We have chosen to present an anthology of writing by artists because it is not the specific work of art that is the primary concern here. Our interest is in the arguments, motivations and actions of those producers who, as self-described artists, confront the question of how to participate meaningfully in social struggles – struggles that also, of course, have implications for the processes by which the activity of art is constituted.

This is not to suggest that artists have a privileged position when it comes to expressing or acting on the desire to change the social order. Indeed, it could be argued that the opposite is the case. Though the idea of art's autonomy has at times been productively invoked in defence of the freedom of thought and expression, the place and role of art in modern Western culture has been circumscribed, in theory and in practice, to the extent that it has often been suggested that art should not, or cannot, engage in the attempt to effect change in society. Art is also a primary target of censorship in totalitarian states, or other situations where the context of a tightly controlled discourse lends certain images a transgressive power.

We do not mean to imply that certain representations or actions have some intrinsic radicalism or political import. However apparently self-evident the meaning of an image or text, or the outcome of a gesture, it is always possible to imagine a situation in which that meaning or outcome might be lost or altered. The Situationist Mustapha Khayati, for example, augmented the republication of his text *On the Poverty of Student Life* with the disclaimer that 'this pamphlet, which had all of its revolutionary value in 1966, today has for the licensed publisher of radical theory only a commodity value'. This is not a mechanism that applies only to the recuperation of revolutionary manifestos: meaning is specific, it is made in context and in action.

Having issued these caveats, it should be acknowledged that artists have often contributed to the methods and vocabulary of modern social movements. Some tactics or technologies, such as photomontage or protest-performance, have been widely adopted and remained in use for decades. Practices that – from a Western modernist viewpoint might appear as the rejection of art or its subjugation to politics – have been theorised

or defended by artists in many complex and far-reaching ways. The idea of art itself has been invoked as representing, among many other things, an ideal of personal liberty, a utopian condition to which society might aspire, or a common right to participate in the creation of everyday culture. Concepts drawn equally from both modernist and older traditions have been incorporated into hybrid practices of all kinds, from propaganda and grassroots community action to media subversion and real experiments with social relations. In recent years, a new hybrid practice has arisen at the intersection of art, political activism and the forms of organisation enabled by the Internet. Indeed, one of the motivations for the production of this book has been to bring together some of the antecedents of this strand of contemporary activism.

Chronologically organised, the reader is presented in four sections, which are centred around particular moments of conflict or political upheaval: 1871, the year of the Paris Commune; 1917, the year of the Russian revolutions; 1968, a year of political turbulence on several continents; and 1989, the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire. These dates do not mark definitive beginnings or endings; we have, however, chosen them as representing the historical focus of certain situations, conditions or attitudes.

Geographically, we have followed what might be termed the 'globalisation of modernism'. The conception of art primarily at issue here is a modern, Western one that has been disseminated around the planet as the social, economic and political conditions and institutions that support it have been replicated. The particular status of art as a secular commodity and the codes that not only attend its place in capitalist society, but also devalue other manifestations or definitions, form the context from which many of the texts presented here derive their power. Consequently, the texts selected for the anthology are drawn almost exclusively from Europe and the US in the first two sections, and from a wider geographic range thereafter. We should also acknowledge, however, that our own cultural situation, and the many other limitations involved in compiling this reader, make this, at best, a partial and unavoidably skewed survey, even within the restrictions of its format and aims.

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The range of action that delimited and defined the role of the artist in European society changed dramatically during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The uneven rise of capitalism, urbanism, secularism, republicanism and democratic citizenship, and the concomitant complex and diverse remaking of social mores and responsibilities had far-reaching effects. The secular artist could approach contemporary issues directly, not only through religious allegory. The court artist, in service of the aristocracy,

could become a freelancer hired by the new bourgeoisie. The artist as citizen, rather than as subject, could engage in politics, join an academy that recognised the political import of the tradition of mimetic and allegorical art, or begin to question or define their own role outside the academy. At the same time, the internal migrations, cultural upheavals and economic adjustments that came along with eighteenth and nineteenth century industrialisation had the effect of destroying artisanal traditions that had for centuries operated in a wider context than that suggested by the modern idea of 'applied art', producing specific and locally meaningful elaborations on functional clothing, tools and utensils, as well as the purely symbolic icons, ritual garments and gift goods of rural life.

As John Milner notes in his essay, in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, there is already a clear division among radical artists or artistic movements, between collectivism and individualism. For Gustave Courbet, for example, the artist is potentially an archetype of the sovereign individual. Courbet stands apart from French society; he asserts his right to free expression and refuses the entreaties of a government envoy who seeks to co-opt his work. To William Morris, on the other hand, the valorisation of individual artists and the sphere in which they work is a new and temporary phenomenon produced by the rise of capitalist social relations. The working population, the artisans of the past, are deprived of the opportunity for expression by industrial production, while a new kind of fine artist is employed to sell back to the bourgeoisie commodified versions of their own vision of themselves.

Morris and Courbet held divergent views on the nature of art and the role of the artist. Still, they had in common an idea of art inextricably linked with its social context, both in its production and its reception, and rejected the conditions for the production of art that the existing social order demanded.

Courbet took an active political role in the revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871. He was elected to the culture committee and proposed the effective de-institutionalisation of art. He suggested that the galleries and museums be controlled by artists, that the academies be run by the students, and all state prizes and medals be abolished. For him, art's importance in the political struggle is as an embodiment of personal truth, and artistic freedom rests upon individual liberty. Morris saw his dream of art as part of the daily life of all members of society, and considered it inseparable from the creation of an egalitarian social order. He devoted much of his later life to the leftist cause, writing some of the first explicitly socialist theoretical texts on art, and participating in demonstrations and direct action that saw him arrested following the confrontations of Bloody Sunday in 1887.

Neither Morris nor Courbet developed what would now be thought of as an activist art practice, but both of them established models for their artistic production alongside their explicit political activism that challenged the emerging order of modern art. Courbet's independent 'Realist Pavilion'

erected outside the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855 and the associated manifesto were not intended to declare the independence of art *per se*, but the independence of Courbet's political vision and the way in which his work both articulated that vision and expressed its realisation. Morris's attempts to establish a co-operative artisanal workshop embodied his belief that all production should be, in some sense, the production of art. His opposition to industrialisation meant that he was, in effect, producing luxury goods for a privileged market, but his work led directly to the establishment of another utopian experiment, C.R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicrafts, and undoubtedly contributed to the body of ideas that Walter Gropius drew on for the foundation of the Bauhaus. The contemporary relevance of Morris's thinking, however, lies as much as anything in his application of utopian ideas of artistic production and social fulfilment in a far-reaching critique of capitalist social organisation.

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The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia was only one aspect of a widespread conflict that encompassed a revolution in Mexico and a destructive imperial war in Europe. Socialist, communist and anarchist political visions remained powerful forces in capitalist Europe, and even in the US, up until the Spanish Civil War, but the aftermath of WWII silenced the few dissenting voices that survived it, even as it brought a short-lived social democratic settlement in the US and parts of Europe.

If the forces of capital and labour had become increasingly polarised throughout the nineteenth century, the forces of labour in northern Europe and the US were also increasingly well organised. Allied to this, what might be thought of as the political beginning of the Civil Rights movement in the US was coalescing alongside an emerging art scene and an emerging internationalism.

This confidence in their cultural power made it possible for mill workers in Paterson, New Jersey to appropriate the theatrical forms of high culture and take them back into the heart of New York, in the form of the *Pageant of the Paterson Strike*. Striking suburban workers, many of them members of the Wobblies – the International Workers of the World – played themselves in a massive performance of solidarity in front of an urban public. During the performance, at least one union activist reprised a speech that had previously landed him in jail.

Ultimately, the Paterson strike pageant did not halt the closure of the mill, or legitimise the actual workers' takeover of production that the pageant dramatised, and was seen by many commentators to have failed. Yet the 'War in Paterson', as the American communist writer John Reed described it, was a battle that the state and forces of capital could not afford to lose, and the pageant takes its place as a seminal synthesis of political struggle and its

representation that prefigures many more recent activist approaches.

Socialist ideas continued to be a powerful presence in American literary and visual culture throughout the 1930s, informing, for example, both the artists of the Harlem Renaissance and the scene around journals such as *Partisan Review*. Ironically, however, divergent reactions to the Russian

Revolution had already weakened and divided the left as a political force. The revolution in Russia was not, of course, a tidy transfer of power from one regime to another. The project of defining the new order, culturally and politically, unfolded against the background of civil war. Those artists who allied themselves with the Leninist future were faced with the question of what their role might be after the ostensible elimination of the bourgeois class and the associated space for the idle contemplation of painting and sculpture.

Many competing visions were put forward. Street art and agit-prop flourished under Lenin's injunction to 'let everything be temporary'. The primacy of proletarian modes of expression was championed even before the proletariat had the opportunity to make their voice heard on the matter, while many of those who had counted themselves among the artistic avant-garde, as Futurists or Supremacists gravitated towards what became the Constructivist, or Productivist programme.

The Constructivists declared the end of art as a separate activity conducted for its own sake, and replaced it with the idea of construction – art as technological research into aesthetics and architectonics whose findings were not an end in themselves, but were to be applied in the service of the progress of society. Art was thus to be integrated into the wider life of the socialist society on a scientific basis that allowed for individual discoveries, but not for individual expression. The Constructivist study of aesthetics, intended to eliminate bourgeois ideology from art production, succeeded by demanding pragmatic social applications of its results. The bourgeois concept of art – as a universal value independent of society whose essence was apparent to an elite for whom its enjoyment was reserved – was replaced by an idea of art as an instrument, an objective technology that was to be applied by trained individuals in the service of the Revolution. Ultimately, the ideals of the Constructivists, which had been forged in the early upheavals of the Revolution, were rejected by the Soviet state under Stalin in favour of the propaganda of Socialist Realism, and the dream of a rational social aesthetics applied to all forms of production was ultimately recycled into kitsch totalitarian monuments.

Still, the Constructivists' ideas were powerful and influential. The Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in 1919 as a 'cathedral of socialism', was dedicated to exploring the ways in which artists could contribute to the creation of a new society. Gropius's vision was drawn from German Expressionism, which in turn looked to the Arts and Crafts movement, but was soon augmented by Constructivist ideas. Gropius himself moved quickly

from designing the expressionist Sommerfeld house in 1920 to working on the International Style *Haus am Horn* two years later, while prominent Constructivists such as the Hungarian artist Laszlo Moholy-Nagy were recruited as Bauhaus masters.

Without the fervent sense of revolutionary possibility that fuelled the Russian experiments, however, Bauhaus ideals mutated from the aestheticisation of daily life into industrial functionalism in the service of political and economic expediency. Hannes Meyer consolidated the move away from individual expression and towards industrial production that Gropius had initiated, but still set this production, its aims and organisation, in the context of an egalitarian social vision. His brief tenure as director was brought to an end by Gropius's capitulation to pressure from local fascist politicians, in the face of protest from the student body. Meyer's successor, Mies van der Rohe, was seen as more compliant; although Mies, too, eventually fell foul of the fascist authorities, he had negotiated with them in the hope of continuing Bauhaus operations in Berlin into the 1930s, and went on to demonstrate, in his later architectural career, that the radical vision of art as an objective technical discipline was also wholly compatible with the interests of capital.

If the Constructivists and the Bauhaus represented the most developed modernist attempts to reframe the idea of art in the service of collective social ends, Dada represented the rejection of all such utopian ideologies. Though the Berlin Dadaists – Hausmann, Huelsenbeck, Höch, Heartfield and Grosz in particular – embraced the aim of revolutionary social change and, in the case of Hausmann and Huelsenbeck, published a radical and at least semi-serious political manifesto, they made few aesthetic claims on the imagined new social order. They did, however, develop powerful strategies of critique, protest and refusal whose influence continues to be felt. The insight that the assumptions of the dominant ideology were deeply inscribed in the forms of everyday language, imagery and behaviour, and that it was on this level on which they had to be attacked and dismantled, prefigured many subsequent theoretical efforts. Meanwhile, the tactics of photomontage and confrontational performance have become mainstays of contemporary political activism.

As Dada was an avowedly 'anti-art' movement, it is perhaps surprising that many of the Dadaists, even those in the more radical Berlin faction, continued to produce poetry or paintings throughout their lives – Marcel Duchamp's rejection of painting, for example, is often considered a quintessentially Dadaist decision. But, just as Duchamp rejected painting as unnecessary for art, Dada also perhaps acknowledged that certain conceptions of art were not necessary to support the existence of painting or poetry.

The Surrealist movement originated in large part from attempts to establish Dada in Paris, but it quickly developed a very different character.

The Surrealists, led by André Breton, proposed to liberate expression from culture and ideology with methods aimed at tapping directly into the unconscious mind. Whether or not they technically succeeded in this aim, they certainly both greatly expanded the aesthetic and symbolic vocabulary of Western art, and disrupted many of its cherished assumptions. Surrealism's propositions about creativity were radically democratic; Surrealist insight could not be taught, nor could it be restricted by social judgements.

From Breton's viewpoint, the prevailing system of political organisation and social norms were an unjust and unjustifiable imposition on a heterogeneous and unpredictable human nature. In the early days of the movement, according to Breton, 'it was the entire defence apparatus of society that we were attacking: the army, "justice", the police, religion, psychiatric and legal medicine, and schooling'.[1] The Parisian Surrealist Group, through their journal *La Révolution Surréaliste*, and later *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution*, not only presented experiments in perception and expression but manifestos that proposed action and took emphatic political positions far more radical than any political organisation in France at the time.

Many Surrealist works were not exhibited or circulated within the formal art world until many years after their production. This perhaps was in part a deliberate policy, and in part a result of a delay in the market acceptance of the works' experimental formal nature. The result was an independent cultural community whose production represented a symbolic political negotiation within the group. Form had political content in this restricted context, and formal propositions were read in the context of internal tensions between, for example, anarchist, Leninist or Trotskyite positions. These internal conflicts had little public manifestation, however, despite Breton's divisive attempt in 1927 to affiliate the Surrealist movement with the Communist Party. Miro, amongst others, refused to join, and Breton himself was expelled from the party in 1933. While Aragon and Eluard placed themselves at the service of official communist truth, Breton found the Party's ideological rejection of Surrealism's artistic vision to be part of a deeper political disagreement. This was perhaps inevitable given that, for Breton, Surrealism was in itself a revolutionary programme.

Benjamin Péret, who had also initially joined the Communist Party, went on to fight with the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War. Though close to Breton, he argued that the poet cannot be expected to put his/her work at the service of politics. It is perhaps this refusal to give up the idea of aesthetic autonomy that led him to understand the desire for total artistic freedom as demanding direct social engagement. In all events, much of the debate and tension within the avant-gardes of the 1930s was brought to an abrupt and

1 André Breton, 'La Claire Tour' ('The Lighthouse'), *Libertaire*, 297, 11 January 1952, reprinted in José Pierre, *Surréalisme et Anarchie: les billets surréalistes du Libertaire*, Paris: Plasma 1983, pp.86–87.

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premature halt by the outbreak of the next full-scale European conflict in 1939. Resistance to Fascism became a binding commitment that extended beyond 1945 and into the reconstruction period, while both Allied and Axis powers took the opportunity of the war to break up or suppress anti-capitalist movements. It is only in the early 1960s that coherent and collective forms of artistic and political opposition, unattached from the West and East ideological blocks, once again emerged.

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The uprisings of 1968 in France and the US were only the most visible part of a conflict that had been building throughout the 1960s, and whose effects continued to unfold in the following decade. Anti-imperialist struggles in Africa and South America often looked to Marxist-Leninist ideas, and Maoism became briefly fashionable among European intellectuals in the early 70s, but what was most significant about the '68 movements was a widespread distrust and critique of established ideologies.

Active revolutionary movements had little or no interest in the bourgeois art world. Art had to become an instrument for the graphic communication of revolutionary ideology, or be set aside at least for the duration of the conflict. In Mozambique in 1961, the painters Malangatana and Bertina Lopes refused to exhibit as representatives of the Portuguese colonial occupiers in the São Paolo Bienal. Soon afterwards, Malangatana affiliated himself with the FRELIMO resistance movement and at one point declared that he would not paint again until Mozambique was liberated. Emory Douglas, the Black Panther Party's Minister of Culture, produced incendiary image-text works that were published in the pages of the party newspaper and sold as posters; they called for artists to subvert the forms of capitalist propaganda – advertising and publicity – in the service of the BPP's revolutionary ideology. In Chile, in 1967, the Brigadas Ramona Parra were formed by the youth wing of the Communist Party to make propagandist street murals, and created an aesthetic that synthesised sloganeering with traditional symbolism and the modernism of Roberto Matta, along with a strategy for guerrilla street painting at the focal points of political agitation. In Europe, the Situationist International produced a body of theoretical writing that proposed a similar suppression of art in favour of revolutionary analysis and direct action.

A somewhat different path was taken by a succession of loosely-connected groups and individuals in Northern California in the 60s and 70s. In the early 60s, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, founded by Ronald G. Davis, produced politicised theatre performances informed both by the ideas of Bertholt Brecht and Italian Renaissance Commedia dell'Arte. As part of an emerging post-Beatnik counterculture, they began giving free outdoor shows, which in turn gave birth to the idea of 'guerrilla theatre'

performances as unauthorised interventions in public space. In the mid 60s another group, the San Francisco Diggers, founded by two ex-Mime Troupe members, took this idea much further. The performance was no longer a neatly framed event that aimed to confront or somehow raise the consciousness of its audience; the Diggers' practice was instead the full-time performance of the existence of a new society. Though they staged many public events, these events in general embodied the Diggers' political agenda rather than demanding it from their audience. In one such action, they offered free food to passing officials on the steps of the City Hall. When asked by a journalist what it was that the politicians should do, one of the Diggers replied simply, 'Eat'. One of the mainstays of Digger ideology was a radical critique of property that was publicly performed in their 'free stores'. Their free-food distribution in the Panhandle area of San Francisco's Golden Gate park was sometimes accompanied by the presence of a giant picture frame, the 'Free Frame of Reference' – stepping through the frame signified a transition from the world of property and charity to a new society in which 'it's free because it's yours'.

A few years later, the San Francisco-based artist Bonnie Sherk initiated a project that had echoes of the actions of the seventeenth-century English Diggers after whom the Californian group were named. *Crossroads Community (The Farm)* was an effort to transform an area of wasteground underneath a recently constructed freeway into agricultural land. Presented as 'a life-scale environmental sculpture', or a 'life-frame', *The Farm*'s utopian ambitions extended to the merging of production, education, theatre and direct action, and drew its community into a conflict with the city authorities that lasted several years.

It is perhaps a sign of the kaleidoscopic nature of the revolutions in political thought of the 1960s that the two apparently opposing poles outlined above – the suppression of art except for revolutionary propaganda in the service of well-defined groups and ideologies, and the enactment of new social relationships under the utopian sign of art – do not entirely encompass artists' attempts to respond to the events and ideas of the time.

Refusal certainly became a widely practised strategy among artists who connected galleries and museums with the interests of capital and the governments that served those interests. The 'Experience 68' exhibition at the DiTella Institute in Buenos Aires became the focus of dissent for many of the invited artists who withdrew rather than see their desire for political engagement reframed by the institution as simply another chapter in the development of the modernist avant-garde. The New York art museums were repeatedly targeted by art strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations on behalf of coalitions that combined criticism of art institutional complicity with the US war on Vietnam with demands for an end to the almost exclusively white, male cultural order that the museums defended. Lucy Lippard offers an eyewitness overview of these conflicts in her commissioned essay.

At the same time, other potential models were proposed that offered escape routes from the dialectic of image and action. New technologies – chemical, mediatic and cybernetic – offered new modes of being and proposed new social relationships. Even as Marshall McLuhan and Guy Debord were cataloguing the evils of the spectacular society and its apparatus, the counterculture was discovering exploits in the machinery itself. At Galleri Cannabis, in the provincial Swedish city of Malmö, exhibitions were whatever happened to be going on in the space at the time. Art was easy, a participatory activity available to anyone open to the revolutionary state of psychedelic consciousness, a state which was not necessarily drug-induced, but which implied a fundamental reordering of social priorities around the search for individual truth. In Denmark, a group dedicated to producing psychedelic lightshows and happenings, and associated with the recently squatted freetown of Christiania, spawned a radical street-theatre collective, Solvognen (The Sun Wagon; an allusion to Norse mythology). In contrast to the Mime Troupe's Guerrilla Theatre, Augusto Boal's idea of Invisible Theatre and the Diggers' merging of performance with their everyday existence, Solvognen adopted, amplified and subverted the theatrical elements of the ongoing performance of the dominant ideology. Dozens of performers dressed as Santa Claus staged a week-long pre-Christmas festival that began with free entertainment and random acts of generosity, and ended with a factory occupation; ersatz NATO soldiers staged peace demonstrations in the city centre; and a parade celebrating the bicentennial of US independence was invaded by activists on horseback in Native American costume, the whole spectacle televised live for 30 million transatlantic viewers. Images of the Danish police struggling with Father Christmas and Indian squaws served to ridicule the exercise of power necessary to suppress Solvognen's dissent, while simultaneously describing to the media audience the very oppressions they were protesting.

The video collective movement in the US began to take shape both before video had been accepted by galleries and museums as a medium for the production of art, and before any other formal system existed to distribute its experiments. Filmmakers, artists, activists and hardware hackers all gravitated towards the new medium and developed a practice concerned with aesthetics no less than with information sharing. The possibilities of a new and accessible means of production so closely related to television were also central. In parallel to the earliest development of the Internet, this movement, and the New York-based journal *Radical Software* that provided a focus for it, envisaged a non-hierarchical, two-way, participatory, educational, democratic communications system that could interrupt the corporate-state domination of the media. The ultimate ambition of the movement, in fact, was to replace the whole idea of the media with the idea of an open, direct, electronic mass-medium that served no higher interest but that was, itself, an image of a new society.

In general, this kind of utopianism did not survive the following decade. In some cases, cultural and social reform offered politically committed artists in the West a route into the institutional or academic system, as the real freedoms and legal loopholes that had allowed the counterculture to operate its few temporary autonomous zones began to be closed down. Others simply abandoned any artistic practice and became disillusioned. The forces of capital, and with them the forces of the law, pushed outwards into the rural recesses where the refuseniks had migrated and inwards into the urban centres of resistance, bearing with them the consolations of community art and 'urban redevelopment', personal choice and the free market.

The second-wave feminist movement that emerged at the end of the 60s has been characterised as marking the shift from the utopianism of the 60s to the fragmented struggles and identity politics of the 70s and 80s. Certainly, the particular aims of feminism were not entirely incompatible with the supposed ideals of the existing political structures they challenged, and feminists entered into reformist political and cultural battles with a realistic expectation of making gains. Concerted attempts were made to reform the almost exclusively male art-historical canon, and to make real, physical space in society for art produced by women that addressed social inequalities and patriarchal power.

Many feminist theorists and feminist artists also linked the demand for sexual equality to other rights struggles – racial equality and labour rights struggles in particular. A body of theory and intensely-theorised art practice was developed in which criticism of the institutions of patriarchy involved deconstructing the process of the exercise of institutional power at the level of language and representation. Even within the debates over the canon, one approach was to expose the way that the sphere of modern art was constructed on the exclusion of labour. The aim was not to demand the admission of women into the patriarchal history, but to shift the terms on which the sphere of art was defined, and to attack its structures and assumptions – its value system and the system of economic valuation that underpinned it.

In the immediacy and concrete nature of its demands, its focus on the critique of ideological forms, and its ability to create parallel organisational systems, the feminist movement – like many of the other supposedly 'single-issue' movements of the post-68 Western left – suggested a way out of the utopianist *impasse*, a route back to the hope that another world might yet be possible.

It has often been suggested that the relative defeat of the 68 uprisings in Europe and the US, and the largely successful taming of the anti-colonial revolutions elsewhere led to a loss of faith in the possibility of dramatic social transformation. The sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein has argued that the events of this era nonetheless signalled a fundamental shift in the way

social movements conceived of this transformation taking place. He identifies a shift from a belief in vanguardist forms of organisation that looked to take power to the idea that a movement's form of organisation should reflect the non-hierarchical structure of the imagined society to come.

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The end of the 1980s saw important political and structural victories for neo-liberalism, and the end of the Soviet hegemony marked this shift in the balance of power. Industrial production increasingly was located in politically repressive, low-wage, low-rights regimes outside the core economies of the West. The development of institutions of global capital beyond the reach of the nation state, on which almost all democratic discourse was still based, allowed imperialist relationships to be recast in the terms of international development.

These changing relationships, accelerating urbanisation and a newly rich sector of the middle-class enabled the reproduction of the Western art-world system in parts of South-East Asia and (more briefly) Latin America. In Europe and the US, an increasingly asymmetric distribution of wealth fuelled an expansion both of the commercial art market and of art as a leisure industry, while the altered terms of economic competition, allied to the emergence of the Internet, produced an emphasis on so-called creative capital and intellectual property, the accelerated incorporation of creativity into the capitalist production mechanism and property regime.

In Britain the rave-music scene and the free-party culture that surrounded it perhaps came closest to capturing the conflicting currents at work. On the one hand, it represented the definitive end of the 60s alternative in a commodified Summer of Love, and a final battle over rights to common land and free assembly that ended in the criminalisation and dispersal of the anarchist counter-culture. On the other, it marked a moment at which self-organisation, politicised hedonism and a defiantly proletarian grassroots culture become mass phenomena. Responding in different terms, the art world in the West shaped itself around the overheating financial markets; public museums and galleries reinvented themselves in the language of economic regeneration and cultural industry, the latter a term of abuse invented by Adorno in the 1960s that became a goal of national economics thirty years later. Artists found a new role in the so-called new economy as consultants and expert consumers who could be called upon to address social needs through creative thinking. Oppositional practice in public institutions was broadly subsumed into experimentation with the idea of social space. Utopian models could be proposed in these art laboratories, and even extended to major cultural sites such as the Venice Biennial, but

the struggles through which they might be realised and the contradictions with the surrounding global capitalist system were rarely discussed.

At the same time, other strands of practice, including many proposed or developed during the 60s and early 70s, were finding expression outside the formal art system. The Internet offered a new field of operation in which the modernist sphere of art could not be replicated, and which enabled new modes of organisation, knowledge production and distribution. The counter-cultural opposition to capitalism, freed in its moment of ostensible defeat from the dead weight of Soviet totalitarianism, was reinvented as pluralist and heterogeneous. The scattered nature of the radical diaspora became a cause for celebration rather than despair, and the 'movement of movements' found room for many who, like the feminists and the most radical of the '68 groups, rejected vanguardist organisation in favour of immediate and specific action, building the structure of the new world in the shell of the old. This broad aim necessarily has a cultural dimension, and the return of ideas of collectivism, internationalism and networked organisation led to revivals of older cultural experiments, such as street theatre, co-operative print workshops or free universities, as well as new preoccupations centred around the hardware, software and intellectual property battles of the online world.

A field of practice now exists in which visual production, media activism, political theory, research and protest combine with the search for uncommodified pleasure, viable forms of counter-organisation and a rethinking of property relations. It could be argued that the conditions set out at the start of this introduction, under which artists found it necessary to disrupt or operate outside of the approved boundaries of the art world in an effort to engage with politics, have been to some extent reversed.

Practitioners of these new hybrid forms –perhaps it is incorrect even to call them forms – have found the vestigial social democratic institutions of art a useful source of material support. Conversely, those institutions have found the cultural wing of the new social movements attractive. A renewal of the sphere of art as a sphere of free expression and experimentation has appealing echoes of modernist principles, a space that allows the impossible dream of a life outside of capitalism. However it is unlikely that the mainstream institutions of art will be politically or culturally able to transform themselves in the ways that current activist practice might propose. Indeed it seems more probable that even the present accommodation will be short-lived, as neo-liberal policies continue to bring public institutions into the embrace of the market. There is also, perhaps, some truth to the remark made by one artist at a recent UK institutional conference that, if the Arts Council is sponsoring the revolution, it is very unlikely to be the revolution.

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It would be overly pessimistic in the context of this book, whose subject is art and social change, to conclude that the primary value of the formal contemporary art world to oppositional politics is as a source of dwindling material support, rather than as an open forum for the reinvigoration of civil society. Still, the conflict described at the beginning of this introduction, between the construction and maintenance of the sphere of art by the dominant social and economic forces, and artists' pursuit of the possibility of social change, remains. The institutions of the Western art world have proven both flexible enough to accommodate every formal challenge and resilient enough to resist every structural attack; in this they reflect the characteristics of the economic and political system that supports them. What has changed in recent decades is that formal or aesthetic criteria are no longer sufficient, in fact no longer viable, as a basis for describing the manifest sphere of art.

The category of modern art synthesised two apparently opposing ideas: art as a progression of aesthetic philosophies and movements that built on the past, and the radical experiments of the avant-garde that continually attempted to break from that tradition or to remake the category itself. Now, it seems that more-or-less all possible human actions have been claimed as art at one time or another. There are also more authorities than ever before with the power to legitimise the art status of those claims. In this context, artists' struggles to get certain aesthetics or concepts accepted into the canon are over, and the debate over the nature of art has been superseded by a marketplace in which all forms or definitions are available, and the buyers – whether they are public or private galleries, corporate collectors, public commissioners or any other interested party – are able to select those that best serve their interests.

Of course, the debate over the nature of art, over the nature of the power or role of art and the form its institutions should take, continues, but it does so as an explicitly ideological contest. In his commissioned essay, Gerald Raunig suggests a framework for understanding some of the recurring themes in the historical development of this situation, while Tirdad Zolghadr and Geeta Kapur describe two very different situations in which this debate is bound to urgent political and social questions. In what Zolghadr describes as the 'semi-totalitarian' society of Iran, a new generation of artists negotiate censorship in the hope of international success, while the state monopolises social sites – the media and the theatrical arena of public politics, for example – that have been the focus of dissent in the West. Kapur examines the importance of art in the context of civil society in contemporary India, and the political struggles over representation, in every sense, that attend the attempt to address the failings of the institutions of democracy. Marina Vishmidt connects VALIE EXPORT's personal engagement with the politics of public space to the more recent actions of Park Fiction and the Hafenrandverein in Hamburg, a conflict between state-backed capital and

local citizens that united and organised the community under the banner of utopian art.

While the recently reinvigorated theoretical debate around the idea of the public sphere – and the importance of art within it – has an understandably valedictory tone, questions of civil society remain central to attempts to oppose capitalist injustice from existing democratic systems. The idea of artistic freedom has been recently mobilised by the neo-liberal right in defence of media propaganda, and by the conservative left in the defence of social democratic cultural institutions – even as it becomes apparent that the reimagination of these institutions depends upon embracing an expanded discourse within which the political interests at stake can be articulated and debated. Meanwhile, many emerging politically-engaged cultural movements are increasingly focused on the ideals of independence from existing state or market structures. They choose their tools pragmatically, and build their networks across disciplinary boundaries. The central question, in the context of the kinds of practices that this book attempts to describe, is perhaps no longer one of breaking with the institution of art, but of how to constitute an active alternative.

Gustave Courbet *La rencontre* or '*Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*', 1854
Oil on canvas, 129 × 149 cm
Courtesy Musée Fabre, Montpellier; © RMN, DR

Michel Charles Fichot *Paris on Fire on the Night of 24–25 May*, 1871
Coloured engraving
Courtesy Musée de la Ville de Paris; © Carnavalet/Roger-Viollet

On the occasion of the Artists' International Congress and Exhibition
WE ASK YOUR ATTENTION

NON-INTERVENTION is not merely a political expedient in the Spanish situation, nor the alleged policy of a certain international committee. It is something much more than that ; it is the typical and inevitable product of a way of thinking and behaving, the prevailing political attitude of **educated and conscious** people since the war.

This attitude has been pure NON-INTERVENTION. Politics were looked upon as a dirty and stupid game of little real importance. Politicians were paid off to play it on their own, recognised knaves and professional liars, but not too sharply questioned as long as things went not too outrageously, and above all as long as the intellectuals were left safely with their books, their arts and intellectual interests. Their aim was **to localise politics,** to confine it to a few people, to treat is as a possible contagious, certainly disgusting disease.

This attitude has been modified in one direction only. Memories of the last war, and the obviously growing dangers of another, have produced widespread pacifism. For the pacifist tries to deal with war as an isolated disaster, apart from its wider causes and connections ; he tries to look upon it as the embodiment of an abstract principle of VIOLENCE, and he will try to oppose it by the equally abstract principle of REASON. He will not examine the actual social and economic circumstances which produce violence, and above all he will not seek to oppose it by actual political means ; he will not meet it on its own ground. He remains NON-INTERVENTIONIST.

In a similar way the London Non-Intervention Committee was designed to apply this policy in the situation created by the international Fascist coup in Spain. Political expedience and political justice were ignored ; all social and political circumstances were disregarded, in favour of a single object : to localise the conflict, to confine within limits as narrow as possible this outbreak of VIOLENCE.

In this way the London Committee has a significance far beyond its own immediate aims. It is a practical test, a crucial experiment upon the attitudes which we have adopted. Is it possible to remain blind any longer to the results of this experiment ?

The facts, the events, are not in dispute. The Fascist countries, Italy, Germany and Portugal, have assisted Franco freely with materials of war and barely disguised divisions of their regular armies. They have condescended to cloak their actions to some extent under promises, agreements, denials and counter-charges. But behind this fog of words, Fascist intervention has proceeded unhampered save by the magnificent courage of the armies of THE SPANISH PEOPLE.

Is there any reason to suppose that Non-Intervention at future times and in other places may succeed better? Has Fascist militarism announced any limit to its hopes of conquest? Has it shown signs of a moral regeneration, of a greater respect for agreements and conventions? The opinion of the politicians at least is clear. Since the Fascist outbreak in Spain every European country

has hastened and enlarged its plans of re-armament. Only a few pacifists continue to believe in Non-Intervention. By doing so, they can only assist the forces of war by yielding one strategic point after another to the militarist dictators, they make VIOLENCE more certain and infinitely more disastrous in its effects.

One thing, then, is clear. With all respect for the motives of **pacifism,** for the sincerity and courage of pacifists, this form of Non-Intervention is completely discredited **in practice** by the Spanish experiment.

But more depends on the experiment than this. Not only pacifism has been on trial, but our whole attitude of Non-Intervention in politics. How have our paid knaves and liars conducted themselves?

Unfortunately, like paid knaves and liars. If, conceivably, six months ago NON-INTERVENTION was defensible, it was only remotely justifiable as long as there was a fair fight between the parties in Spain. The German and Italian invasions removed even these remote justifications. At the very least we might have expected unequivocal protests against the Fascist aggressors, but even these have been lacking.

Unfortunately, this is not all. Our Government has in various ways intervened actually on behalf of the Fascist aggressors. Several weeks before the international ban on volunteers, it dug up a century-old Act on Foreign Enlistment, and indicated its intention to harass British volunteers gratuitously by this antiquated instrument. It has repeatedly refused to admit representatives of THE SPANISH PEOPLE, and their

Raoul Hausmann *The Art Critic*, 1919–1920
Lithograph and photographic collage on paper, 31.8 × 25.4 cm
© ADAGP, Paris; DACS, London; Tate, London

Atelier Populaire
Poster, 1968
Courtesy the International Institute of Social History (IISH),
Amsterdam

The Pageant of the Paterson Strike
Programme, 1912
Courtesy Tamiment Library, New York University

Previous page:
British Surrealist Group *We Ask Your Attention*, 1938
Pamphlet designed by Henry Moore
Courtesy the Henry Moore Foundation, London

Gran Fury *Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do*, ca. 1989
Poster
Courtesy Gran Fury Records, Manuscripts and Archives
Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lennox and
Tilden Foundations

Sture Johannesson *The Pen is Mightier than the Sword?*, 1976
KulturHuset, Stockholm

Peter Kennard *Defended to Death*, 1983
Photomontage

<u>Bonnie Sherk</u> Documentation of *Crossroads Community (The Farm)*, 1974–1981

Solvognen US Independence Day demonstration, Rebild, Denmark, 1976
Courtesy Nils Vest / www.vestfilm.dk

RevArte Documentation of the Popotla project by RevArte
and the Popotla community, 1997
Photograph © James Blienser, Luz Camacho and Jim Hammond

Ip Gim Demonstration protesting the 'Scattering of the Abanggung
Occupation Project at Jongmyo', 2000

Park Fiction Park Fiction Guides (Filiz and Noorjan)
under the Palm trees on the Teagarden Island, 2003
Photograph © Margit Czenki

St. Pauli Kickboxers during the opening party for the Park,
Permanent Picnic against Gentrification, on the *Tulip Patterned
Tartan Field*, 2005 and *Rabbit Fashion in the Park*, 2004
Photographs © Christoph Schäfer
Courtesy the Park Fiction Archive for Independent Urbanism

Next page:
William Morris Design for the membership card
of the Democratic Federation, 1883
Courtesy the Working Class Movement Library, Salford

LIBERTY EQUALITY FRATERNITY

EDUCATE

DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

ORGANISE

AGITATE
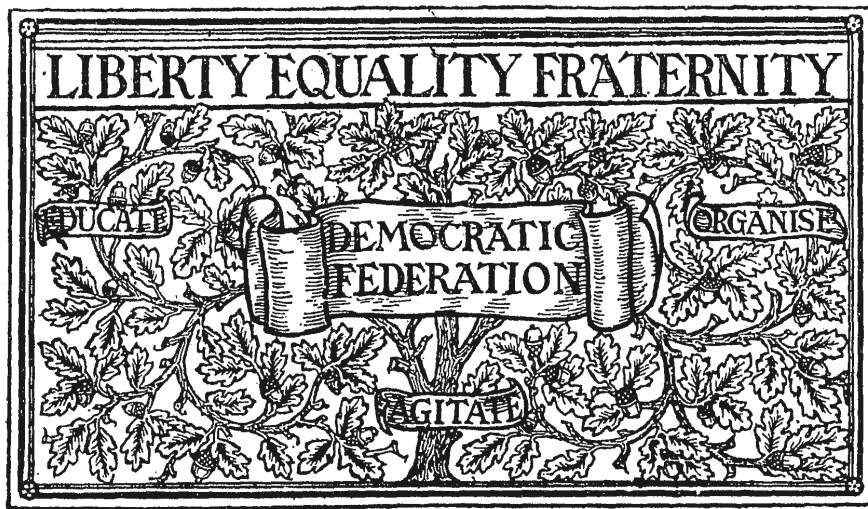
THE COMMUNE
AND
THE COMMONWEAL

1871

Against the background of the Commune, the role of the artist as a citizen and the political nature of art and its institutions is explicitly considered. Gustave Courbet and William Morris independently develop the notion that, as art is inextricably linked with its social context, political activism forms a legitimate part of an artist's practice. During the upheavals of the Paris Commune, Courbet proposes the effective de-institutionalisation of art. Morris sees his dream of art as part of the daily life of all members of society as inseparable from the creation of an egalitarian social order.

LETTERS, OCTOBER 1870–APRIL 1871

GUSTAVE COURBET

Extracts from letters written by
Gustave Courbet, Paris 1870–71.
From Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu (ed.
and trans.), *Letters of Gustave Courbet*,
University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Letter to the German army and the German artists, Paris, 29 October 1870

Listen: leave us your Krupp cannons, we will melt them together with ours; the last cannon, its upturned muzzle covered with a phrygian bonnet, planted on a pedestal resting on three cannon balls: that colossal monument that we'll erect together on the place Vendôme will be our column, for you and for us, the column of the people, the column of Germany and France forever federated.

Letter to his colleagues, Paris, 18 March 1871

The preceding regimes that governed France nearly destroyed art by protecting it and taking away its spontaneity. That feudal approach, sustained by a despotic and discretionary government, produced nothing but aristocratic and theocratic art, just the opposite of the modern tendencies, of our needs, of our philosophy and the revelation of man manifesting his individuality and his moral and physical independence. Today, when democracy must direct everything, it would be illogical for art, which leads the world, to lag behind in the revolution that is taking place in France at this moment.

In order to achieve this goal, we will discuss in an assembly of artists the plans, projects and ideas that will be submitted to us, in order to achieve the new reorganisation of art and its material interests.

Letter to the artists of Paris, 7 April 1871

As Paris has finally won itself freedom of action and independence,
I call upon artists to assume control of the museums and art collections
which, though the property of the nation, are primarily theirs, from
the intellectual as well as the material point of view. …

The *Ecole de Rome* shall be abolished, and so shall the *Ecole des beaux-arts* –
but the Parisian monument could be left at the disposal of students to
promote, through their entirely free choice of professors, the evolution
of their studies. …

Honour crosses and medals of all classes shall be entirely abolished.

Letter to his family, Charenton, 30 April 1871

Here I am, thanks to the people of Paris, up to my neck in politics: president
of the Federation of Artists, member of the Commune, delegate to the Office
of the Mayor, delegate to the Ministry of Public Education, four of the most
important offices in Paris! I get up, I eat breakfast, and I sit and I preside
twelve hours a day. My head is beginning to feel like a baked apple. But in
spite of all this agitation in my head and in my understanding of social
questions that I was not familiar with, I am in seventh heaven.
Paris is a true paradise! … The Paris Commune is more successful
than any form of government that has ever been.

Gustave Courbet *The Stone Breakers,* 1849
Oil on canvas, 160 × 259 cm
Courtesy Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden; © BPK

The Paris Commune *Barricade Rue du Faubourg
Saint Antoine,* 1871
© BHVP/Roger-Viollet
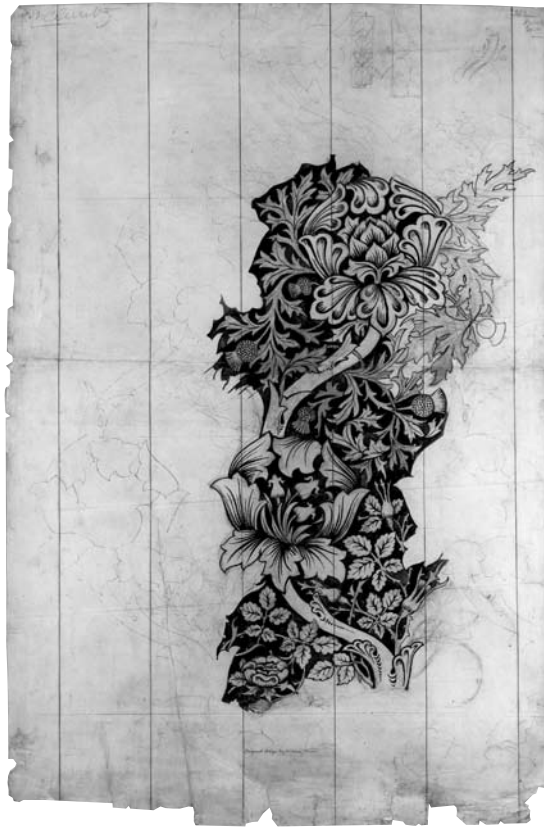
<u>William Morris</u> Design for a textile; *Rose and Thistle*, 1882
Charcoal and watercolour
Courtesy V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum,
London

Washing cotton in the River Wandle,
Merton Abbey Works, Surrey

SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP

WILLIAM MORRIS AND E. BELFORT BAX

In dealing with the great event of the Paris Commune, we must take for granted a knowledge of the facts, which are in a brief form accessible to all since the publication by the Socialist League of its pamphlet on the subject.

As we have stated before, the International was founded in 1864 under the leadership of Beesley, Marx and Odger. In 1869, at the Congress of Basle, Marx drew it into the compass of socialism; and though in England it still remained an indefinite labour-body, on the Continent it became at once decidedly socialistic and revolutionary, and its influence was considerable.

The progress of socialism and the spreading feeling of the solidarity of labour were very clearly shown by the noble protest made by the German socialists[1] against the war with France, in the teeth of a 'patriotic' feeling so strong in appearance that it might have been expected to silence any objectors from the first. The result of the war seemed to offer at least a chance for action to the rapidly increasing Socialist Party, if they could manage to take advantage of it, to get into their hands the political power; and under the influence of the Internationalists, the French socialists determined to take action if an immediate opportunity offered [itself]. Neither did the opportunity fail. The final defeat of the French army at Sedan brought on the fall of the Empire, when Republican France might perhaps have made terms with the invaders, whom the men of the Empire had challenged. But a resistance was organised by Gambetta, at the head of a stock-jobbing clique whose interests, both commercial and political, forbade them to let the war die out lest they should find themselves face to face with a people determined to be 'fleeced' no longer. This resistance, sustained by the success with which this clique played on the sham patriotic or jingoistic feelings of the general population, was always quite hopeless from a military point of view, and brought the country to the verge of ruin. It also necessarily involved the German siege of Paris, the result of which was to throw a great deal of power into the hands of the city proletariat, since they at least were in earnest in their resistance to the foreign enemy, and the theatrical resistance necessary to the ambition of the political adventurers who posed as their leaders could not have a decent face to put upon it

[1] They also protested, at the end of the war, against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.

without their enthusiasm. In October, while the siege was still at its height, a rising headed by Blanqui nearly succeeded in overthrowing the bourgeois domination; and after the siege the possession of arms, especially cannon, by the proletariat, in the face of the disarmed and disorganised army under the bourgeois, afforded the opportunity desired by the socialists. On the failure of Thiers's attempt to disarm Paris – whether he expected it to succeed, or only designed it as a trap to enable him to fall with mere force of arms on Paris – on this failure the insurrection took place, and the Central Committee, largely composed of members of the International, got into their hands the executive power, a great deal of which they retained during the whole of the existence of the Commune. Their position was strengthened by the fact that, apart from their aims towards the economical freedom of the proletariat, in their aspirations towards genuine federalisation they were, in appearance at least, in accord with the Radicals who wished to see an advanced municipalism brought about.

As the movement progressed, it became more and more obvious that if the resistance to Thiers and the attempt to establish municipal independence for Paris was to succeed, it must be through the exercise of socialist influence on the proletariat: the Radicals, therefore, were forced by the march of events into alliance with the socialists. The socialist element therefore came to the front, and enactments of a distinctly socialistic nature were passed, involving the suspension of contract and abolition of rents; and both in these matters and in the decentralisation which was almost the watchword of the Commune, the advance from the proceedings of the earlier revolutionists is clearly marked. Also, although the opportunity for the establishment of the Commune was given by the struggle against foreigners, the international character of their aspirations was shown by the presence of foreigners in the Council of the Commune and in command of its troops. And though in itself the destruction of the Vendôme Column may seem but a small matter, yet considering the importance attached generally, and in France particularly, to such symbols, the dismounting of that base piece of Napoleonic upholstery was another mark of the determination to hold no parley with the old jingoistic legends.

It should be noted that the risings which took place in other towns in France were not so much vanquished by the strength of the bourgeoisie, which at first found itself powerless before the people, but rather fell through owing to a want of fuller development of socialism and a more vigorous proclamation of its principles.

The whole revolt was at last drowned in the blood of the workers of Paris. Certainly the immediate result was to crush socialism for the time by the destruction of a whole generation of its most determined recruits. Nevertheless the very violence and excess of the bourgeois revenge have, as we can now see, tended to strengthen the progress of socialism, as they have set the seal of tragedy and heroism on the mixed

events of the Commune, and made its memory a rallying point for all future revolutionists.

However, the fall of the Commune involved that of the International. The immediate failure of its action was obvious, and blinded people to its indestructible principles. Besides, a period of great commercial prosperity visited the countries of Europe at this time. The French milliards, which Germany had won as the prize of war, were being turned over and over by the German bourgeois in their merry game of 'beggar-my-neighbour'. England was at the height of its period of 'leaps and bounds' – a period now called by the German middle-classes themselves the 'swindle period'. Even France, in spite of her being the plundered country, recovered from the condition into which the war had thrown her with a speed that made the plunderer envy her. In short, it was one of those periods which prove to the bourgeois exploiter that he is positively right, in which the bettermost workman grows quite unconscious of the chain which binds him, and is contemptuously regardless of that which lies heavy on the labourer below him, to whom the prosperity or adversity of the rest of the world make little or no difference.

Internal dissensions, also, were at work within the International and at the Congress of the Hague in 1872 it was broken up; and though it still existed as a name for the next year or two, the remaining fragments of it did nothing worth speaking of.

In Vienna, in 1871, the movement in sympathy with the Commune became threatening, but was repressed by the authorities, and several of the prominent members of the party were imprisoned for the part they had taken in a socialist demonstration – amongst others, Johann Most and Andreas Scheu.

For a while after the fall of the Commune the interest in the active side of the movement turned to Russia and Germany. In 1878 Nobiling and Hodel shot at the Emperor William; which event gave the occasion for the attack by Bismarck on the rapidly increasing Socialist Party in October 78, when the repressive laws were enacted which have been in force ever since. The result of these laws, which suppressed meetings, papers, and other literature, has been to drive the movement into a purely parliamentary course. In spite of the repression, the party has not only succeeded in holding itself together, but has grown to large dimensions, numbering, according to official statements, 650,000.

In Russia the socialist movement was, on the face of it, mixed up with nationalist and political agitation, which was natural in a country in the bonds of the crudest form of absolutism. Nevertheless the ultimate aim of the party is unmistakable, and the propaganda has been carried on with a revolutionary fervour and purity of devotion that have never been surpassed, if they have ever been equalled. The slaying of the Czar on 13 March 1881, with the tragic scenes that followed it, has been the most

dramatic event that the Russian movement has given to the world; and it must be said of it that it has marked and initiated a new revolutionary period. Since that time the elements of Revolution have gathered force and cohesion; a sense of insecurity has come over the authority of 'law and order'; the sympathies of all people of honesty and good feeling have been attracted to the side of those suffering under mere open monstrous oppression; and men's minds generally have been opened to new ideas on the more insidious oppression under which labour groans in constitutionally governed countries.

The last stage of the great revolution inaugurated in France at the end of the eighteenth century seems destined to be reached at the end of the nineteenth – if, indeed, that thing of rags and patches called 'Constitutional Government' can keep itself alive so long.

Within the illustration:

TO · EACH · ACCORDING · TO · HIS · NEEDS ·

FROM · EACH · ACCORDING · HIS · CAPACITY ·

· LIBERTY · EQUALITY · FRATERNITY ·

LA · SOLIDARITE · HUMAINE

ENLIGHTENMENT

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL.
CONDUCTED BY
LOUISE MICHEL
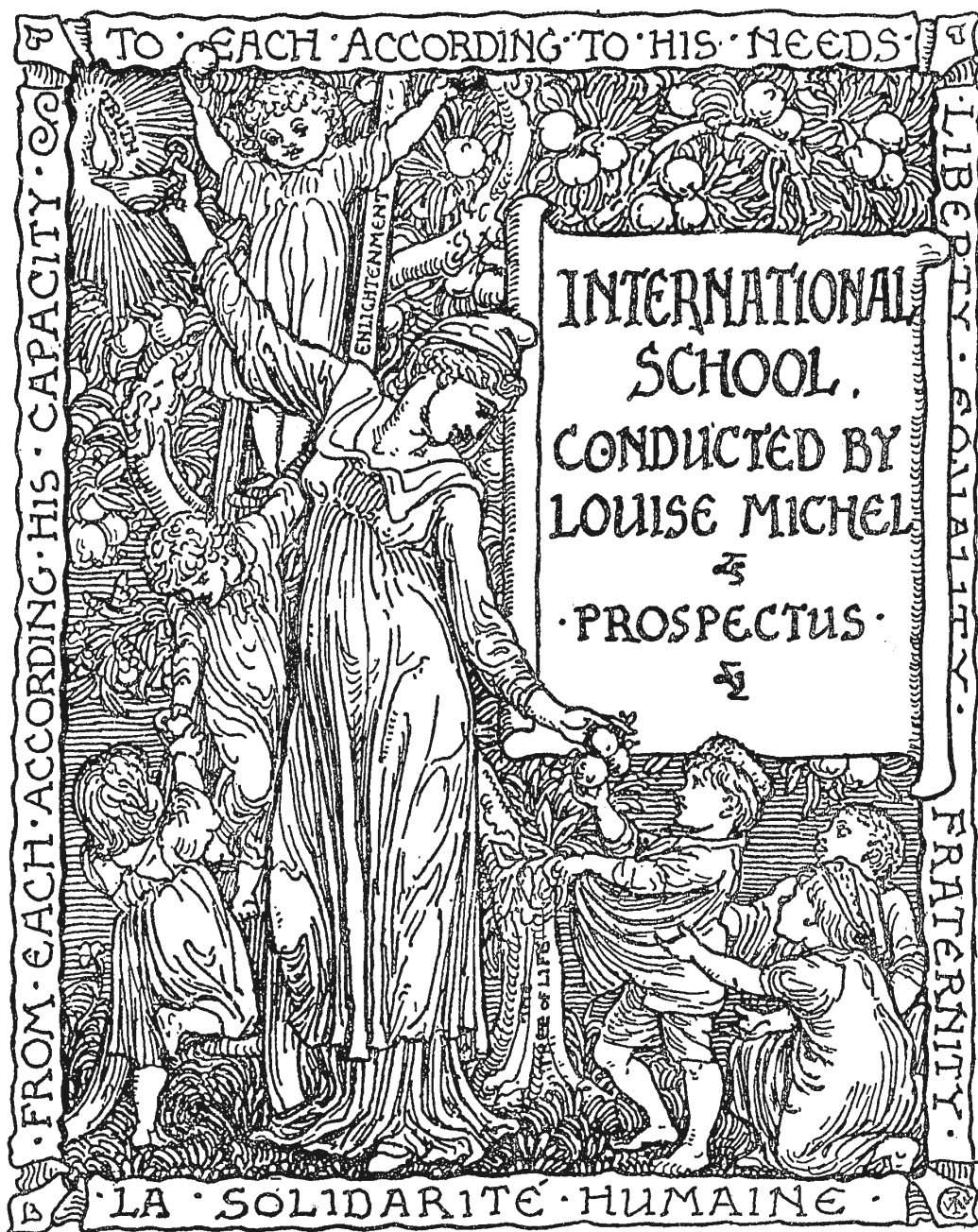
· PROSPECTUS ·

Walter Crane *Prospectus for the International School,*
ca. 1891
Courtesy the Working Class Movement Library, Salford

THE·WORKERS·MAY·POLE

[An offering for May-Day 1894 from Walter Crane]

Walter Crane *The Workers Maypole*, 1894
Print
Courtesy the Working Class Movement Library, Salford

Walter Crane *Stop the War,* ca. 1899
Print
Courtesy the Working Class Movement Library, Salford

THE SOCIALIST IDEAL: ART

WILLIAM MORRIS

Some people will perhaps not be prepared to hear that socialism has any ideal of art, for in the first place it is so obviously founded on the necessity for dealing with the bare economy of life that many, and even some socialists, can see nothing save that economic basis; and moreover, many who might be disposed to admit the necessity of economic change in the direction of socialism believe quite sincerely that art is fostered by the inequalities of condition which it is the first business of socialism to do away with, and indeed that it cannot exist without them. Nevertheless, in the teeth of these opinions I assert first that socialism is an all-embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethic and a religion of its own, so also it has an aesthetic: so that to every one who wishes to study socialism duly it is necessary to look on it from the aesthetic point of view. And, secondly, I assert that inequality of condition, whatever may have been the case in former ages of the world, has now become incompatible with the existence of a healthy art.

But before I go further I must explain that I use the word art in a wider sense than is commonly used amongst us today; for convenience sake, indeed, I will exclude all appeals to the intellect and emotions that are not addressed to the eyesight, though properly speaking, music and all literature that deals with style should be considered as portions of art; but I can exclude from consideration as a possible vehicle of art no production of man which can be looked at. And here at once becomes obvious the sundering of the ways between the socialist and the commercial view of art. To the socialist a house, a knife, a cup, a steam engine or what not, anything, I repeat, that is made by man and has form, must either be a work of art or destructive to art. The commercialist, on the other hand, divides 'manufactured articles' into those that are prepensely works of art, and are offered for sale in the market as such, and those that have no pretence and could have no pretence to artistic qualities. The one side asserts indifference, the other denies it. The commercialist sees that in the great mass of civilized human labour there is no pretence to art, and thinks that this is natural, inevitable, and on the whole desirable. The socialist, on the contrary, sees in this obvious lack of art a disease peculiar to modern civilization and hurtful to humanity; and furthermore believes it to be a disease that can be remedied.

This disease and injury to humanity, also, he thinks is no trifling matter, but a grievous deduction from the happiness of man; for he knows that the all-pervading art of which I have been speaking, and to the possibility of which the commercialist is blind, is the expression of pleasure in the labour of production; and that, since all persons who are not mere burdens on the community must produce, in some form or another, it follows that under our present system most honest men must lead unhappy lives, since their work, which is the most important part of their lives, is devoid of pleasure.

Or, to put it very bluntly and shortly, under the present state of society happiness is only possible to artists and thieves.

It will at once be seen from this statement how necessary it is for socialists to consider the due relation of art to society; for it is their aim to realise a reasonable, logical, and stable society; and of the two groups above-named it must be said that the artists (using the word in its present narrow meaning) are few, and are too busy over their special work (small blame to them) to pay much heed to public matters; and that the thieves (of all classes) form a disturbing element in society.

Now, the socialist not only sees this disease in the body politic, but also thinks that he knows the cause of it, and consequently can conceive of a remedy; and that all the more because the disease is in the main peculiar, as above-said, to modern civilization. Art was once the common possession of the whole people; it was the rule in the Middle Ages that the produce of handicraft was beautiful. Doubtless, there were eyesores in the palmy days of medieval art, but these were caused by destruction of wares, not as now by the making of them: it was the act of war and devastation that grieved the eye of the artist then; the sacked town, the burned village, the deserted fields. Ruin bore on its face the tokens of its essential hideousness; today, it is prosperity that is externally ugly.

The story of the Lancashire manufacturer who, coming back from Italy, that sad museum of the nations, rejoiced to see the smoke, with which he was poisoning the beauty of the earth, pouring out of his chimneys, gives us a genuine type of the active rich man of the Commercial Period, degraded into incapacity of even wishing for decent surroundings. In those past days the wounds of war were grievous indeed, but peace would bring back pleasure to men, and the hope of peace was at least conceivable; but now, peace can no longer help us and has no hope for us; the prosperity of the country, by whatever 'leaps and bounds' it may advance, will but make everything more and more ugly about us; it will become more a definitely established axiom that the longing for beauty, the interest in history, the intelligence of the whole nation, shall be of no power to stop one rich man from injuring the whole nation to the full extent of his riches, that is, of his privilege of taxing other people; it will be proved to demonstration, at least to all lovers of beauty and a decent life, that private property is public robbery.

Nor, however much we may suffer from this if we happen to be artists,

should we socialists at least complain of it. For, in fact, the 'peace' of commercialism is not peace, but bitter war, and the ghastly waste of Lancashire and the ever-spreading squalor of London are at least object-lessons to teach us that this is so, that there is war in the land which quells all our efforts to live wholesomely and happily. The necessity of the time, I say, is to feed the commercial war which we are all of us waging in some way or another; if, while we are doing this, we can manage, some of us, to adorn our lives with some little pleasure of the eyes, it is well, but it is no necessity, it is a luxury, the lack of which we must endure.

Thus, in this matter also does the artificial famine of inequality, felt in so many other ways, impoverish us despite our riches; and we sit starving amidst our gold, the Midas of the ages.

Let me state bluntly a few facts about the present condition of the arts before I try to lay before my readers the definite socialist ideal, which I have been asked to state. It is necessary to do this because no ideal for the future can be conceived of unless we proceed by way of contrast; it is the desire to escape from the present failure which forces us into what are called 'ideals'; in fact, they are mostly attempts by persons of strong hope to embody their discontent with the present.

It will scarcely be denied, I suppose, that at present art is only enjoyed, or indeed thought of, by comparatively few persons, broadly speaking, by the rich and the parasites that minister to them directly. The poor can only afford to have what art is given to them in charity; which is of the inferior quality inherent in all such gifts – not worth picking up except by starving people.

Now, having eliminated the poor (that is, almost the whole mass of those that make anything that has form, which, as before-said, must either be helpful to life or destructive of it) as not sharing in art from any side, let us see how the rich, who do share in it to a certain extent, get on with it. But poorly, I think, although they are rich. By abstracting themselves from the general life of man that surrounds them, they can get some pleasure from a few works of art; whether they be part of the wreckage of times past, or produced by the individual labour, intelligence, and patience of a few men of genius of today fighting desperately against all the tendencies of the age. But they can do no more than surround themselves with a little circle of hot-house atmosphere of art hopelessly at odds with the common air of day. A rich man may have a house full of pictures and beautiful books and furniture and so forth; but as soon as he steps out into the streets he is again in the midst of ugliness to which he must blunt his senses, or be miserable if he really cares about art. Even when he is in the country, amidst the beauty of trees and fields, he cannot prevent some neighbouring landowner making the landscape hideous with utilitarian agriculture; nay, it is almost certain that his own steward or agent will force him into doing the like on his own lands; he cannot even rescue his parish church from the hands of the

restoring parson. He can go where he likes and do what he likes outside the realm of art, but there he is helpless. Why is this? Simply because the great mass of effective art, that which pervades all life, must be the result of the harmonious co-operation of neighbours. And a rich man has no neighbours – nothing but rivals and parasites.

Now the outcome of this is that although the educated classes (as we call them) have theoretically some share in art, or might have, as a matter of fact they have very little. Outside the circle of the artists themselves there are very few even of the educated classes who care about art. Art is kept alive by a small group of artists working in a spirit quite antagonistic to the spirit of the time; and they also suffer from the lack of co-operation that is an essential lack in the art of our epoch. They are limited, therefore, to the production of a few individualistic works, which are looked upon by almost everybody as curiosities to be examined, and not as pieces of beauty to be enjoyed. Nor have they any position or power of helping the public in general matters of taste (to use a somewhat ugly word). For example, in laying out all the parks and pleasure grounds which have lately been acquired for the public, as far as I know, no artist has been consulted; whereas they ought to have been laid out by a committee of artists; and I will venture to say that even a badly chosen committee (and it might easily be well chosen) would have saved the public from most of the disasters which have resulted from handing them over to the tender mercies of the landscape gardener.

This, then, is the position of art in this epoch. It is helpless and crippled amidst the sea of utilitarian brutality. It cannot perform the most necessary functions: it cannot build a decent house, or ornament a book, or lay out a garden, or prevent the ladies of the time from dressing in a way that caricatures the body and degrades it. On the one hand it is cut off from the traditions of the past, on the other from the life of the present. It is the art of a clique and not of the people. The people are too poor to have any share of it.

As an artist I know this, because I can see it. As a socialist I know that it can never be bettered as long as we are living in that special condition of inequality which is produced by the direct and intimate exploitation of the makers of wares, the workmen, at the hands of those who are not producers in any, even the widest, acceptation of the word.

The first point, therefore, in the socialist ideal of art is that it should be common to the whole people; and this can only be the case if it comes to be recognised that art should be an integral part of all manufactured wares that have definite form and are intended for any endurance. In other words, instead of looking upon art as a luxury incidental to a certain privileged position, the socialist claims art as a necessity of human life which society has no right to withhold from any one of the citizens; and he claims also that in order that this claim may be established people shall have every opportunity of taking to the work which each is best fitted for; not only

that there may be the least possible waste of human effort, but also that that effort may be exercised pleasurably. For I must here repeat what I have often had to say, that the pleasurable exercise of our energies is at once the source of all art and the cause of all happiness: that is to say, it is the end of life. So that once again the society which does not give a due opportunity to all its members to exercise their energies pleasurably has forgotten the end of life, is not fulfilling its functions, and therefore is a mere tyranny to be resisted at all points.

Furthermore, in the making of wares there should be some of the spirit of the handicraftsman, whether the goods be made by hand, or by a machine that helps the hand, or by one that supersedes it. Now the essential part of the spirit of the handicraftsman is the instinct for looking at the wares in themselves and their essential use as the object of his work. Their secondary uses, the exigencies of the market, are nothing to him; it does not matter to him whether the goods he makes are for the use of a slave or a king, his business is to make them as excellent as may be; if he does otherwise he is making wares for rogues to sell to fools, and he is himself a rogue by reason of his complicity. All this means that he is making the goods for himself; for his own pleasure in making them and using them. But to do this he requires reciprocity, or else he will be ill-found, except in the goods that he himself makes. His neighbours must make goods in the same spirit that he does; and each, being a good workman after his kind, will be ready to recognise excellence in the others, or to note defects; because the primary purpose of the goods, their use in fact, will never be lost sight of. Thus the market of neighbours, the interchange of mutual good services, will be established, and will take the place of the present gambling-market, and its bond-slave the modern factory system. But the working in this fashion, with the unforced and instinctive reciprocity of service, clearly implies the existence of something more than a mere gregarious collection of workmen. It implies a consciousness of the existence of a society of neighbours, that is of equals; of men who do indeed expect to be made use of by others, but only so far as the services they give are pleasing to themselves; so far as they are services the performance of which is necessary to their own well-being and happiness.

Now, as on the one hand I know that no worthy popular art can grow out of any other soil than this of freedom and mutual respect, so on the other I feel sure both that this opportunity will be given to art and also that it will avail itself of it, and that, once again, nothing which is made by man will be ugly, but will have its due form, and its due ornament, will tell the tale of its making and the tale of its use, even where it tells no other tale. And this because when people once more take pleasure in their work, when the pleasure rises to a certain point, the expression of it will become irresistible, and that expression of pleasure is art, whatever form it may take. As to that form, do not let us trouble ourselves about it; remembering that after all the earliest art which we have record of is still art to us; that Homer is no more

out of date than Browning; that the most scientifically-minded of people (I had almost said the most utilitarian), the ancient Greeks, are still thought to have produced good artists; that the most superstitious epoch of the world, the early Middle Ages, produced the freest art; though there is reason enough for that if I had time to go into it.

For in fact, considering the relation of the modern world to art, our business is now, and for long will be, not so much attempting to produce definite art, as rather clearing the ground to give art its opportunity. We have been such slaves to the modern practice of the unlimited manufacture of makeshifts for real wares, that we run a serious risk of destroying the very material of art; of making it necessary that men, in order to have any artistic perception, should be born blind, and should get their ideas of beauty from the hearsay of books. This degradation is surely the first thing which we should deal with; and certainly socialists must deal with it at the first opportunity; they at least must see, however much others may shut their eyes: for they cannot help reflecting that to condemn a vast population to live in South Lancashire while art and education are being furthered in decent places, is like feasting within earshot of a patient on the rack.

Anyhow, the first step toward the fresh new-birth of art must interfere with the privilege of private persons to destroy the beauty of the earth for their private advantage, and thereby to rob the community. The day when some company of enemies of the community are forbidden, for example, to turn the fields of Kent into another collection of cinder heaps in order that they may extract wealth, unearned by them, from a mass of half-paid labourers; the day when some hitherto all powerful 'pig-skin stuffed with money' is told that he shall not pull down some ancient building in order that he may force his fellow citizens to pay him additional rack-rent for land which is not his (save as the newly acquired watch of the highwayman is) – that day will be the beginning of the fresh new-birth of art in modern times.

But that day will also be one of the memorable days of socialism; for this very privilege, which is but the privilege of the robber by force of arms, is just the thing which it is the aim and end of our present organisation to uphold; and all the formidable executive at the back of it, army, police, law courts, presided over by the judge as representing the executive, is directed towards this one end – to take care that the richest shall rule, and shall have full licence to injure the commonwealth to the full extent of his riches.

SOLD FOR THE BENEFIT OF LINNELL'S ORPHANS.

ALFRED LINNELL

Killed in Trafalgar Square,
NOVEMBER 20, 1887.

A DEATH SONG,
BY MR. W. MORRIS.
Memorial Design by Mr. Walter Crane.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Walter Crane and William Morris
Pamphlet for Alfred Linnell: A Death
Song, 1887
Courtesy the Working Class
Movement Library, Salford

Bloody Sunday, 1887
Illustrated London News

THE MASSES;
ART IS DEAD;
CONSTRUCTION;
UTOPIANS;
THE ARTISTS'
INTERNATIONAL;

1917

Artists take positions against the background of an increasing polarisation of the forces of capital and labour; proletarian propaganda appropriates high cultural forms in the US; the Dadaists extend their critique of authority to the form of language itself; many strands of the European avant-garde declare the end of art itself; artists in revolutionary Russia seek to construct a new practice that reflects a new form of social organisation; the Surrealists connect the liberation of the forces of production with the liberation of the imagination; the events surrounding the Spanish Civil War mark the end of the revolutionary project of 1917.

The Paterson Strike Pageant, 1912
The cast of the pageant photographed in front of
the 200-foot-wide backdrop painted by John Sloan
Courtesy Tamiment Library, New York University

THE WAR IN PATERSON

JOHN REED

There's war in Paterson. But it's a curious kind of war. All the violence is the work of one side – the Mill Owners. Their servants, the Police, club unresisting men and women and ride down law-abiding crowds on horseback. Their paid mercenaries, the armed Detectives, shoot and kill innocent people. Their newspapers, the *Paterson Press* and the *Paterson Call*, publish incendiary and crime-inciting appeals to mob-violence against the strike leaders. Their tool, Recorder Carroll, deals out heavy sentences to peaceful pickets that the police-net gathers up. They control absolutely the Police, the Press, the Courts.

Opposing them are about 25,000 striking silk-workers, of whom perhaps 10,000 are active, and their weapon is the picket-line. Let me tell you what I saw in Paterson and then you will say which side of this struggle is 'anarchistic' and 'contrary to American ideals'. At six o'clock in the morning a light rain was falling. Slate-grey and cold, the streets of Paterson were deserted. But soon came the Cops – 20 of them – strolling along with their nightsticks under their arms. We went ahead of them toward the mill district. Now we began to see workmen going in the same direction, coat collars turned up, hands in their pockets. We came into a long street, one side of which was lined with silk mills, the other side with the wooden tenement houses. In every doorway, at every window of the houses clustered foreign-faced men and women, laughing and chatting as if after breakfast on a holiday. There seemed no sense of expectancy, no strain or feeling of fear. The sidewalks were almost empty, only over in front of the mills a few couples – there couldn't have been more than 50 – marched slowly up and down, dripping with the rain. Some were men, with here and there a man and woman together, or two young boys. As the warmer light of full day came the people drifted out of their houses and began to pace back and forth, gathering in little knots on the corners. They were quick with gesticulating hands and low-voiced conversation. They looked often toward the corners of side streets.

Suddenly appeared a policeman, swinging his club. 'Ah-h-h!' said the crowd softly.

Six men had taken shelter from the rain under the canopy of a saloon. 'Come on! Get out of that!' yelled the policeman, advancing. The men quietly obeyed. 'Get off this street! Go home, now! Don't be standing here!' They gave way before him in silence, drifting back again when he turned away.

Other policemen materialised, hustling, cursing, brutal, ineffectual. No one answered back. Nervous, bleary-eyed, unshaven, these officers were worn out with nine weeks of incessant strike duty.

On the mill side of the street the picket-line had grown to about 400. Several policemen shouldered roughly among them, looking for trouble. A workman appeared, with a tin pail, escorted by two detectives. 'Boo! Boo!' shouted a few scattered voices. Two Italian boys leaned against the mill fence and shouted a merry Irish threat, 'Scab! Come outa here I knocka you' head off!' A policeman grabbed the boys roughly by the shoulder. 'Get to hell out of here!' he cried, jerking and pushing them violently to the corner, where he kicked them. Not a voice, not a movement from the crowd.

A little further along the street we saw a young woman with an umbrella, who had been picketing, suddenly confronted by a big policeman.

'What the hell are you doing here?' he roared. 'God damn you, you go home!' and he jammed his club against her mouth. 'I no go home!' she shrilled passionately, with blazing eyes. 'You bigga stiff!'

Silently, steadfastly, solidly the picket-line grew. In groups or in couples the strikers patrolled the sidewalk. There was no more laughing. They looked on with eyes full of hate. These were fiery-blooded Italians, and the police were the same brutal thugs that had beaten them and insulted them for nine weeks. I wondered how long they could stand it.

It began to rain heavily. I asked a man's permission to stand on the porch of his house. There was a policeman standing in front of it. His name, I afterwards discovered, was McCormack. I had to walk around him to mount the steps.

Suddenly he turned round, and shot at the owner: 'Do all them fellows live in that house?' The man indicated the three other strikers and himself, and shook his head at me.

'Then you get to hell off of there!' said the cop, pointing his club at me.

'I have the permission of this gentleman to stand here,' I said, 'He owns this house.'

'Never mind! Do what I tell you! Come off of there, and come off damn quick!'

'I'll do nothing of the sort.'

With that he leaped up the steps, seized my arm, and violently jerked me to the sidewalk. Another cop took my arm and they gave me a shove.

'Now you get to hell off this street!' said Officer McCormack.

'I won't get off this street or any other street. If I'm breaking any law, you arrest me!'

Officer McCormack, who is doubtless a good, stupid Irishman in time of peace, is almost helpless in a situation that requires thinking. He was dreadfully troubled by my request. He didn't want to arrest me, and said so with a great deal of profanity.

'I've got your number,' said I sweetly. 'Now will you tell me your name?'

'Yes,' he bellowed, 'an' I got your number! I'll arrest you.' He took me by the arm and marched me up the street.

He was sorry he had arrested me. There was no charge he could lodge against me. I hadn't been doing anything. He felt he must make me say something that could be construed as a violation of the Law. To which end he God-damned me harshly, loading me with abuse and obscenity, and threatened me with his night-stick, saying, 'You big – – lug, I'd like to beat the hell out of you with this club.'
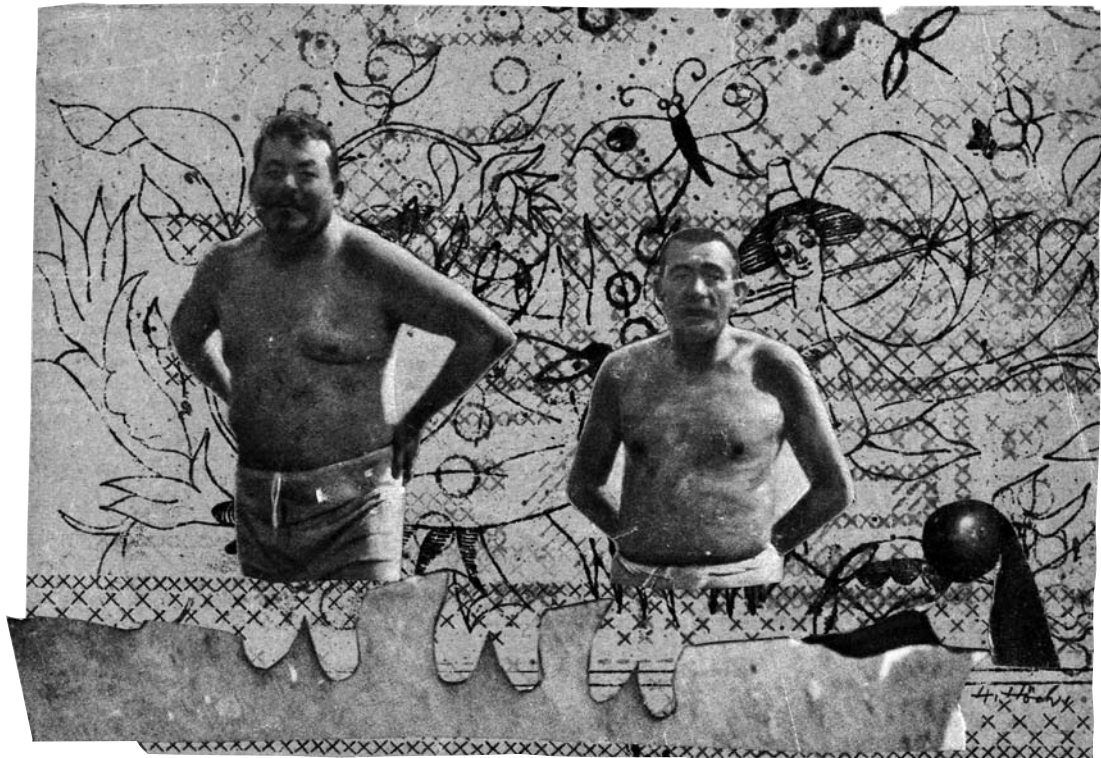
Hannah Höch *Heads of State*, 1918–1919
Photomontage
Courtesy Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V., Stuttgart;
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EN AVANT DADA:
A HISTORY OF DADAISM

RICHARD HUELSENBECK

In January 1917 I returned to Germany, the face of which had meanwhile undergone a fantastic change. I felt as though I had left a smug fat idyll for a street full of electric signs, shouting hawkers and auto horns. In Zurich the international profiteers sat in the restaurants with well-filled wallets and rosy cheeks, ate with their knives and smacked their lips in a merry hurrah for the countries that were bashing each other's skulls in. Berlin was the city of tightened stomachs, of mounting, thundering hunger, where hidden rage was transformed into a boundless money lust, and men's minds were concentrating more and more on questions of naked existence. Here we would have to proceed with entirely different methods, if we wanted to say something to the people. Here we would have to discard our patent leather pumps and tie our Byronic cravats to the doorpost. While in Zurich people lived as in a health resort, chasing after the ladies and longing for nightfall that would bring pleasure barges, magic lanterns and music by Verdi, in Berlin you never knew where the next meal was coming from. Fear was in everybody's bones, everybody had a feeling that the big deal launched by Hindenburg & Co. was going to turn out very badly. The people had an exalted and romantic attitude towards art and all cultural values. A phenomenon familiar in German history was again manifested: Germany always becomes the land of poets and thinkers when it begins to be washed up as the land of judges and butchers.

In 1917 the Germans were beginning to give a great deal of thought to their souls. This was only a natural defence on the part of a society that had been harassed, milked dry, and driven to the breaking point. This was the time when expressionism began to enjoy a vogue, since its whole attitude fell in with the retreat and the weariness of the German spirit. It was only natural that the Germans should have lost their enthusiasm for reality, to which before the war they had sung hymns of praise, through the mouths of innumerable academic thickheads, and which had now cost them over a million dead, while the blockade was strangling their children and grandchildren. Germany was seized with the mood that always precedes a so-called idealistic resurrection, an orgy *a la* Turnvater-Jahn, a Schenkendorf period.

Now came the expressionists, like those famous medical quacks who promise to 'fix everything up', looking heavenward like the gentle Muse; they pointed to 'the rich treasures of our literature', pulled people gently by the sleeve and led them into the half-light of the Gothic cathedrals, where the street noises die down to a distant murmur and, in accordance with the old principle that all cats are grey at night, men without exception are fine fellows. Man, they have discovered, is good. And so expressionism, which brought the Germans so many welcome truths, became a 'national achievement'. In art it aimed at inwardness, abstraction, renunciation of all objectivity. When expressionism is mentioned, the first three names I think of are Daubler, Edschmid, and Hiller. Daubler is the gigantosaurus of expressionist lyric poetry. Edschmid the prose writer and prototype of the expressionist man, while Kurt Hiller, with his intentional or unintentional meliorism, is the theoretician of the expressionist age.

On the basis of all these considerations and the psychological insight that a turning-away from objective reality implied the whole complex of weariness and cowardice that is so welcome to putrescent bourgeoisie, we immediately launched a sharp attack on expressionism in Germany, under the watchword of 'action', acquired through our fight for the principles of bruitism, simultaneity and the new medium. The first German Dadaist manifesto, written by myself, says among other things:

Art in its execution and direction is dependent on the time in which it lives, and artists are creatures of their epoch. The highest art will be that which in its conscious content presents the thousandfold problems of the day, the art which has been visibly shattered by the explosions of the last week, which is forever trying to collect its limbs after yesterday's crash. The best and most extraordinary artists will be those who every hour snatch the tatters of their bodies out of the frenzied cataract of life, who, with bleeding hands and hearts, hold fast to the intelligence of their time. Has expressionism fulfilled our expectations of such an art, which should be the expression of our most vital concerns? No! No! No! Under the pretext of turning inward, the expressionists in literature and painting have banded together into a generation, which is already looking forward to honorable mention in the histories of literature and art and aspiring to the most respectable civic distinctions. On pretext of carrying on propaganda for the soul, they have, in their struggle with Naturalism, found their way back to the abstract, pathetic gestures, which presuppose a comfortable life free from content or strife. The stages are filling up with kings, poets and Faustian characters of all sorts; the theory of a melioristic philosophy, the psychological naivety of which is highly significant for a critical understanding of expressionism, runs ghostlike through the minds of men who never act. Hatred of the press, hatred of advertising, hatred of sensations, are typical of people who prefer their armchair to the noise of the street, and who even make it a point of pride to be swindled by every

small-time profiteer. That sentimental resistance to the times, which are neither better nor worse, neither more reactionary nor more revolutionary than other times, that weak-kneed resistance, flirting with prayers and incense when it does not prefer to load its cardboard cannon with Attic iambics, is the quality of a youth which never knew how to be young. Expressionism, discovered abroad, and in Germany, true to style, transformed into an opulent idyll and the expectation of a good pension, has nothing in common with the efforts of active men. The signers of this manifesto have, under the battle cry Dada!, gathered together to put forward a new art, from which they expect the realisation of new ideals.

And so on. Here the difference between our conception and that of Tzara is clear. While Tzara was still writing: 'Dada ne signifie rien' (Dada means nothing), in Germany Dada lost its art-for-art's-sake character with its very first move. Instead of continuing to produce art, Dada, in direct contrast to abstract art, went out and found an adversary. Emphasis was laid on the movement, on struggle. But we still needed a programme of action, we had to say exactly what our Dadaism was after. This programme was drawn up by Raoul Hausmann and myself. In it we consciously adopted a political position:

> *What is Dadaism and what does it want in Germany?*
> *1. Demands:*
>   *a) The international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual men and women on the basis of radical communism;*
>   *b) The introduction of progressive unemployment through comprehensive mechanisation of every field of activity. Only by unemployment does it become possible for the individual to achieve certainty as to the truth of life and finally become accustomed to experience;*
>   *c) The immediate expropriation of property (socialisation) and the communal feeding of all; further, the erection of cities of light, and gardens which will belong to society as a whole and prepare man for a state of freedom.*
> *2. Central council demands:*
>   *a) Daily meals at public expense for all creative and intellectual men and women on the Potsdamer Platz (Berlin);*
>   *b) Compulsory adherence of all clergymen and teachers to the Dadaist articles of faith;*
>   *c) The most brutal struggle against all directions of so-called 'workers of the spirit' (Hiller, Adler), against their concealed bourgeoisism, against expressionism and post-classical education as advocated by the Sturm group;*
>   *d) The immediate erection of a state art centre, elimination of concepts of property in the new art (expressionism); the concept of property is entirely excluded from the super-individual movement of Dadaism which liberates all mankind;*
>   *e) Introduction of the simultaneist poem as a communist state prayer;*

f) Requisition of churches for the performance of bruitism, simultaneist and Dadaist poems;

g) Establishment of a Dadaist advisory council for the remodelling of life in every city of over 50,000 inhabitants;

h) Immediate organisation of a large scale Dadaist propaganda campaign with 150 circuses for the enlightenment of the proletariat;

i) Submission of all laws and decrees to the Dadaist central council for approval;

j) Immediate regulation of all sexual relations according to the views of international Dadaism through establishment of a Dadaist sexual centre.

The Dadaist revolutionary central council.
German group: Hausmann, Huelsenbeck.
Business Office: Charlottenburg, Kantstrasse 118.
Applications for membership taken at business office.

The significance of this programme is that in it Dada turns decisively away from the speculative, in a sense loses its metaphysics and reveals its understanding of itself as an expression of this age which is primarily characterised by machinery and the growth of civilization. It desires to be no more than an expression of the times, it has taken into itself all their knowledge, their breathless tempo, their scepticism, but also their weariness, their despair of a meaning or a 'truth'. In an article on expressionism Kornfeld makes the distinction between the ethical man and the psychological man. The ethical man has the child-like piety and faith, which permit him to kneel at some altar and recognise some God, who has the power to lead men from their misery to some paradise. The psychological man has journeyed vainly through the infinite, has recognised the limits of his spiritual possibilities, he knows that every 'system' is a seduction with all the consequences of seduction and every God an opportunity for financiers.

The Dadaist, as the psychological man, has brought back his gaze from the distance and considers it important to have shoes that fit and a suit without holes in it. The Dadaist is an atheist by instinct. He is no longer a metaphysician in the sense of finding a rule for the conduct of life in any theoretical principles, for him there is no longer a 'thou shalt'; for him the cigarette-butt and the umbrella are as exalted and as timeless as the 'thing in itself'. Consequently, the good is for the Dadaist no 'better' than the bad – there is only a simultaneity, in values as in everything else. This simultaneity applied to the economy of facts is communism, a communism, to be sure, which has abandoned the principle of 'making things better' and above all sees its goal in the destruction of everything that has gone bourgeois. Thus the Dadaist is opposed to the idea of paradise in every form, and one of the ideas farthest from his mind is that 'the spirit is the sum of all means for the improvement of human existence'. The word 'improvement' is in every form

unintelligible to the Dadaist, since behind it he sees a hammering and sawing on this life which, though useless, aimless and vile, represents as such a thoroughly spiritual phenomenon, requiring no improvement in a metaphysical sense. To mention spirit and improvement in the same breath is for the Dadaist a blasphemy. 'Evil' has a profound meaning, the polarity of events finds in it a limit, and though the real political thinker (such as Lenin seems to be) creates a movement, ie., he dissolves individualities with the help of a theory, he changes nothing. And that, as paradoxical as it may seem, is the import of the communist movement.

The Dadaist exploits the psychological possibilities inherent in his faculty for flinging out his own personality as one flings a lasso or lets a cloak flutter in the wind. He is not the same man today as tomorrow, the day after tomorrow he will perhaps be 'nothing at all'; and then he may become everything. He is entirely devoted to the movement of life, he accepts its angularity – but he never loses his distance to phenomena, because at the same time he preserves his creative indifference, as Friedlaender-Mynona calls it. It seems scarcely credible that anyone could be at the same time active and at rest, that he should be devoted, yet maintain an attitude of rejection; and yet it is in this very anomaly that life itself consists, naive, obvious life, with its indifference toward happiness and death, joy and misery. The Dadaist is naive. The thing he is after is obvious, undifferentiated, unintellectual life. For him a table is not a mouse-trap and an umbrella is definitely not to pick your teeth with. In such a life art is no more and no less than a psychological problem. In relation to the masses, it is a phenomenon of public morality.

The Dadaist considers it necessary to come out against art, because he has seen through its fraud as a moral safety valve. Perhaps this militant attitude is a last gesture of inculcated honesty, perhaps it merely amuses the Dadaist, perhaps it means nothing at all. But in any case, art (including culture, spirit, athletic club), regarded from a serious point of view, is a large-scale swindle. And this, as I have hinted above, most especially in Germany, where the most absurd idolatry of all sorts of divinities is beaten into the child in order that the grown man and taxpayer should automatically fall on his knees when, in the interest of the state or some smaller gang of thieves, he receives the order to worship some 'great spirit'. I maintain again and again: the whole spirit business is a vulgar utilitarian swindle. In this war the Germans (especially in Saxony where the most infamous hypocrites reside) strove to justify themselves at home and abroad with Goethe and Schiller. Culture can be designated solemnly and with complete naivety as the national spirit become form, but also it can be characterised as a compensatory phenomenon, an obeisance to an invisible judge, as veronal [a sedative] for the conscience. The Germans are masters of dissembling, they are unquestionably the magicians (in the vaudeville sense) among nations, in every moment of their life they conjure up

a culture, a spirit, a superiority, which they can hold as a shield in front of their endangered bellies. It is this hypocrisy that has always seemed utterly foreign and incomprehensible to the French, a sign of diabolical malice. The German is un-naive, he is twofold and has a double base.

Here we have no intention of standing up for any nation. The French have the least right of anyone to be praised as a *grande* nation, now that they have brought the chauvinism of our times to its greatest possible height. The German has all the qualities and drawbacks of the idealist. You can look at it whichever way you like. You can construe the idealism that distorts things and makes them function as an absolute (the discipline of corpses) whether it be vegetarianism, the rights of man or the monarchy, as a pathological deformation, or you can call it ecstatically 'the bridge to eternity'; 'the goal of life'; or more such platitudes. The expressionists have done quite a bit in that direction. The Dadaist is instinctively opposed to all this. He is a man of reality who loves wine, women and advertising, his culture is above all of the body. Instinctively he sees his mission in smashing the cultural ideology of the Germans. I have no desire to justify the Dadaist. He acts instinctively, just as a man might say he was a thief out of 'passion', or a stamp-collector by preference. The 'ideal' has shifted: the abstract artist has become (if you insist, dear reader) a wicked materialist, with the abstruse characteristic of considering the care of his stomach and stock jobbing more honourable than philosophy. 'But that's nothing new', those people will shout who can never tear themselves away from the 'old'. But it is something startlingly new, since for the first time in history the consequence has been drawn from the question: What is German culture? (Answer: Shit), and this culture is attacked with all the instruments of satire, bluff, irony and finally, violence. And in a great common action.

Dada is German Bolshevism. The bourgeois must be deprived of the opportunity to 'buy up art for his justification'. Art should altogether get a sound thrashing, and Dada stands for the thrashing with all the vehemence of its limited nature. The technical aspect of the Dadaist campaign against German culture was considered at great length. Our best instrument consisted of big demonstrations at which, in return for a suitable admission fee, everything connected with spirit, culture and inwardness was symbolically massacred. It is ridiculous and a sign of idiocy exceeding the legal limit to say that Dada (whose actual achievements and immense success cannot be denied) is 'only of negative value'. Today you can hardly fool schoolchildren with the old saw about positive and negative.

Alexander Rodchenko *Worker's Club*, for the Exposition
Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels
Modernes, Paris **1925**; © DACS, London

First International Dada Exhibition in the Otto Burchard
Gallery, Berlin **1920**
Space **1** (with Margarete Herzfelde seated at the table)
Courtesy Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne
Kunst Fotografie und Architektur

PROGRAMME DECLARATION

KOMFUT

A communist regime demands a communist consciousness. All forms of life, morality, philosophy and art must be re-created according to communist principles. Without this, the subsequent development of the communist revolution is impossible.

In their activities the cultural-educational organs of the Soviet government show a complete misunderstanding of the revolutionary task entrusted to them. The social-democratic ideology so hastily knocked together is incapable of resisting the century-old experience of the bourgeois ideologists, who, in their own interests, are exploiting the proletarian cultural-educational organs.

Under the guise of immutable truths, the masses are being presented with the pseudo teachings of the gentry.

Under the guise of universal truth – the morality of the exploiters.

Under the guise of the eternal laws of beauty – the depraved taste of the oppressors.

It is essential to start creating our own communist ideology.

It is essential to wage merciless war against all the false ideologies of the bourgeois past.

It is essential to subordinate the Soviet cultural-educational organs to the guidance of a new cultural communist ideology – an ideology that is only now being formulated.

It is essential – in all cultural fields, as well as in art – to reject emphatically all the democratic illusions that pervade the vestiges and prejudices of the bourgeoisie.

It is essential to summon the masses to creative activity.

A GENERAL THEORY
OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

VARVARA STEPANOVA

I — Constructivism as ideology not as an artistic trend
First of all, we should establish that Constructivism is a new ideology
in that area of human activity which until now has been called art. It is not
an artistic trend that we might present as a new treatment of artistic forms,
one based on a fascination and enthusiasm for industrial machine-made
forms. Such an evaluation of Constructivism would not raise it above the
level of an artistic trend.

But Constructivism is not an attempt to rework aesthetic taste into
industrial taste. It is a movement against aesthetics as manifested in the
various fields of human activity. For the most part Constructivism is an
inventive, creative activity, embracing all those fields which relate to the
question of external form, and which implement the results of human
ideas and their practical application through construction.

II — Constructivism as the transformation of 'artistic activity' into
     intellectual production
Constructivism is the product of the revolutionary search for a new
consciousness in art. After subjecting the creative process in the art of
the recent past to critical analysis, we now discover that it contains new
elements which have altered the entire character of artistic activity:
1. Construction of a painting based on technical necessity, rejecting
the inner spiritual necessity.
2. Rejection of representation and contemplation in favour of activity
and production. The work of art (as idea + its materialisation) is the result
of man's perceptions and opinions about the external forms of the world,
and the task of art is to formulate an ideal of beauty for a given epoch.
The perception of forms in the external world used to be refracted through
man's centre or 'spiritual world', and thus bore traces of his religious and
philosophical culture. Hence the work of art attempted to solve the problems
of the ideal and harmonious beauty posited by philosophical idealism,
with its doubts as to the reality of the existing world and its opposing
illusion of individual consciousness – 'consciousness *per se*' – as something
'objectively real'.

Given its materialistic means of expression, the visual arts were the
clearest and most complete expression of their time, and at the height

of the idealistic world-view recorded and materialised idealistic dreams with extraordinary precision. The ideal of external beauty is consistently harmonious and symmetrical, it has become axiomatic thanks to two thousand years of culture and has almost been transformed into something innate and instinctive.

Experimental cognition, as 'active thought', as the action of the contemporary epoch (rather than contemplation), produces an analytical method in art that destroys the sacred value of the work as a unique object by laying bare its material foundations. This rejection of representation has undermined the content of works of art created in the period of philosophical idealism. New working principles have become a part of the painting – the development of craftsmanship and the solution of specific professional problems. The formal approach is opposed to spirituality and ideas, and the work is transformed into an experiment, a form of laboratory work. The work of art which functions as a source of entertainment and pleasure does not exist.

This revolutionary destructive activity, which strips art down to its basic elements, has shocked the consciousness of those who work in art: it has confronted them with the problem of construction as an expedient necessity. Based on the further principle of the expedient implementation of work, a new Constructivist ideology has been formulated.

The contemplative and representational activity of art is shifting to an active conscious action, and the concept of the spiritual nature of the artist's creative process is being destroyed.

Industry and technology are developing continuously. They astonish us at every turn with their unexpected external forms which find no corresponding echo in nature and run counter to it, making it impossible to establish an ideal of beauty for the modern epoch in external form. The realisation of ideal beauty is thereby eliminated as a function of artistic activity, forcing the artist to move into industrial production in order to apply his objective knowledge of forms and constructions. For his activity that takes place outside real life (the reflection and elaboration of concrete forms) loses its meaning in the face of constant technological progress, which expects no formal canons from art.

For the first time in the entire history of art the problem of artistic form has been solved independently of our ideal conception of external beauty.

The atavism 'beauty outside time and space' which we inherited from the idealistic world-view, with its unchanging aesthetic experience, has been destroyed by the analytic method. The result produces an action out of diverse elements and material tasks, rather than the revelation of ideas according to a synthetic principle. Let us now systematise the factors that determine the Constructivist's new consciousness:

1. The development of industry and technology. The concept of a harmonious beauty determined by nature is now redundant. Newly

invented objects and apparatuses which, in their first principles, have no connection to natural forms, and which are aimed at overcoming nature, make it possible to construct a work of art whose artistic form is based on the concept of 'artificiality'. The appearance in technology of contrasting and dissonant forms of construction rarely found in nature – for example, instances of achieving balance not just through the trivial principle of the pyramid, but, on the contrary, as in a crane where a triangle stands at an acute angle to the broader section above it. This has undermined conventional concepts about composition in art.

2. Materialism and experimental cognition. Provides displacements in the very essence of the artist's activity, changing his view of creativity as contemplation and representation, and confronting him with the problem of dynamic conscious action. Creates further progress in the production process as the concretisation of this action.

3. A series of discoveries in science and technology during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century has been recorded in art as the solution of formal problems dealing with technological necessity. The concepts of 'craftsmanship' and 'artificiality' arise as a second derivative of the work 'art'.

4. The social prerequisites that emphasise the abnormality of art's position as a specific function, the result of its isolation from the general tendency and development of social life, and its aestheticisation (which, at best, is decorative).

All these factors have brought Constructivism to the point where the essence of artistic activity has changed fundamentally from spiritual representation to a conscious dynamic activity.

Being aware of this new activity is particularly important. Subconscious inspiration (a fortuitous phenomenon) is transformed into organised activity.

The intellect is our point of departure, taking the place of the 'soul' of idealism.

From this it follows that, on the whole, Constructivism is also intellectual production (and not thought alone), incompatible with the spirituality of artistic activity.

III — The rejection of art and the rupture between artistic culture
      and Constructivism

Constructivism has analysed the 'essence of artistic activity' and revealed the new factors mentioned above. Further analysis of the real concretisation of these elements in art has made it clear that, though it has shrugged off the ways of religion and philosophy, art has been unable to give up aesthetics, which led it to maintain the painting's self-sufficient value. In other words, the analytical method was applied to art not as a significant modern

principle in our thinking, but rather within the confines of the self-sufficient laws of art, ie. as in the past the laws governing art persisted, separated from the rest of life.

As a self-sufficient value, a painting becomes the content of art, accountable to nothing. Religion and philosophy are replaced by pure aesthetics. How difficult it is for us to renounce the atavisms which we have accumulated thanks to our upbringing, and which we have inherited.

Religious sanctity is destroyed. A new aesthetic sanctity has appeared which can be defended only by reference to our forebears and by a few phrases about the value of art that resist analysis.

Even formal problems – the craft of painting – which were investigated at great length, did not enable us to understand the significance of all that had taken place in art or its goals.

Without Constructivism, therefore, the path of art, even in its formal achievements, contained hidden aesthetic traits of 'art for art's sake' in the guise of craftsmanship for its own sake. The goal was not attained and the abandoned ideological content (which I regard as the real vitality of the art of the past) was covered over with an excessive degree of aesthetics.

This indicates the complexity of art's activity in modern culture.

Aesthetics, then, as a subordinate element, even in the analytical working method, leaves the fundamental characteristic of art unchanged, ie. the realisation of humanity's ideal by means of the illusory canvas of the painting.

Hence Constructivism moves towards the rejection of all art, questioning the specific need for art to create an international aesthetic.

But in the course of solving formal problems in art the term 'technological necessity' is used figuratively, in reference to aesthetics. But Constructivism stresses a lack of continuity in artistic culture, excluding aesthetics as an unnecessary and forced form of stupefaction.

Similarly, the lack of continuity in artistic culture for Constructivist structures is rejected in view of its atavistic nature, which finds an aesthetic solution to formal problems.

IV — A social theory of Constructivism
Once purged of aesthetic, philosophical and religious excrescences, art leaves us its material foundations, which henceforth will be organised by intellectual production. The organising principle is expedient Constructivism, in which technology and experimental thinking take the place of aesthetics.

In its specialised meaning, Constructivism consists of three effective acts: tectonics, construction, and facture.

Tectonics is adopted by the Constructivists to replace the idea of 'style'. The monumentality of a work of art created the concept

of eternal beauty that existed outside time. The basic peculiarity of the modern epoch is temporality – transience.

In contrasting tectonics with 'the monumental style of the past', Constructivism provides a definite ideological approach to working.

Every task can be carried out both monumentally and tectonically. Tectonics is a way of approaching the task as essentially a task, independent of the style of the epoch. Ideologically, tectonics cannot exist outside the experiment, that is, without construction and facture.

Tectonics is further distinguished from the monumental by its dynamic quality, which can change as quickly as its environment, conditions or experiences.

As a principle, tectonics is the result of experience. In the present situation it is dictated by production, because material is being improved, experience and knowledge are increasing and providing new conditions and possibilities for formulating the task.

If we take into account all the qualities of the material, and approach the making of a thing organically, we will approach it tectonically. Hence the approach to a definition of tectonics as something organic and continuing.

Till now this continuing organicness did not exist, and though style was initially smelted tectonically to fit the demands of the epoch, it became an external form subject to the conventions of a given era and was subsequently understood in terms of aesthetic prettiness.

Hence stylistic form became the principle of the epoch, and the question was approached in reverse, ie. from the principle to the experiment and the result.

Style understood as the organised form of an epoch – a form made canonical not by a principle but by its external manifestation – loses its meaning in the era of industrial culture. The ease with which external form is changed and produced decreases its value. Only the principle and the process are important, and the object is specifically intended to implement this.

The concept of a monumental style resulted from long hours of manual labour expended on each new form and object. Today, when the slogan of the epoch is 'the temporary and the transient', there can no longer be a monumental style, ie. the establishment of certain conventions of external form in a single complex, in the present day, when function, action, dynamics and tectonics are replacing the static object or element.

The conflict between the temporary and the monumental can be solved only by tectonics, ie. the principle of ceaseless shift.

But the short-term significance of each new form contains a stimulus to further expansion and evolution. Only a complete lack of understanding of the moment leads one to seek support in monumentality, where one is allowed to move right and left, but only on the same plane. If you move your foot forward, you declare yourself to be outside the process of continuity.

ART AND PROPAGANDA

WILLIAM PICKENS

What we are going to say now will make us a Philistine to some of the 'artists', and to all of the near-artists. But a little *thinking* will do even an artist some good.

The artists, and especially the near-artists, are now-a-days far overdoing the idea that Art and Propaganda cannot be done in the same book, or same work of any kind. 'There must be no propaganda in a work of art.' They forget that that statement is simply one of the dogmas of art, a convenient reduction of a certain principle – but that, like all other dogmas, even the dogmas of religion, it is not and cannot be one hundred percent true.

Have not the artists and the 'artists' ever reflected that, just like the religionists, they never offer any inductive proof of this dogma, but they simply *declare* it? And for the simple reason that *data* would overthrow the dogma.

It would be much nearer the truth to say this: *Art and Propaganda always do exist side by side*; for in fact propaganda is the subsoil out of which all art has grown – religious, ethical, racial or class propaganda. But (and here's what the near-artists stumble over) *it is the function of art to so conceal the propaganda as to make it more palatable to the average recipient, while yet not destroying its effect*.

Different arts vary in this purpose element: not every poem, not every lyric, has any general purpose, but practically every story has. And even the little poem, while minus a general purpose in propaganda, may have a direct personal reference or aim toward some individual.

Uncle Tom's Cabin [1852] can lay some claims to art – and yet it was the last word in propaganda. Dickens was certainly a literary artist, and about all he wrote was propaganda. And were not all Italian art, and most of the music of the world, done in the cause of religion? The *art* element will outlast the propaganda element, of course; for if a thing is a good work of art, it will still be a good work of art after the propaganda cause has passed. Who can say today that Phidias had no powerful purpose in his work? Plato certainly had.

The real artist says truly that art must not be confounded with propaganda, and the near-artist gets 'literal' and repeats that the propaganda must not exist at all. There is plenty of propaganda without art, but at least mighty little worthy art without propaganda – for propaganda is the *raison d'être* of the greatest arts. As a physic is concealed under the sugar-coating,

so is propaganda best concealed under art. It then meets less resistance. People are better persuaded when they don't realise that they are being persuaded. They resent the unconcealed and bald implication that they *need to be persuaded*.

And now we come to one literary art, which is practically one hundred percent propaganda – The Art of *Oratory*. You may get away with it, when you say that a picture is painted or a verse written, for the sake of the picture or the verse, but you will hardly have the nerve to claim that a great speech was ever made *for the sake of the speech*. A man may sing a song or play the violin to hear himself, but he will never make a great oration to hear himself talk. Just imagine a fellow speaking over two thousand years ago on the Macedonian question, or speaking today on the Tariff, just to see how many fine phrases he could spin! The poorest specimens of speeches are certainly those made for their own sake and sound. Demosthenes, Cicero, Frederick Douglass, Robert G. Ingersoll – these are first magnitudes in all the firmament of speech – and yet they never opened their mouths except in propaganda. *Oratory* – one of the greatest arts of all time, among all men, is all propaganda. But the real orator is so much of an artist that, under the spell of his art, the listener forgets the propaganda, while he 'gets' it.

Therefore, Mr. Near-Artist, the truth is perhaps something like this: The origin of art is propaganda, but many of the fine arts have risen far above mere propaganda. Hardly any art, however, is as purposeless as a bird's song. The bird (but not men) may sing indeed just to get the song out of its throat, and it may sing although only the solitude listens. It sings best, however, to its mate. But men are not birds, they are purposeful beings, and their greatest efforts are inspired by purpose. And there is no difference between purpose and propaganda, unless we beg the question by narrowing the idea of propaganda to some *necessarily sordid* meaning.

We can have no quarrel with a purpose, if it is tastily done up in the proper dress of art.

THE END OF ART

THEO VAN DOESBURG

The other collaborators of this magazine undertake no responsibility for this article.

Against Vienna
Against Paris
Against the Netherlands

Art cannot be renovated.

'Art' is a Renaissance invention, which has been carried to a state of extreme refinement in the present day.

This is the so-called *abstract* art!

The production of good works of art was achieved only at the cost of an enormous concentration upon certain matters. This concentration could be achieved only through neglecting *life*, through the very loss of life – just as religion had experienced before.

Today, this situation is no longer tolerable.

Today life is paramount. Modern life in general flatly rejects all tendencies towards isolation and ivory-tower-like exclusiveness.

It is absolutely unmodern to concentrate upon just one thing (as did the Middle Ages)!

Modern life is based upon construction, which is to say, upon a system of tensions or a structural balance.

In agreement with this concept we too must distribute our vitality over the whole range of life taken in the broadest possible sense. All other attitudes towards life produce tragedy.

This can be called progress and it excludes concentration on one interest. This is the primary reason why art is impracticable.

Secondly, the development of a true life is hampered by art, just as in the Middle Ages scientific development was limited by religion and its official representatives.

The position which religion then took is now taken by art.

Art has poisoned our life.

Aesthetics has infected everyone (we are ourselves not excluded). No single object remains uninfected (in the Netherlands every cobble-stone is painted with an ornament or a rectangle). No pile can be driven into the ground without the priests of art raising objections and complaining about the resulting damage to the harmony of town-planning or landscaping.

If one chooses to put a typewriter or a sewing-machine in the living room, the housewife says: 'Please take it away; it destroys the harmony of the room.'

Post-cards, stamps, pouches, railway-tickets, pots, umbrellas, towels, pyjamas, chairs, blankets, handkerchiefs and ties – everything is 'arty'. How much more refreshing are those articles which are not called art: bathrooms, bath-tubs, bicycles, automobiles, engine-rooms and flat-irons.

There are still people who can make beautiful things without art.

They are the progressives.

However, such people are frustrated; their activities are prescribed by ministers of art and their invention is hampered by art.

For the sake of progress we must suppress the notion of 'art' as an aesthetic speculation.

Paris 1925

ART AND REALITY

MIECZYSŁAW SZCZUKA

A remarkable feature of the evolution that has occurred in the domain of art during the rule of modern capitalism is the far reaching division between a worker in art – the artist – and everyday life. This division has been particularly conspicuous in the plastic arts. Before we pass to the explanation of the causes of such division, we should mention the form and conditions of the labour of artists in earlier days.

An artist of the past centuries, adapted to a social system based upon small-scale production, remained in a certain degree of harmony with it. As we know, the limits of the arts were broader than today. In a sense, almost every craftsman producing useful things was an artist: a cabinetmaker, locksmith, carpenter, goldsmith, etc. Having time, without too much haste, with relatively primitive tools, he decorated the objects he made in accord with certain canons that came to be established without being too broadly expanded or violently transformed – they could often survive many generations. However, within such a canon, he had a certain initiative, permitted him by his tools, materials, and sensibility.

Those conditions changed radically when small-scale craftsmanship was substituted by capitalism, with its stormy rate of growth, violent technological upheavals, uncontrolled market – and above all with its machine mass production in all areas.[1]

The so-called plastic arts are directly dependent on architecture, which is the most conspicuous for its conjunction of a utilitarian content with an aesthetic surplus. The art of building is most strictly adjusted to the life conditions of those to whom it provides a shelter or a workshop. It is an index of their material state; their 'level of life'; the scope of their requirements and needs in everyday life; their culture and their class background. A harmonious adaptation of useful objects in a home interior (furniture, utensils, etc.) to the form of the building itself influences their

[1] Even a craftsman today, though he seems to be 'independent', is a slave of his improved tools. Things have gone so far that it is more expensive to make a piece of furniture with rational simple shapes than to make a similar piece with modernistic curvatures. Factories, producing tools adjusted to the making of things in certain 'taste', sometimes make the most rational and humble forms unattainable.

outlook (in the aesthetic sense). In this way, the 'style' is moulded (ie. a system of aesthetic connections between forms). The economically (and thereby also culturally) privileged circles evolve their own building – the architecture (residential, representative, religious, official, etc.) in which they can, owing to the means at their disposal, develop the aesthetic side to the greatest degree, beside convenience and practicality. The emerging style of the privileged classes is imposed on the whole society – no matter if the classes had any germs of their own styles (eg. our so-called folk art). The pace of development of modern capitalism has not permitted the adjustment, in the artistic sense, of the forms of the produced objects of everyday use (an apartment, a house, furniture, textiles, dishes, spoons, etc.) to the new materials, new technical means and new conditions of life. Since every maker, beginning from a primitive man, tries to give a beautiful form to the objects produced by him – and since the buyer chooses such an object that is apt to give him, beside its practical aspect, an aesthetic delight – therefore a factory owner, too, has understood the importance of the aesthetic 'appeal' on the market. To gain the 'appeal', he employed the easiest and, what was most important, the cheapest method. He reached for models that could be immediately applied. They were supplied by the past and by the contemporary 'exotic' arts, and sometimes also by local folklore. These sources are used in quantity; 'aesthetic' gimmicks are stuck on the essential content which are often quite incompatible. We have pseudo-Antique, pseudo-Gothic, pseudo-Chinese or pseudo-folk art. In this way, the taste of the public is moulded and the tools of production are adjusted. A home interior, beginning from the apartments of the barons of industry, bankers, etc. and ending at the flats of petty burghers, is a booth in which a lot of unnecessary gimmicks are collected chaotically and without any plan, depending only on the degree of wealth of the owner. The product for the working masses is even poorer and more tawdry – because less expensive – and of course, there is less of it. 'Art for the mob' is represented by reproductions with pastoral, bellicose, patriotic or religious themes, destined for the workers' homes or for the places visited by them.

Doubtless, the development of the plastic arts during the nineteenth century bore the print of the character of the class that came to power everywhere in that epoch. The European bourgeoisie has emerged from the so-called 'third class' or from the 'volk' as the new politically and economically privileged element. On one side, it had the 'volk', the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat pressing upon its privileges; on the other side it had the already-formed alliances of privilege, the feudal class whom it attempted to join – and succeeded after a short period of agitation and struggle. And it should be remarked that in fact the great bourgeoisie has never fought the feudal class in a really relentless manner.

Such a social situation, this cowardly creeping up the ranks of the privileged, has been causing a deeply *parvenu* attitude of the grand

bourgeoisie towards art and towards life.[2] Typically *parvenu* is their fondness for the past, for the sundry 'styles' and outdated fashions; their search for beauty in what is old, what has lost its utility, their being ashamed of those real and useful possessions which they have brought in themselves. Hence those aesthetic theories establishing the frontiers between beauty and utility; only that is beautiful which has never been of any use, or that is of no use now (the cult of the ruin, etc.). Never, indeed, has the disruption between the 'beautiful' and the useful come to such monstrous extents. On one hand, imitations of the outmoded styles; on the other hand, repugnant brick barracks, built without any account for living conditions (lodging houses, factory buildings). People are wholly irrelevant – what is relevant is only the maximum gain for the owner; building up a factory, raising sheds for machines, for raw materials and for ready products – caring very little for the people who are going to work there. While building lodging houses, even the elementary principles of providing at least bearable conditions for human life are neglected. The predominant type of city building is a tenement house in which every cubic metre must give profit. State buildings, offices, houses of the rich, are built with apparent luxury, for this pays and attracts the buyer or offers the required air of solemnity. The luxury is expressed mainly in the outer trimming: cornices, columns, friezes, etc. are gaudily stuck around the front part of buildings, for they are 'stylish' and cost very little. The interiors are better and more convenient. Sometimes there is some greenery and a certain care for the lighting.[3] All these semblances are rejected outright in the buildings for the poorer quarters, in the servants' rooms, in basements and in garrets, where the conditions are simply terrible.[4]

The influence of these conditions – the remarkable features of capitalism, the psychology of the ruling class – has been augmented by the failure of the artists to adjust to the increased demands. An artist submerged in the old methods of 'creation', particularly an artist with his own initiative, is too slow to keep up with the pace of development. Frequently, too, he is too expensive. As we have already remarked, if, eg., architecture is concerned, the 'aesthetic' side remains the domain of pure speculation. What remains

[2] Sorel pointed out the antechambre-servitory traits in French eighteenth-century literature. But even after the Revolution, those symptoms came back with remarkable strength. Balzac, the Homer of the bourgeoisie, gave vent in his novels to an apparently strange, lackey-like cult of aristocracy, debasing the quality of many of his works. Curious symptoms can also be remarked in Comte's philosophy in this respect.

[3] Capitalism, in its own well-understood interest manifests expressions of social altruism and care for the cultural requirements in the life of the broadest masses. Eg. the new American bill on urban development, which is seen as the first step towards 'urbanisation of cities', is explained by the desire to increase profits. The rooms on the lowest floors of skyscrapers did not yield such incomes as would satisfy the appetite of capitalists because of the complete darkness in them (caused by the narrowness of the streets, out of proportion to the multistoried buildings). Thus, it is simple interest rather than humanitarian considerations that dictates to capitalism those moves which are illusions of healthy, modern social tendencies in architecture.

[4] The workers' garden cities and rationally-planned suburbs (in Britain, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium) arise under the pressure of the demands of the proletariat and they should be treated as its concrete achievements.

for an artist as a consolation, is 'pure art'. All this cannot be packed up within the 'division of labour' framework. An artist is more and more withdrawn from life, pursuing 'pure art', or 'art for its own sake'.

There have been other causes of such 'purification' of art from the earthly elements. In past centuries, an artist almost always knew his patron: it could be a city, some association, the church or an individual. An artist now works for an unknown public: he sends his works to the market, to an exhibition, to a *Kunsthändler*. But this unknown buyer is not completely anonymous: he must be a man who is sufficiently well-off to be able to afford a work of art. This is the only guidepost: otherwise there is the unbridled stormy element of the market boom or depression in which an artist is submerged like any other petty producer of fancy objects.

This market has been fairly inviting: the rapidly increasing production of surplus value at the expense of the working masses turned out whole new strata of buyers and connoisseurs; it provided the ground for a development of those hitherto unknown conditions. If in the past an artist knew his patron, the reverse was also true. This contact has been broken. While an artist is facing the puzzling and chaotic forces of the market, feeling more or less high or low depending on how he has been received, the 'consumer' is also facing the riddle of a completely unfamiliar expression of 'creation'.

An artist, whatever the tools of his work – a poet, painter or sculptor – assumes the air of a priest who has possessed the secret powers[5] in a much higher degree than formerly. His position towards the aesthete mass of buyers is in a way similar to that occupied by a medieval alchemist: a little of a scientist, a little of a charlatan, separating himself with a broad, concealed gesture from those affairs in which he cannot feel like a 'master' and priest – from affairs that he cannot understand, and the market among them. With the same gesture, he isolates himself from the 'mob'.

Here are the sources of individualism in art (individualism should be written with a capital 'I', of course). Various elements come into relief here. Besides the reasons already listed, what comes into account is the establishment of frontier lines, separation from one's competitors, a struggle for one's piece of the market, for one's own congregation, a lay audience, all of them listening and looking with utmost devotion.

Let us also remind ourselves of the phenomenon of so-called Bohemianism, an apparently inseparable quality of all the 'progressive' trends in art during the nineteenth century. It was the 'school of life', a necessary preparation to becoming a 'true' artist. Bohemianism doubtless had a desocialising effect in the training of pure artists. Life in the great cities has doubtless provided the conditions for such a conception of art; it has contributed to the development of certain tendencies. The yearning for

5 The same airs were taken by the medieval 'master' craftsman.

nature, characteristic of a city dweller and a typical product of city life (the poor health conditions, the lack of fresh air, sunlight, etc.) has found its expression in landscape painting, in the silence of 'still lives', in genre painting.

A highbrow suffocating in his city looks for the powers of 'renewal' in the source of the primitive robustness of the 'volk' and the primitive tribes; hence the fondness for folklore, exoticism and primitivism.

The rapid heartbeat of contemporary life, the violence and sharpness of the changes in the relationship of social forces on one hand – and on the other, the facility of broad and relatively easy dissemination of the achievements of artistic technology (with the vulgarisation that cannot be avoided in the process) – all this has its effects on the rapidity and violence of the revolutions in art. During a relatively short period, a number of revolts have occurred in painting: Classicism, Romanticism, Naturalism, Impressionism. And, during the twentieth century, the pace of change is a real merry-go-round.

This is strictly related to progress in technology. The demand for portrait, landscape, still-life, historical or war painting, illustration, etc. is met by photography and cinema which are beyond competition in their precision, quickness and cheapness compared with the labour of the artist that previously satisfied this need. An artist loses the ground under his feet, whole domains of work are lost to him. What remains are formal problems, into which he goes deeper and deeper.

Impressionism, the first of the movements born in the 'pure' bourgeois atmosphere, introduced the problem of an analysis of light into art. There followed a period of rapture for the machine. Instead of the expression of personal moods of doubtful merit, instead of the impoverished contents of the 'souls' of artists, immature, frustrated and often lacking even a modest general knowledge, there came a reaction: an awe for the marvels of technology.[6]

The work on formal problems proceeds: art gets liberated from the rule of Naturalism, literary anecdote, etc. There follows a period of collective search for new forms and laboratory methods of work – the endeavour to build a work of art for itself, expressing nothing, existing as absolutely self-sufficient.[7]

Easel painting has objectively become a luxury, and a debased one at that, poured out to the exhibition market and eventually yielding rather mean

[6] The ideological changes in the plastic arts and the proof of the influence of bourgeois ideology on modern art will be discussed in papers devoted to cinema and advertising, as they represent this ideology in the best manner.

[7] Among the abundant formal assumptions, the problem of materials was decisive. An artist, considering the constructional properties of a material, the variety of surface qualities of the same material depending on the finish, the peculiar qualities of a material when exposed to light, etc., became aware that the character of the things he made should be dependent on the applied material. The problem of materials (not treated as a fetish in the manner of the Cubists or Suprematists) brought forth the problem of the utilitarian value of the work of art, which has become the pivotal question for certain modern artists.

effects. For an exhibition, accessible at some fixed terms only, is overtaken by a magazine reproduction.

As we have remarked above, an artist had to and did link up his survival with the propertied classes and he was treated by them in various ways, but usually as a cultural surplus, carrying out a function that was not exactly necessary – sometimes respected, but sometimes just ridiculous. Doomed to perpetuate his art for its own sake, pure art, still the artist has been alive and active in society (meaning, the well-off classes). Thus, an artist had to express in his works what his patrons cared for. Of course, this did not preclude some individuals having a different attitude to these matters. But here we are considering artists as a social group.

It was, of course, by no means accidental that the break in the attitudes of artists towards social issues occurred in parallel with the ideological and technical crisis in art. The same tendencies have found expression here as in the other domains of contemporary life. The progress of mechanisation and technology makes absurd and upsets former modes of social action and organisation. Technological developments surpass the power of the organisational frames of contemporary society; hence the ubiquitous contradictions both in ideology and in everyday practice. A modern artist, apparently withdrawn (considering his social situation, already discussed), without any clear awareness of those contradictions, usually took the path of formal researches and of contributing new values to what former generations had left. Having enough time (as there are no immediate applications), he makes formal developments and he seeks in them the meaning of his efforts. Indeed the way is paved for him. It is the easiest one – to satisfy the tastes of people who have no time to contemplate artistic problems, but control the material means warranting the artist's survival. This is not, quite obviously, the way for the more ambitious and more richly-bestowed natures, perhaps more honest. Those people revolt and break the fixed frames; they carry to the ultimate end the assumptions of their formal experiment, thereby reducing to an absurdity the fiction of 'art for art's sake' or 'pure' art. Disinterested work on formal problems (Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism, etc.); enquiries into new materials, thus gaining an awareness of new methods of production; making the character of the output dependent on the material employed (yes indeed; for even that used to be secret once) – all of this worked to uncover the whole monstrous forgery of 'pure' art.

An awareness of the fact that nineteenth century art had no vital applications can be discerned in the slogans, however vague, put forth by artists during the last decade or two, as 'art on the streets', 'art for all'. Those slogans, the staple of the so-called new art, were easier to avow than to make real. The consumers, demoralised by the prevailing practices, saw in it nothing more indeed than an innocent pursuit for a 'new thrill'; or at best a reflection of some ferments agitating the sphere of the intelligentsia. Even

worse, those slogans lost all worth by the fact that most artists apprehended them in this way. This is witnessed by the brawls flaunted by futurists in snobbish consumer circles. The essence of the conflict has been dimmed, and it has had to remain incomprehensible for a long time.

The lack of a social bond was also responsible. Artists, writers, intellectuals in general, have got accustomed to send out to the market 'pure art', 'pure poetry', 'pure thought' and in general only the 'pure' cultural commodities. But such cultural commodities serve only a limited number of buyers. Things could run more or less smoothly until the prevailing conditions changed. The war and the consequent economic crisis ravaged the petty and middle urban bourgeoisie that had been the main buyers of current artistic production (the grand bourgeoisie, the magnates of industry and the landlords, most often made their collections of works of old and dead artists of established repute). The market has become considerably narrower.

A new audience has come to the fore and in time it will make its presence more and more marked: the proletariat. But this audience requires a definite product – it has no use for the 'pure' items; it demands useful things. Confused by the prevailing chaos, they fail to define their demands with sufficient clarity, but they are told by their instinct what they need. The development of the consciousness of the modern proletariat is a unique process in history; its course is enormously difficult and complicated by the most varied influences. In the political field, the strivings of the proletariat have, in a natural way, been revealed in a definite manner because of the acute necessity to oppose the ruling classes. In the domain of art, as well as in many cultural matters, there has been no such necessity. Hence the chaos and lack of any programme here.

This is not only because the direct political struggle, by which almost all the forces of the working class are absorbed, still is, and will long be, predominant. It must be taken into consideration that the foremost working class elements have grown up and been educated within the bourgeois culture and they often believe the products of this culture to be the uppermost phenomena that cannot be overtaken. Criticism which is sharp and penetrating when it is aimed against bourgeois politics and economics wanes out and no longer apprehends the phenomena appropriately when it enters the field of bourgeois culture. In a word, the revolutionary mind in politics is often coupled with an absolute bourgeois-mindedness in cultural matters. Hence the tendency that may be defined as expansion in cultural labelling. A typical bourgeois product gets a proletarian label attached to it in the form of a few slogans or some vague evocation.

In these matters, it is the instinct of the masses that should be relied upon, rather than the usual sophisticated theories that smell of the incurable bourgeois mentality of their makers. The proletariat needs art not as stucco gimcracks for a Sunday evening, but art for the days of the week.

The separation that is a result of the *parvenu* timidity of the bourgeoisie must perish: the separation of production from the affairs of life and from cultural matters; the division which entails a hypocritical elevation to the status of a fetish all the expressions of human activity, and at the same time a range of horrible lies, covering everything from the economy, government institutions and parliamentary democracy through to the most trifling, everyday matters. This must perish, as the defining lie of the capitalist world must perish: that of art for its own sake. It must perish not only in theory – as hardly anybody still admits it – but in practice, too. The artist has begun to think. He has become precisely aware of the nothingness of his social position. The artist breaks away from the framework of the present social system; he desires and seeks a practical aim, a practical application of his activity. He doesn't want to be a vain 'ornament' of his society; he wants to cooperate in the organisation of life. The capitalist system would not and cannot offer him all that. Even where it seems to open up some perspective of such work, it turns out to be spurious. Even where the egoism of individuals, subjugating millions to its will, seems to lose it significance, it always turns out to be a matter of some cowardly compromise – the most exposed positions are given up in order to defend the next line more firmly. Only a new social system will enable us to use all the opportunities of technological progress, suppressed or misused by those who govern the world today, and make possible new conditions for this human activity that we call art.

DRAFT MANIFESTO

THE JOHN REED CLUB OF NEW YORK

Mankind is passing through the most profound crisis in its history. An old world is dying; a new one is being born. Capitalist civilization, which has dominated the economic, political, and cultural life of continents, is in the process of decay. It received a deadly blow during the imperialist war which it engendered. It is now breeding new and more devastating wars. At this very moment the Far East seethes with military conflicts and preparations which will have far-reaching consequences for the whole of humanity.

Meantime, the prevailing economic crisis is placing greater and greater burdens upon the mass of the world's population, upon those who work with hand or brain. In the cities of five-sixths of the globe, millions of workers are tramping the streets looking for jobs in vain. In the rural districts, millions of farmers are bankrupt. The colonial countries reverberate with the revolutionary struggles of oppressed peoples against imperialist exploitation; in the capitalist countries the class struggle grows sharper from day to day.

The present crisis has stripped capitalism naked. It stands more revealed than ever as a system of robbery and fraud, unemployment and terror, starvation and war.

The general crisis of capitalism is reflected in its culture. The economic and political machinery of the bourgeoisie is in decay, its philosophy, its literature, and its art are bankrupt. Sections of the bourgeoisie are beginning to lose faith in its early progressive ideas. The bourgeoisie is no longer a progressive class, and its ideas are no longer progressive ideas. On the contrary: as the bourgeois world moves toward the abyss, it reverts to the mysticism of the middle ages. Fascism in politics is accompanied by neo-catholicism in thinking. Capitalism cannot give the mass of mankind bread. It is equally unable to evolve creative ideas.

This crisis in every aspect of life holds America, like the other capitalist countries, in its iron grip. Here there is unemployment, starvation, terror, and preparation for war. Here the government, national, state and local, is dropping the hypocritical mask of democracy, and openly flaunts a fascist face. The demand of the unemployed for work or bread is answered with machine-gun bullets. Strike areas are closed to investigators; strike leaders are murdered in cold blood. And as the pretense of constitutionalism is dropped, as brute force is used against workers fighting for better living conditions, investigations reveal the utmost corruption and graft in

government, and the closest cooperation of the capitalist political parties and organised crime.

In America, too, bourgeois culture writhes in a blind alley. Since the imperialist war, the best talents in bourgeois literature and art, philosophy and science, those who have the finest imaginations and the richest craftsmanship, have revealed from year to year the sterility, the utter impotence of bourgeois culture to advance mankind to higher levels. They have made it clear that although the bourgeoisie has a monopoly of the instruments of culture, its culture is in decay. Most of the American writers who have developed in the past fifteen years betray the cynicism and despair of capitalist values. The movies are a vast corrupt commercial enterprise, turning out infantile entertainment or crude propaganda for the profit of stockholders. Philosophy has become mystical and idealist. Science goes in for godseeking. Painting loses itself in abstractions or trivialities.

In the past two years, however, a marked change has come over the American intelligentsia. The class struggle in culture has assumed sharp forms. Recently we have witnessed two major movements among American intellectuals: the Humanist movement, frankly reactionary in its ideas; and a movement to the left among certain types of liberal intellectuals.

The reasons for the swing to the left are not hard to find. The best of the younger American writers have come, by and large, from the middle classes. During the boom which followed the war these classes increased their income. They played the stock-market with profit. They were beneficiaries of the New Era. The crash in the autumn of 1929 fell on their heads like a thunderbolt. They found themselves the victims of the greatest expropriation in the history of the country. The articulate members of the middle classes – the writers and artists, the members of the learned professions – lost that faith in capitalism which during the twenties trapped them into dreaming on the decadent shores of post-war European culture. These intellectuals suddenly awoke to the fact that we live in the era of imperialism and revolution; that two civilizations are in mortal combat and that they must take sides.

A number of factors intensified their consciousness of the true state of affairs. The crisis has affected the intellectual's mind because it has affected his income. Thousands of school-teachers, engineers, chemists, newspapermen and members of other professions are unemployed. The publishing business has suffered acutely from the economic crisis. Middle-class patrons are no longer able to buy paintings as they did formerly. The movies and theatres are discharging writers, actors and artists. And in the midst of this economic crisis, the middle-class intelligentsia, nauseated by the last war, sees another one, more barbarous still, on the horizon. They see the civilization in whose tenets they were nurtured going to pieces.

In contrast, they see a new civilization rising in the Soviet Union. They see a land of 160 million people, occupying one-sixth of the globe, where

workers rule in alliance with farmers. In this vast country there is no unemployment. Amidst the decay of capitalist economy, Soviet industry and agriculture rise to higher and higher levels of production every year. In contrast to capitalist anarchy, they see planned socialist economy. They see a system with private profit and the parasitic classes which it nourishes abolished; they see a world in which the land, the factories, the mines, the rivers, and the hands and brains of the people produce wealth not for a handful of capitalists but for the nation as a whole. In contrast to the imperialist oppression of the colonies, to the lynching of Negroes, to Scottsboro cases, they see 132 races and nationalities in full social and political equality cooperating in the building of a socialist society. Above all, they see a cultural revolution unprecedented in history, unparalleled in the contemporary world. They see the destruction of the monopoly of culture. They see knowledge, art, and science made more accessible to the mass of workers and peasants. They see workers and peasants themselves creating literature and art, themselves participating in science and invention. And seeing this, they realise that the Soviet Union is the vanguard of the new communist society which is to replace the old.

Some of the intellectuals who have thought seriously about the world crisis, the coming war and the achievements of the Soviet Union, have taken the next logical step. They have begun to realise that in every capitalist country the revolutionary working class struggles for the abolition of the outworn and barbarous system of capitalism. Some of them, aligning themselves with the American workers, have gone to strike areas in Kentucky and Pennsylvania and have given their talents to the cause of the working class.

Such allies from the disillusioned middle-class intelligentsia are to be welcomed. But of primary importance at this stage is the development of the revolutionary culture of the working class itself. The proletarian revolution has its own philosophy developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin. It has developed its own revolutionary schools, newspapers, and magazines; it has its worker-correspondents, its own literature and art. In the past two decades there have developed writers, artists and critics who have approached the American scene from the viewpoint of the revolutionary workers.

To give this movement in arts and letters greater scope and force, to bring it closer to the daily struggle of the workers, the John Reed Club was formed in the fall of 1929. In the past two and a half years, the influence of this organisation has spread to many cities. Today there are 13 John Reed Clubs throughout the country. These organisations are open to writers and artists, whatever their social origin, who subscribe to the fundamental programme adopted by the international conference of revolutionary writers and artists which met at Kharkov, in November, 1930. The programme contains six points upon which all honest intellectuals, regardless of their background may unite in the common struggle against capitalism. They are:

1. Fight against imperialist war, defend the Soviet Union against capitalist aggression;
2. Fight against fascism, whether open or concealed, like social-fascism;
3. Fight for the development and strengthening of the revolutionary labour movement;
4. Fight against White chauvinism (against all forms of Negro discrimination or persecution) and against the persecution of the foreign-born;
5. Fight against the influence of middle-class ideas in the work of revolutionary writers and artists;
6. Fight against the imprisonment of revolutionary writers and artists, as well as other class-war prisoners throughout the world.

On the basis of this minimum programme, we call upon all honest intellectuals, all honest writers and artists, to abandon decisively the treacherous illusion that art can exist for art's sake, or that the artist can remain remote from the historic conflicts in which all men must take sides. We call upon them to break with bourgeois ideas which seek to conceal the violence and fraud, the corruption and decay of capitalist society. We call upon them to align themselves with the working class in its struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation, against unemployment and terror, against fascism and war. We urge them to join with the literary and artistic movement of the working class in forging a new art that shall be a weapon in the battle for a new and superior world.

Benjamin Péret photographed in the act of insulting
a priest (as published in *La Révolution Surréaliste* no.8,
December 1926)

Vladimir Tatlin *Monument to the Third International*
or *Tatlin's Tower*, 1919
The maquette paraded through the streets
on a horse-drawn cart, Moscow, 1927

OPEN THE PRISONS! DISBAND THE ARMY!

THE SURREALIST GROUP

There Are No Common Law Crimes

Social coercion has had its day – neither recognition of an accomplished fault nor contribution to the national defence can force man to give up freedom. The idea of prison and the idea of barracks are commonplace today; these monstrosities no longer shock you. The infamy lies in the calmness of those who have got around the difficulty with various moral and physical abdications (honesty, sickness, patriotism).

Once consciousness has been recovered from the abuse that composes one part of the existence of such dungeons – the other part being the degradation, the diminution, that they engender in those who escape from them as well as those imprisoned there – and there are, it seems, some madmen who prefer the cell or the barrack room – once this consciousness is finally recovered, no discussion can be recognised, no recantation. Never has the opportunity to be done with it been so great, so don't mention opportuneness to us. Let the assassins begin, if you wish; peace prepares for war, such proposals conceal only the lowest fear or the most hypocritical desires. Let us not be afraid to acknowledge that we are waiting, that we are inviting a catastrophe. Catastrophe? That would be the persistence of a world in which man has rights over man. 'Sacred unity' before knives or machine guns – how can this discredited argument be cited any longer? Send the soldiers and convicts back to the field. Your freedom? No freedom for the enemies of freedom. We will not be the accomplices of jailers.

Parliament votes for a mangled amnesty; next spring's graduating class will depart. In England a whole town has been powerless to save one man. It was learned without great surprise that in America the execution of several condemned men had been postponed until after Christmas *because they had good voices*. And now that they have sung they might as well die, for the exercise. In the sentry boxes, in the electric chair, the dying wait.
Will you let them go under?

OPEN THE PRISONS!
DISBAND THE ARMY!

REVOLUTION NOW AND FOREVER!

THE SURREALIST GROUP

This world is a focal point for conflicts which, for those who are somewhat alert, cannot be confined in the framework of a simple political or social debate. Our epoch is singularly lacking in seers. But it is impossible for anyone retaining even minimal perspicacity not to attempt to foresee the human consequences of an *absolutely staggering* state of affairs.

Far beyond the reawakened self-love of long-enslaved people who seem to desire nothing except to re-conquer their independence, far beyond the irreconcilable conflict of work and social demands within still-functioning European states, we believe in the inevitability of total deliverance. Man, treated more and more brutally, will finally be forced to change his relationships.

Fully conscious of the nature of the forces disturbing the world at the moment, even before we learn how many of us there are and begin our work, we want to proclaim our total detachment, in a sense of uncontamination, from the ideas at the basis of a still-real European civilisation, based in its turn on the intolerable principles of necessity and duty.

Even more than patriotism – which is quite a commonplace sort of hysteria, though emptier and shorter-lived than most – we are disgusted by the idea of belonging to a country at all, which is the most bestial and least philosophic of the concepts to which we are subjected.

We are certainly barbarians, since a certain form of civilisation thoroughly disgusts us.

Wherever Western civilisation is dominant, all human contact has disappeared, except contact from which money can be made – payment in hard cash. For over a century human dignity has been reduced to an exchange value. It is not only unjust, it is monstrous, that those who own property enslave those who do not; but when this oppression goes beyond wage labour and becomes, for example, the type of slavery imposed by international high finance, then it is an iniquity worse than any massacre it provokes. We do not accept the slavery of labour, and, in a still wider sense, we have taken up arms against history. History is ruled by laws based on the pusillanimity of individuals, and we are certainly not humanists of any sort whatever.

It is our rejection of all accepted law, our hope in new, subterranean forces, capable of overthrowing history, which make us turn our eyes

towards Asia. Categorically we need freedom, but a freedom based on our deepest spiritual needs and on the most imperious and most human desires of our bodies (in fact, it is always the others who are sacred). Time is up for the contemporary world. The stereotyped gestures, acts and lies of Europe have gone through their whole disgusting cycle. Spinoza, Kant, Blake, Hegel, Schelling, Proudhon, Marx, Stirner, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Nietzsche – this list alone is the beginning of your downfall. It is the turn of the Mongols to bivouac in our squares. We should never for a moment worry that this violence could take us by surprise or get out of hand. As far as we are concerned, it could never be enough, whatever happens. All that should be seen in our behaviour is the absolute confidence we have in a sentiment common to all of us: the sentiment of revolt, on which anything of value is based.

Most of us are conscriptable and officially destined to don the abject sky-blue uniform; but from now we shall resist energetically and in every way the very idea of such subjugation, given the fact that, for us, France does not exist.

It goes without saying that, in these circumstances, we fully support and countersign the manifesto issued by the Action Committee Against the Moroccan War, so much the more as the authors of this manifesto are embroiled in legal proceedings.

Priests, doctors, professors, *littérateurs*, poets, philosophers, journalists, judges, lawyers, policemen, academicians of all sorts – all of you who signed the imbecile sheet titled 'Intellectuals on the side of their country' – we will denounce you on every occasion. Dogs trained to benefit the nation, the mere thought of this bone sets you quivering.

We are the revolt of the spirit; we believe that bloody revolution is the inevitable vengeance of a spirit humiliated by your doings. We are not utopians; we can conceive this revolution only as a social form. If anywhere there are men who have seen a coalition form against them (traitors to everything that is not freedom, rebels of every sort, prisoners of common law), let them never forget that the idea of revolution is the best and most effective safeguard of the individual.

CANNIBALIST MANIFESTO

OSWALD DE ANDRADE

Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically.

The world's only law. Disguised expression of all individualism,
of all collectivisms. Of all religions. Of all peace treaties.

Tupi or not *tupi* that is the question.

Down with all catechisms. And down with the Mother of the Gracchi.

I am concerned only with what is not mine. Human law. Cannibal law.

We're tired of all the suspicious Catholic husbands who've been given
leading roles. Freud put an end to the mystery of woman and to other
horrors of printed psychology.

It was clothing that got in the way of the truth, a raincoat placed
between the inner and outer worlds. The reaction against the clothed man.
American cinema will explain.

Children of the sun, the mother of the living. Found and fiercely loved,
with all the hypocrisy of *saudade*, by the immigrants, by the slaves, and
by the *touristes*. In the land of the Great Snake.

It was because we never had grammars, nor collections of old plants.
And we never knew what urban, suburban, frontier, and continental were.
Lazy in the *mapamundi* of Brazil.

A participatory consciousness, a religious rhythmics.

Down with the importers of canned consciousness. The palpable
existence of life. And the pre-logical mentality for Mr. Lévy-Bruhl to study.

We want the Carib revolution. Greater than the French Revolution. The
unification of all productive revolts for the progress of humanity. Without
us Europe wouldn't even have its meagre declaration of the rights of man.

The Golden Age heralded by America. The Golden Age. And all the *girls*.

Affiliation. Contact with Carib Brazil. *Où Villegaignon print terre*. Montaigne. Natural man. Rousseau. From the French Revolution to Romanticism, to the Bolshevik Revolution, to the Surrealist Revolution and Keyserling's technicised barbarian. We continue.

We were never catechised. We live by a somnambulistic law. We caused the birth of Christ in Bahia. Or in Belém do Pará.

But we never permitted the birth of logic among us.

Down with Father Vieira. The negociant of our first loan, to gain a commission. The illiterate king said to him: 'Put it on paper, but go easy on the double-talk.' The loan was made. Brazilian sugar was signed away. Vieira left the money in Portugal and brought us the double-talk.

The spirit refuses to conceive of a spirit without a body. Anthropomorphism. The need for a cannibalist vaccine. To maintain our equilibrium against the religions of the meridian. And against external inquisitions.

We can attend only to the oracular world.

We already had justice, the codification of revenge. Science, the codification of Magic. Cannibalism. The permanent transformation of the Tabu into a totem.

Down with the reversible world and objectified ideas. Cadaverised. A stop to dynamic thought. The individual as victim of the system. The source of classic injustice. Of romantic injustice. And the forgetting of inner conquests.

Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes.

The Carib instinct.

The life and death of hypotheses. From the equation 'Self, part of the Cosmos' to the axiom 'Cosmos, part of the Self'. Subsistence. Knowledge. Cannibalism.

Against the vegetable elites. In communication with the soil.

We were never catechised. What we did was Carnival. The Indian dressed up as a senator of the Empire. Making believe he's Pitt. Or appearing

in Alencar's operas, brimming with decent Portuguese sentiment.

We already had communism. We already had Surrealist language.
The Golden Age.

Catiti Catiti
Imara Notiá.
Notiá Imara.
Ipejú.

Magic and life. We had the list and the allocation of physical goods,
of moral goods, of royal goods. And, with the aid of a few grammatical
forms, we knew how to transpose mystery and death.

I asked a man what the Law was. He replied that it was a guarantee of
the exercise of possibility. The man's name was Galli Mathias. I ate him.

Where there is mystery there is no determinism.
But what does that have to do with us?

Down with the histories of man that begin at Cape Finisterre.
The undated world. Unsigned. Without Napoleon. Without Caesar.

Determining progress by catalogues and television sets. Only machinery.
And the blood transfusers.

Down with the antagonistic sublimations. Brought over on the caravels.

Down with the truth of missionary peoples, defined by the sagacity
of a cannibal, the Viscount of Cairu: 'It is a lie often repeated'.

But those who came were not crusaders. They were fugitives from a
civilisation we are now eating, for we are strong and vengeful like the Jabuti.

If God is the conscience of the Uncreated Universe,
Guaraci is the mother of the living. Jaci is the mother of the plants.

We didn't have speculation. But we had divination. We had Politics,
which is the science of distribution. And a social-planetary system.

Migrations. The flight from states of boredom. Against urban scleroses.

Down with Conservatories and speculative tedium.

From William James to Voronoff. The transfiguration of the Taboo
into a totem. Cannibalism.

The *pater familias* and the creation of the fable of the stork: real ignorance
of things, plus lack of imagination, plus a sense of authority over
the curious children.

To arrive at the idea of God, one must start from a profound atheism.
But this wasn't necessary for the Carib. Because he had Guaraci.

The created object rebels like the Fallen Angels. Later, Moses rambles on.
What's it to us?

Before the Portuguese discovered Brazil, Brazil had discovered happiness.

Down with the Indian as torch-bearer. The Indian son of Mary,
godson of Catherine de Médici and son-in-law of Don Antônio de Mariz.

Happiness is the real test.

In the matriarchy of Pindorama.

Down with Memory, the source of habit.
The renewal of personal experience.

We are realists. Ideas take over, rebel, and set fire to people in public
squares. Let us get rid of ideas and other paralyses. By means of routes.
Follow the signs, trust your instruments and follow the stars.

Down with Goethe, the Mother of the Gracchi, and the court of Don João vi.

Happiness is the real test.

The struggle between what could be called the Uncreated and the Creation –
illustrated by the permanent contradiction between man and his taboo.
Everyday love and the capitalist way of life. Cannibalism. Absorption of
the sacred enemy. That he may be transformed into a totem. The human
adventure. The earthly end. Only the pure elites, however, were able to realise
carnal cannibalism, which contains the highest meaning of life and avoids
all of the catechistic evils identified by Freud. What takes place is not a
sublimation of sexual instinct. It is the thermometric scale of the cannibal
instinct. From carnal, it becomes elective and creates friendship.
Affectionate, love. Speculative, science. It turns away and transfers itself.

We approach vilification. Low cannibalism joined with the sins of the catechism – envy, usury, calumny, murder. It is against this plague of so-called cultured and Christian peoples that we act. Cannibals.

Down with Anchieta singing the 11,000 virgins of heaven, in the land of Iracema-patriarch João Ramalho, founder of São Paulo.

Our independence has not yet been proclaimed. A phrase typical of Don João VI: 'My son, put this crown on your own head before some adventurer puts it on his!' We expelled the dynasty. We must expel the Bragantine spirit, the ordinations, and Maria da Fonte's snuff.

Against social reality, clothed and oppressive, recorded by Freud-reality without complexes, without madness, without prostitutions and without penitentiaries in the matriarchy of Pindorama.

> *Oswald de Andrade*
> *In Piratininga, in the 374th year of the swallowing of Bishop Sardinha.*

Translated by the editors.

DEUTSCHLAND DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALLES

KURT TUCHOLSKY AND JOHN HEARTFIELD

Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles,
Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1929
(trans. Anne Halley), Amherst: UMP,
1972; photographs © DACS, London.

The People

'Religion must be preserved for the people.' – 'You have to understand – the people have a different sense of...' – 'The people are simply...' The speakers? Middle-class citizens with delusions of grandeur. Let's give our subject its proper name, say what we mean: the workers. And no more nonsense about the workers' need for Culture. They need other things. For me to write this picture-book, I need:

Enough to eat. A roof over my head. Leisure and time to look at the pictures the publishers send me. A father who gave me enough money in my youth so that I could learn a little more than the ABC and the multiplication tables ... I need all those conditions. Occasionally a heroic proletarian may overcome his limitations: in epic struggles and in spite of hunger, cold, and inadequate education, working at night, with enormous strength of will, the worker may achieve what the businessman's son accomplishes with ease. But to expect the worker to accomplish all this as a matter of course, shows an insulting lack of sensitivity; to despise him for not accomplishing it is shameless.

Perhaps the basket-weavers pictured here should read the French mystic Paul Claudel? Or think about the concept of immortality in Lao-tze? Should we criticise them for not doing so? And should we deny them the opportunity to do so forever? Which is not to suggest that environment is all important; of course heredity, and possibly some inexplicable 'x', also matter in human development. But why not grant these workers [...] *The wages that they really deserve but don't get under the present system.*

Camouflage
The German army's newest protective device makes machine-gun divisions almost invisible. This net is not a net. It is an allegory.
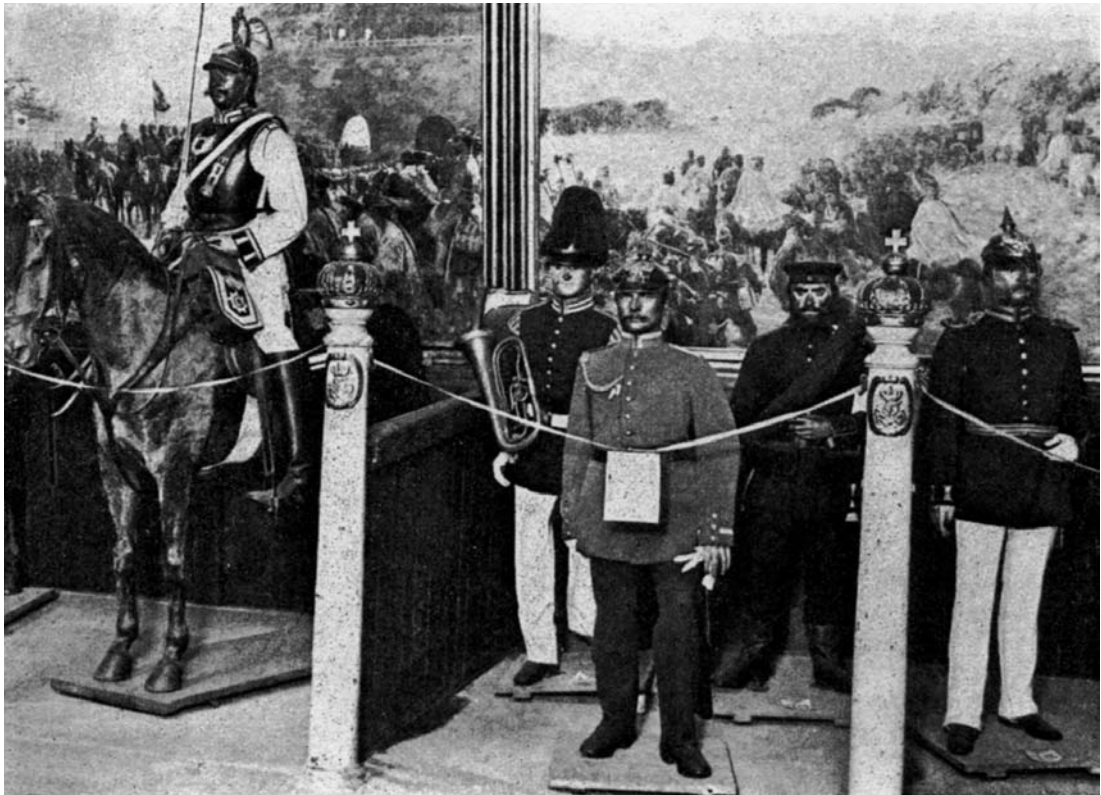
The Idols of the Maigoto-Blacks

… a curious practice. The tribe erects costumed idols of wood, or even wax, in special halls and dances around them on ceremonial occasions. The writer has had opportunity to enter these rooms: he saw truly terrifying figures, wild masks expressing insensitive, brute primitivism. One idol, enthroned on a totem-animal, held a spear in its hand … the Maigoto-Blacks are exceedingly proud of these works of art…

Still a Joke

One day it will be serious. The snout-face will be ordinary reality. No one will think it is funny anymore. Many people will weep. But, of course, we can't prevent it: the hat manufacturer proclaims straw-hat week, the Canadian fruit-grower propagates peaches, and the defence industry needs war.

—

BAUHAUS N°3,
THE STUDENTS' VOICE

KOSTUFRA

Extract from *Bauhaus*: *Sprachrohr der Studierenden* (The Students' Voice), no.3, Dessau, 1930.

Herr Kandinsky, is it true

that you or your wife Nina peddled the story to the authorities that Hannes Meyer had done a drawing for the *rote hilfe* so that it would be published in the press?

Herr Kandinsky, is it furthermore true that even before your trip to a summer resort that you knew of the things that would happen? Before your departure, hadn't you and Mayor Hesse already decided upon a successor, or how is it then that in his telegram to the masters that he refers to you of all people?

Herr Gropius, is it true

that in connection with the dismissal of Hannes Meyer, you suggested that *Herr* Mayor Hesse shut down the cafeteria (excepting meal times) and shutdown the *prellerhaus* completely? (The attempt to shut down the cafeteria was made.)

Herr Gropius, is it furthermore true that only five minutes after the 'circle of architects' protested against the magistrate's procedure that you lodged an appeal?

Translated by April Lamm.

bauhaus 3

sprachrohr der studierenden

herr kandinsky, ist es wahr,

dass durch sie oder ihre frau gemahlin nina die nachricht
von der zeichnung hannes meyers für die rote hilfe bei den
zuständigen stellen kolportiert worden ist, sodass sie in d
der presse erschien?

herr kandinsky, ist es ferner wahr, dass sie schon vor ihrer
abreise in die sommerfrische von den dingen gewusst haben
die sich ereignen würden? hatten sie schon vor ihrer ab-
reise mit oberbürgermeister hesse zusammen den nachfolger
bestimmt, oder wie kommt es, dass hesse bei seinem tele-
gramm an die meister sich ausgerechnet auf sie beruft?

herr gropius, ist es wahr,

dass sie im anschluss an den hinauswurf von hannes meyer
herrn oberbürgermeister hesse den vorschlag machten,die
kantine (bis auf die mahlzeiten) und das prellerhaus
ganz zu schliessen? (der versuch, die kantine tu schliessen
ist gemacht worden.)

herr gropius, ist es ferner wahr, dass sie, nachdem der
'ring der architekten' gegen das vorgehen des magistrats
protestiert hatte, fünf minuten später dagegen einspruch
erhoben?

Bauhaus: The Students' Voice, no.3, 1930
The journal of the Bauhaus students' communist group,
KOSTUFRA
Courtesy Bauhaus Archives Berlin.

THE FALL OF HANNES MEYER

KOSTUFRA

Hannes Meyer was dismissed, Mies van der Rohe is the new director. It all happened so fast and was unexpected by most. To some maybe not, as they always said that the communists and so on… but the communists have been at the Bauhaus for as long as it has existed, and the petty bourgeoisie prattling on about a 'communist-nest' for just as long. But maybe the work of the Bauhaus under the directorship of Hannes Meyer was second rate? To the contrary! The Bauhaus had increased its profit, and even some days before Hannes Meyer was thrown out, all of the Dessau press was singing praises about his *laubenganghäuser* in Torten. Now Mayor Hesse claims that a Marxist leader of the Bauhaus is not what we need. Besides, the fact that Hannes Meyer is not a Marxist – who at most flirted with Marxism – is something Mayor Hesse knew even before H.M.'s first day in office. And Gropius could only hope to speak of his time as being that of the 'cathedral of socialism'. Furthermore, what reasons were there? None will be found as long as we look for them from the perspective of the *prellerhaus*. We cannot view giving H.M. the boot as a thing contained within itself but rather as something connected to what is happening outside. (The intervention came from without and has its cause there too.)

The Mayor states the reason: H.M.'s Marxist stance, even though it was not a problem when he took office in August 1930, is the cause of the problem now (incidentally, H.M. is not an isolated case). Most recently we can confirm that several such restrictions from radical officials have been imposed.

The bourgeoisie is going through a difficult crisis now – meaning that the conditions of the working- and lower-middle class will only get worse and again will result in the fact that these classes will become more radical and will stage an uprising. The bourgeoisie must, if it doesn't want to lose its supremacy, distract the masses from starting a proletarian revolution. An excellent medium for this is fascism. Fascism calls upon lower-middle class instincts (a homestead, family, morals, homeland) and brings [at least] some of the oppressed on a detour from their actual goals. Fascism is successful with small business owners and lower officials and, in short, successful with all of those who are doing horribly, those who still do not understand that their horrible situation will only possibly get better by changing the entire system, ie., with the overturning of the capitalist economic system.

And here the role of the SPD [Social Democratic Party] is established: that of the pacemaker of fascism. The workers and lower middle class are the voters of this party. And as the working class slips from the SPD to the KPD [Communist Party] – due to its hostile worker policies – the SPD must orient its politics towards the lower-middle class voter. (Indeed, it is cultivating the petty bourgeoisie with its propaganda for private homes, etc.) The SPD no longer speaks of revolution but of evolution. The SPD no longer speaks of the international, but proudly describe themselves as the 'only true national party'. (See the *Rheinlandrummel*). This is the breeding ground of fascism. And from here, we are only one small step away from a fascist dictator.

But to come back to Hannes Meyer: the Reichstag was dissolved, and on 14 September there will be new elections; the National Socialists have powerful propaganda behind them and are *en vogue* with the lower-middle classes. This is a dangerous situation for the SPD and it must prove to the lower-middle classes that it is their party. Seen from the point of view of Dessau, this means a struggle against lower middle class nuisances. And Hannes was just such a nuisance!

But Mayor Hesse is certainly no Social Democrat! Indeed, Hesse became Mayor by the grace of Paulick. We all know that Hesse is the heart of this system. Thus, one should not think Mayor Hesse an innocent lamb. He is a Democrat. And the transformation of the Democratic Party into the party of the state demonstrates its reactionary development. The elections are on 14 September. We do not believe that the Social Democratic and Democratic Party has won the sympathies of the students through its reactionary dirty trick. Hopefully the members of the Bauhaus have finally recognised that there is only one revolutionary party: the KPD.

Translated by April Lamm.

LETTER, AUGUST 1936

FELICIA BROWNE

You say I am escaping and evading things by not painting or making sculpture. If there is no painting or sculpture to be made I cannot make it. I can only make out of what is valid and urgent to me. If painting and sculpture were more valid and urgent to me than the earthquake which is happening in the revolution, or if these two were reconciled so that the demands of one didn't conflict (in time, even, or concentration) with the demands of the other, I should paint or make sculpture.

British Surrealists May Day Demonstration,
Hyde Park, 1 May 1938
The Surrealists, in Neville Chamberlain
masks, protest the British government's
non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War
Courtesy the Scottish National Gallery
of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh

WE ASK YOUR ATTENTION

BRITISH SURREALIST GROUP

On the occasion of the Artists' International Congress and Exhibition
WE ASK YOUR ATTENTION

NON-INTERVENTION is not merely a political expedient in the Spanish
situation, nor the alleged policy of a certain international committee. It is
something much more than that; it is the typical and inevitable product of
a way of thinking and behaving, the prevailing political attitude of educated
and conscious people since the war.

This attitude has been pure NON-INTERVENTION. Politics were looked
upon as a dirty and stupid game of little real importance. Politicians were
paid off to play it on their own, recognised knaves and professional liars, but
not too sharply questioned as long as things went on not too outrageously,
and above all as long as the intellectuals were left safely with their books,
their arts and intellectual interests. Their aim was to localise politics, to
confine it to a few people, to treat it as a possibly contagious, certainly
disgusting disease.

This attitude has been modified in one direction only. Memories of
the last war, and the obviously growing dangers of another, have produced
widespread pacifism. For the pacifist tries to deal with war as an isolated
disaster, apart from its wider causes and connections; he tries to look upon
it as the embodiment of an abstract principle of VIOLENCE, and he will try to
oppose it by the equally abstract principle of REASON. He will not examine
the actual social and economic circumstances which produce violence, and
above all he will not seek to oppose it by actual political means; he will not
meet it on its own ground. He remains NON-INTERVENTIONIST.

In a similar way the London Non-Intervention Committee was designed
to apply this policy in the situation created by the international Fascist coup
in Spain. Political expedience and political justice were ignored; all social
and political circumstances were disregarded, in favour of a single object:
to localise the conflict, to confine within limits as narrow as possible this
outbreak of VIOLENCE.

In this way the London Committee has a significance far beyond its own immediate aims. It is a practical test, a crucial experiment upon the attitudes which we have adopted. Is it possible to remain blind to the results of this experiment?

The facts, the events, are not in dispute. The Fascist countries, Italy, Germany and Portugal, have assisted Franco freely with materials of war and barely disguised divisions of their regular armies. They have condescended to cloak their actions to some extent under promises, agreements, denials and counter-charges. But behind this fog of words, Fascist intervention has proceeded unhampered save by the magnificent courage of the armies of THE SPANISH PEOPLE.

Is there any reason to suppose that Non-Intervention at future times and in other places may succeed better? Has Fascist militarism announced any limit to its hopes of conquest? Has it shown signs of a moral regeneration, of a greater respect for agreements and conventions? The opinion of the politicians at least is clear. Since the Fascist outbreak in Spain every European country has hastened and enlarged its plans of re-armament. Only a few pacifists continue to believe in Non-Intervention. By doing so, they can only assist the forces of war; by yielding one strategic point after another to the military dictators, they make VIOLENCE more certain and infinitely more disastrous in its effects.

One thing, then, is clear. With all respect for the motives of pacifism, for the sincerity and courage of pacifists, this form of Non-Intervention is completely discredited in practice by the Spanish experiment.

But more depends on the experiment than this. Not only pacifism has been on trial, but our whole attitude of Non-Intervention in politics. How have our paid knaves and liars conducted themselves?

Unfortunately like paid knaves and liars. If, conceivably, six months ago NON-INTERVENTION was defensible, it was only remotely justifiable as long as there was a fair fight between the parties of Spain. The German and Italian invasion removed even these remote justifications. At the very least we might have expected unequivocal protests against the Fascist aggressor, but even these have been lacking.

Unfortunately, this is not all. Our Government has in various ways intervened actually on behalf of the Fascist aggressor. Several weeks before the international ban on volunteers, it dug up a century-old Act on Foreign Enlistment, and indicated its intention to harass British volunteers gratuitously by this antiquated instrument. It has repeatedly refused to admit

representatives of THE SPANISH PEOPLE, and their friends at the same time allowing free passage to Franco's financial agents. And clearest of all, it has negotiated its famous 'gentleman's agreement' with Mussolini, an agreement which apparently includes a free hand for Fascism in Spain. Our present hired rulers, in fact, so far from being Non-Interventionists, stand as the allies of fascism in international politics.

This is the result, in international affairs, of our NON-INTERVENTION; we find ourselves allied, not with the countries of peace and democracy, but with the countries of war and dictatorship. Has our attitude produced a more satisfactory situation within our own country? The publication of the Re-armament programme must remove the last possible illusions. Having sabotaged all hopes of collective security in the League (remember Simon and the Japanese attack on Shanghai; the Hoare-Laval pact) we must now become a great military power. Having failed to evolve any constructive economic policy to deal with general UNEMPLOYMENT and the Special Areas, we must now pour a gigantic loan into the pocket of heavy industry and armaments, to maintain a sham face of prosperity.

Worse, if possible, than the programme itself was the way in which it was introduced. Only a year after the Peace Ballot elections 'honest' Baldwin himself announced in the House of Commons that he had intended to re-arm all the time, and that he deliberately concealed this intention from the electorate because he feared that they would not approve of it. This is the end of democracy and representative government; it is a FASCISM which uses deceit instead of violence.

And that is the result of our NON-INTERVENTION at home. We find ourselves ruled by a Fascism of deceit now, but signs are not wanting that force will follow. By an iniquitous Trades Disputes Act the political strike has been made illegal. The Sedition Act has ensured the creation of a mercenary army accessible only to capitalist political influence. The recent Public Order Act has given the police practically complete power to suppress all undesired political activities.

At the same time steps are being taken to ensure militarisation and organisation of the civilian population. A campaign for physical fitness, a tightening of control on the essential means of propaganda, a fixation of warlike ideas and images by the farcical pageantry of the Coronation – FASCISM, though still only Fascism by deceit.

We have no longer any excuse. NON-INTERVENTION in all forms must end. Artists, intellectuals, all people who live consciously, must recognise their political responsibilities, above all, their duty of direct political action in

defence of their own interests. Do not let us deceive ourselves further; in a militarised state the activities which we value, the kind of consciousness which produces them, cannot exist. 'A warlike state,' said Blake, 'cannot create.' Setting aside general questions of democracy, justice, humanity, we are forced to defend the bare opportunity to carry on our work.

Intervene – but how?

First, unity among ourselves. We are no longer advancing the views of individuals, or of groups. We are defending our common interests and necessities.

Second, activity within the appropriate organisations. We welcome particularly the Congress of British Artists, organised by the Artists' International Association. We hope that it will find time to take up a clear position towards broader political problems, and consider possibilities of political action. Other organisations to which we would draw attention are: the Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture; 'For Intellectual Liberty'; the International Peace Campaign.

Third, we recognise that we are not alone; we are not even the first to realise that the whole political life of the country is at the beginning of a crucial period. Within the Labour Party, the Trades Unions, and the working classes generally there is a new vitality, a new consciousness of the dangers which threaten us all. In spite of the weakness (and worse than weakness) of the old Labour leadership, the movement for a United Front is gaining ground rapidly.

The means of intervention in the political field are well defined by the parties of the UNITED FRONT. We have everything to hope for in supporting a vigorous policy according to their plans and nothing to hope for from any other party. If only in self-defence we must END ALL FORMS OF NON-INTERVENTION, INTERVENE IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS, INTERVENE IN THE FIELD OF IMAGINATION.

THE REVOLUTION which we can bring about must have as its object the DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS and the WIDER SATISFACTION OF DESIRE.

Economic justice is the first object of our intervention, but we demand also the vindication of the psychological rights of man, the liberation of intelligence and imagination.

INTERVENE AS POETS, ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS BY VIOLENT
OR SUBTLE SUBVERSION AND BY STIMULATING DESIRE.

Eileen Agar
Hugh Sykes Davies
D. Norman Dawson
Merlyn Evans
David Gascoyne
Erno Goldfinger
G. Graham
Charles Howard
Joyce Hume
Rupert Lee
Henry Moore
Paul Nash
Roland Penrose
Herbert Read
Julian Trevellyan

VISION IN MOTION

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY

Extract from László Moholy-Nagy,
Vision in Motion, Chicago: Paul
Theobald, **1947**. Courtesy Hattula
Moholy-Nagy.

The true artist is the grindstone of the senses; he sharpens eyes, mind and feeling; he interprets ideas and concepts through his own media. In the midst of vast social controversies he cannot escape that task. He has to take sides and proclaim his stand; indeed the artist has a formative ideological function, otherwise his work would be only an exercise of skill in composition. Hitler was aware of this. He propagandised trash, he tried to destroy modern art, science, and philosophy as the greatest sources of opposition to his vicious system of oppression. He banned the contemporary, the 'degenerate' art, as he called it from the galleries and museums, burned books, and forbade the teaching of Einstein's theories.

He sensed the content of art is basically not different from the content of our other utterances. The only difference is that art is produced mainly by subconscious organisation of the means implicit in the cultural and social setting of the period. To be sure, there are numerous opportunities for expression and research in all fields but among them only a few which are positively related and favoured by the dynamic forces of the age. In intuitively choosing certain aesthetic or technical problems, the most sensitive and advanced artist is a tool for the recording of the time-expressive contents. That is, form and structure denote definite trends. The work of the artist corresponds to the creative problems in other fields, complementing them in the structure of civilization of that particular period.

Art may press for the sociobiological solution of problems just as energetically as the social revolutionaries do through political action. The so-called 'unpolitical' approach of art is a fallacy. Politics freed from graft, party connotations, or more transitory tactics, is mankind's method of realising ideas for the welfare of the community. Such a '*weltanschauung*' is transformed by the arts into emotional form, and becomes retroactive in the realm of conscious existence. This suggests that not only the conscious but also the subconscious mind absorbs social ideas, which are then expressed in the specific media of the arts. Otherwise any problem could be

successfully solved only through intellectual or verbal discourse. The difficulty lies in mass participation. The masses are filled with a petit bourgeois ideology, the masculine superman ideal promoted by papers and radios, books and films – by the unofficial education, which the people have been taught to enjoy in spite of lip service to casual revolutionary ideas. Once their sensitivity is killed, they are unable to receive the message of art whether contemporary or old.

The success theory of the profit economy pays a high premium to the anti-artist. Artists are considered effeminate who do not have the stamina to participate in competition. This is not only untrue, as are most clichés, but tragic since at present art is perhaps the only field where convention does not completely suppress sentiment and where the omnipotence of thought and the independence of emotion are kept relatively intact. To follow the divining rod of intuition and expressive desire may often act as a psychological lifesaver especially in periods of hidden and open suppression of independent thought. The phrase that 'the artist represents the consciousness and memory of his time' is a good characterisation of his function. No society can exist without expressing its ideas, and no culture and no ethics can survive without participation of the artist who cannot be bribed.

Art represents the uncensored statement of its author; this is one of its most positive characteristics. No-one but the painter, the author, the composer is the sole master of his performance. The simpler his medium and the less investment it involves, the easier it is to avoid possible censorship and to preserve the ways of genuinely free expression.

Through his sensitivity the artist becomes the seismograph of events and movements pertaining to the future. He interprets the yet hazy path of coming developments by grasping the dynamics of the present and by freeing himself from the momentary motivations and transitory influences but without evaluating their trends. He is interested only in the recording and communicating of his vision. This is what materialises in his art. He cannot misuse such a situation. To be a 'full-time' worker, a 'professional', involves a moral responsibility. This is why the secured existence of the uncompromising and incorruptible artist is so important to society. … The silly myth that genius has to 'suffer' is the sly excuse of a society which does not care for its productive members unless their work promises immediate technological or economic applications with calculable profit. …

Each generation differs from the preceding one in the determination of its task. The task of this generation is to search for its roots. It must try to understand the significance of natural functions so that everyone may become aware of the essential purpose of living: the preservation and refinement of the biological nature of the individual within a harmonious social existence. The value of such an existence will be measured in terms

of cooperation, social usefulness and personal happiness. This new life requires a new methodology for approaching problems; a social mechanism of production and a creative education. ... To meet the manifold requirements of this age with a definite programme of human values, there must come a new mentality and a new type of personality. The common denominator is the fundamental acknowledgement of human needs; the task is to recognise the moral obligation is satisfying these needs, and the aim is to produce for human need, not for profit.

THE WORLD REVOLUTION;
NETWORKED RESISTANCE;
INSTITUTIONAL CONFLICTS;
RIGHTS AND IDENTITY

1968

The period that sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein calls the 'world revolution'. Many artists participate in specific liberation struggles – anti-colonial struggles, civil rights and women's liberation for example. At the same time the other, strong current of the upheavals around 1968 – anti-statism and a growing distrust of formal ideology – is intensively developed within much art practice. The formal institutions of art are once again attacked; informal networks are proposed as models become active and in all kinds of practice, from distribution structures to political resistance, collective production to education.

Manifesto.

> **2.** To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "*Fluxed* into another world." *South.*
> **3.** *Med.* To cause a discharge from, as in purging.
>
> **flux** (flŭks), *n.* [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere, fluxum,* to flow. See FLUENT; cf. FLUSH, *n.* (of cards).] **1.** *Med.* **a** A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part: esp., an excessive and morbid discharge: as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery. **b** The matter thus discharged.

<u>Purge</u> the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, — PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM" !

> **2.** Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.
> **3.** A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.
> **4.** The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. REFLUX.
> **5.** State of being liquid through heat; fusion. *Rare.*

PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,
Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be ~~fully~~ grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

> **7.** *Chem. & Metal.* **a** Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and limestone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). **b** Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as rosin.

<u>FUSE</u> the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

George Maciunas *Fluxus Manifesto*, February 1963
Courtesy the Gilbert and Lyla Silverman Collection, Detroit and New York

THESES ON THE PARIS COMMUNE

SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL
(GUY DEBORD, ATTILA KOTÁNYI, RAOUL VANEIGEM)

1. 'The classical workers movement must be reexamined without any illusions, particularly without any illusions regarding its various political and pseudotheoretical heirs, for all they have inherited is its failure. The apparent successes of this movement are actually its fundamental failures (reformism or the establishment of a state bureaucracy), while its failures (the Paris Commune or the 1934 Asturian revolt) are its most promising successes so far, for us and for the future.' (*Internationale Situationniste* no.7 [1962])

2. The Commune was the biggest festival of the nineteenth century. Underlying the events of that spring of 1871 one can see the insurgents' feeling that they had become the masters of their own history, not so much on the level of 'governmental' politics as on the level of their everyday life. (Consider, for example, the *games* everyone played with their weapons: they were in fact playing with power.) It is *also* in this sense that Marx should be understood when he says that 'the most important social measure of the Commune was its own existence in acts'.

3. Engels's remark, 'Look at the Paris Commune – *that* was the dictatorship of the proletariat', should be taken seriously in order to reveal what the dictatorship of the proletariat is not (the various forms of state dictatorship over the proletariat in the name of the proletariat).

4. It has been easy to make justified criticisms of the Commune's obvious lack of a *coherent organisational structure*. But as the problem of political structures seems far more complex to us today than the would-be heirs of the Bolshevik-type structure claim it to be, it is time we examine the Commune not just as an outmoded example of revolutionary primitivism, all of whose mistakes can easily be overcome, but as a positive experiment whose whole truth has yet to be rediscovered and fulfilled.

5. The Commune had no leaders. And this at a time when the idea of the necessity of leaders was universally accepted in the workers' movement. This is the first reason for its paradoxical successes and failures. The official organisers of the Commune were incompetent (compared with Marx or Lenin, or even Blanqui). But, on the other hand, the various 'irresponsible' acts of that moment are precisely what is needed for the continuation of the revolutionary movement of our own time (even if the circumstances restricted almost all those acts to the purely destructive level – the most famous example being the rebel who, when a suspect bourgeois insisted that he had never had anything to do with politics, replied, 'That's precisely why I'm going to kill you.').

6. The vital importance of the general arming of the people was manifested practically and symbolically from the beginning to the end of the movement. By and large the right to impose popular will by force was not surrendered and left to any specialised detachments. This exemplary autonomy of the armed groups had its unfortunate flip-side in their lack of coordination: at no point in the offensive or defensive struggle against Versailles did the people's forces attain military effectiveness. It should be borne in mind, however, that the Spanish revolution was lost – as, in the final analysis, was the civil war itself – in the name of such a transformation into a 'republican army'. The contradiction between autonomy and coordination would seem to have been largely related to the technological level of the period.

7. The Commune represents *the only implementation of a revolutionary urbanism* to date – attacking on the spot the petrified signs of the dominant organisation of life, understanding social space in political terms, refusing to accept the innocence of any monument. Anyone who disparages this attack as some 'lumpenproletarian nihilism', some 'irresponsibility of the *pétroleuses*', should specify what he believes to be of positive value in the present society and worth preserving (it will turn out to be almost everything). 'All space is already occupied by the enemy... Authentic urbanism will appear when the absence of this occupation is created in certain zones. What we call construction starts there. It can be clarified by the *positive void* concept developed by modern physics.' ('Basic Program of Unitary Urbanism', *Internationale Situationniste*, no.6 [1961])

8. The Paris Commune succumbed less to the force of arms than to the force of habit. The most scandalous practical example was the refusal to use the cannons to seize the French National Bank when money was so desperately needed. During the entire existence of the Commune the bank remained a Versaillese enclave in Paris, defended by nothing more than a few rifles and the mystique of property and theft. The other ideological habits proved

in every respect equally disastrous (the resurrection of Jacobinism, the defeatist strategy of the barricades in memory of 1848, etc.).

9. The Commune shows how those who defend the old world always benefit in one way or another from the complicity of revolutionaries – particularly of those revolutionaries who merely *think about* revolution, and who turn out to still *think like* the defenders. In this way the old world retains bases (ideology, language, customs, tastes) among its enemies, and uses them to reconquer the terrain it has lost. (Only the thought-in-acts natural to the revolutionary proletariat escapes it irrevocably: the Tax Bureau went up in flames.) The real 'fifth column' is in the very minds of revolutionaries.

10. The story of the arsonists who during the final days of the Commune went to destroy Notre-Dame, only to find themselves confronted by an armed battalion of Commune artists, is a richly provocative example of direct democracy. It gives an idea of the kind of problems that will need to be resolved from the perspective of the power of the councils. Were those artists right to defend a cathedral in the name of eternal aesthetic values – and in the final analysis, in the name of museum culture – while other people wanted to express themselves then and there by making this destruction symbolise their absolute defiance of a society that, in its moment of triumph, was about to consign their entire lives to silence and oblivion? The artist partisans of the Commune, acting as specialists, already found themselves in conflict with an extremist form of struggle against alienation. The Communards must be criticised for not having dared to answer the totalitarian terror of power with the use of the totality of their weapons. Everything indicates that the poets who at that moment actually expressed the Commune's inherent poetry were simply *wiped out*. The Commune's mass of unaccomplished acts enabled its tentative actions to be turned into 'atrocities' and their memory to be censored. Saint Just's remark, 'Those who make revolution halfway only dig their own graves.', also explains his *own* silence.

11. Theoreticians who examine the history of this movement from a divinely omniscient viewpoint (like that found in classical novels) can easily prove that the Commune was objectively doomed to failure and could not have been successfully consummated. They forget that for those who really lived it, the consummation was *already there*.

12. The audacity and inventiveness of the Commune must obviously be measured not in relation to our time, but in terms of the political, intellectual and moral attitudes of its own time, in terms of the *solidarity* of all the common assumptions that it blasted to pieces. The profound solidarity

of presently prevailing assumptions (right and left) gives us an idea of the inventiveness we can expect of a comparable explosion today.

13. The social war of which the Commune was one episode is still being fought today (though its superficial conditions have changed considerably). In the task of 'making conscious the unconscious tendencies of the Commune' (Engels), the last word has yet to be said.

14. For almost twenty years in France the Stalinists and the leftist Christians have agreed, in memory of their anti-German national front, to stress the element of national disarray and offended patriotism in the Commune. (According to the current Stalinist line, 'the French people petitioned to be better governed' and were finally driven to desperate measures by the treachery of the unpatriotic right wing of the bourgeoisie.) In order to refute this pious nonsense it would suffice to consider the role played by all the foreigners who came to fight for the Commune. As Marx said, the Commune was the inevitable battle, the climax of 23 years of struggle in Europe by 'our party'.

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RESPONSE TO A QUESTIONNAIRE FROM THE CENTER FOR SOCIO-EXPERIMENTAL ART

SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL
(J.V. MARTIN, JAN STRIJBOSCH, RAOUL VANEIGEM, RENÉ VIÉNET)

1. Why are the masses not concerned with art? Why does art remain the privilege of certain educated sectors of the bourgeois class?

The importance of the theme of the present questionnaire and the limited space allotted for answers oblige us to be somewhat schematic. The situationists' positions on these topics have been elaborated in more detail in the SI's journals (*Internationale Situationniste, Der Deutsche Gedanke* and *Situationistisk Revolution*) and in the catalogue published on the occasion of the 'Destruction of RSG 6' demonstration in Denmark last June.

The masses, ie. the nonruling classes, have no reason to feel concerned with any aspects of a culture or an organisation of social life that have not only been developed without their participation or their control, but that have in fact been deliberately designed to prevent such participation and control. They are concerned (illusorily) only with the by-products specifically produced for their consumption: the diverse forms of spectacular publicity and propaganda in favour of various products or role models.

This does not mean, however, that art subsists merely as a 'privilege' of the bourgeois class. In the past every dominant class had its *own* art – for the same reasons that a classless society will have none, will be beyond artistic practice. But the historical conditions of our time, associated with a major breakthrough in man's appropriation of nature and thus bearing the concrete project of a classless society, are such that major art in this period has necessarily been revolutionary. What has been called modern art, from its origins in the nineteenth century to its full development in the first third of the twentieth, has been an *anti-bourgeois* art. The present crisis of art is linked to the crisis of the workers movement since the defeat of the Russian revolution and the modernisation of capitalism.

Today a *fake* continuation of modern art (formal repetitions attractively packaged and publicised, completely divorced from the original combativeness of their models) along with a voracious consumption of bits and pieces of previous cultures completely divorced from their real meaning (Malraux, previously their most ludicrous salesman in the realm of 'theory', is now exhibiting them in his 'Culture Centres') are what actually constitute

the dubious 'privilege' of the new stratum of intellectual workers that proliferates with the development of the 'tertiary sector' of the economy. This sector is closely connected to that of the social *spectacle*: this intellectual stratum (the requirements of whose training and employment explain both the quantitative extension of education and its qualitative degradation) is both the most direct producer of the spectacle and the most direct consumer of its specifically cultural elements.

Two tendencies seem to us to typify the contemporary cultural consumption offered to this public of alienated intellectual workers:

On one hand, endeavours such as the 'Visual Art Research Group' clearly tend toward the integration of the population into the dominant socioeconomic system, along the lines currently being worked out by repressive urbanism and the theorists of cybernetic control. Through a veritable parody of the revolutionary theses on putting an end to the passivity of separated spectators through the *construction of situations*, this 'Visual Art' group strives to make the spectator participate in his own misery – taking its lack of dialectics to the point of 'freeing' the spectator by announcing that it is 'forbidden not to participate' (tract at the Third Paris Biennial).

On the other hand, 'New Realism', drawing heavily on the form of Dadaism (but not its spirit), is an *apologetic* junk art. It fits quite well in the margin of pseudofreedom offered by a society of gadgets and waste.

But the importance of such artists remains very much secondary, even in comparison with advertising. Thus, paradoxically, the 'Socialist Realism' of the Eastern bloc, which is not art at all, nevertheless has a more decisive social function. This is because in the East power is maintained primarily by selling ideology (ie. mystifying justifications), while in the West it is maintained by selling consumer goods. The fact that the Eastern bureaucracy has proved incapable of developing its own art, and has been forced to adapt the forms of the pseudoartistic vision of petty-bourgeois conformists of the last century (in spite of the inherent ineffectuality of those forms), confirms the present impossibility of any art as a ruling-class 'privilege'.

Nevertheless, all art is 'social' in the sense that it has its roots in a given society and even despite itself must have some relation to the prevailing conditions, or to their negation. Former moments of opposition survive *fragmentarily* and lose their artistic (or post-artistic) value to the precise extent they have lost the heart of opposition. With their loss of this heart they have also lost any reference to the mass of post-artistic acts (of revolt and of free reconstruction of life) that already exist in the world and that are tending to replace art. This fragmentary opposition can then only withdraw to an aesthetic position and harden rapidly into a dated and ineffectual aesthetic *in a world where it is already too late for aesthetics* – as has happened with Surrealism, for example. Other movements are typical of degraded bourgeois mysticism (art as substitute for religion). They reproduce – but only in the form of solitary fantasy or idealist pretension – the forces that dominate

present social life, both officially and in fact: noncommunication, bluff, frantic desire for novelty as such, for the rapid turnover of arbitrary and uninteresting gadgets – Lettrism, for example, on which subject we remarked that 'Isou, product of an era of unconsumable art, has suppressed the very idea of its consumption' and that he has 'proposed the first art of solipsism' (*Internationale Situationniste*, no. 4 [1960]).

Finally, the very proliferation of would-be artistic movements that are essentially indistinguishable from one another can be seen as an application of the modern sales technique of marketing the same product under rival trademarks.

2. How can art be really 'social'?

The time for art is over. The point now is to *realise* art, to really create on every level of life everything that hitherto could only be an artistic memory or an illusion, dreamed and preserved unilaterally. Art can be realised *only by being suppressed*. However, in contrast to the present society, which suppresses art by replacing it with the automatic functioning of an even more passive and hierarchical spectacle, we maintain that art can really be suppressed *only by being realised*.

2. (cont.) Does the political society in which you live encourage or discourage your social function as an artist?

This society has suppressed what you call the social function of the artist.

If this question refers to the function of employees in the reigning *spectacle*, it is obvious that the number of jobs to be had there expands as the spectacle does. The situationists, however, do not find this employment opportunity the least bit attractive.

If, on the other hand, we take this question as referring to the *inheriting of previous art* through new types of activity, beginning with contestation of the whole society, the society in question naturally discourages such a practice.

3. Do you think your aesthetics would be different if you lived in a socially, politically or economically different society?

Certainly. When our perspectives are realised, aesthetics (as well as their negation) will be superseded.

If we were presently living in an underdeveloped country or in one subjected to archaic forms of domination (colonialism or a Franco-type dictatorship), we would agree that artists can to a certain extent participate as such in popular struggles. In a context of general social and cultural backwardness the social function of the artist still retains a certain significance, and a not entirely sham communication is still possible within the traditional forms.

If we were living in a country governed by a 'socialist' bureaucracy, where information about cultural and other experimentation in advanced

industrialised countries over the last fifty years is systematically suppressed, we would certainly support the minimum demand for dissemination of truth, including the truth about contemporary Western art. We would do this despite the inevitable ambiguity of such a demand, since the history of modern art, though already accessible and even glorified in the West, is nonetheless still profoundly falsified; and its importation into the Eastern bloc would first of all be exploited by hacks like Yevtushenko in their modernisation of official art.

4. Do you participate in politics or not? Why?
Yes, but in only one kind: together with various other forces in the world, we are working toward the linkup and the theoretical and practical organisation of a new revolutionary movement.

All the considerations we are developing here simultaneously demonstrate the need to go beyond the failures of previous specialised politics.

5. Does an association of artists seem necessary to you?
    What would be its objectives?
There are already numerous associations of artists, either without principles or based on one or another extravagant absurdity – mutual aid unions, mutual congratulation societies, alliances for collective careerism. Works that on the slightest pretext are proclaimed 'collective projects' are fashionable at the moment, and are even put in the limelight at the pitiful Paris biennials, thus diverting attention from the real problems of the supersession of art. We regard all these associations with equal contempt and accept no contact whatsoever with this milieu.

We do believe that a coherent and disciplined association for the realisation of a common programme is possible on the bases worked out by the Situationist International, provided that the participants are so rigorously selected that they all demonstrate a high degree of creative originality, and that in a sense they cease to be 'artists' or to consider themselves as artists in the old sense of the word.

It could in fact be questioned whether the situationists are artists at all, even avant-garde ones. Not only because almost everyone in the cultural scene resists acknowledging them as such (at least once the whole of the situationist programme is involved) or because their interests extend far beyond the former scope of art. Their nature as artists is even more problematic on the socioeconomic level. Many situationists support themselves by rather dubious methods, ranging from historical research to poker, from bartending to running puppet theatres. It is striking that of the 28 members of the Situationist International whom we have had to exclude so far, 23 personally had a socially recognised and increasingly profitable role as artists: they were known as artists despite their membership in the SI.

But as such they were tending to reinforce the position of our enemies, who want to invent a 'situationism' so as to finish with us by integrating us into the spectacle as just one more doomsday aesthetic. Yet while doing this, these artists wanted to remain in the SI. This was unacceptable for us. The figures speak for themselves.

It goes without saying that any other 'objectives' of any association of artists are of no interest to us, since we regard them as no longer having any point whatsoever.

6. How is the work you are presenting here related to these statements? The work we have offered in response to your request obviously cannot represent a 'situationist art'. Under the present distinctly anti-situationist cultural conditions we have to resort to 'communication containing its own critique', which we have experimented with in every accessible medium, from film to writing, and which we have theorised under the name of *détournement*. Since the Center for Socio-Experimental Art has limited its survey to the plastic arts, we have selected, from among the numerous possibilities of *détournement* as a means of agitation, Michèle Bernstein's anti-painting *Victory of the Bonnot Gang* [1963]. It forms part of a series including *Victory of the Paris Commune*, *Victory of the Great Jacquerie of 1358*, *Victory of the Spanish Republicans*, *Victory of the Workers Councils of Budapest* and several other victories. Such paintings attempt to negate 'Pop Art' (which is materially and 'ideologically' characterised by *indifference* and dull complacency) by incorporating only *toy* objects and by making them meaningful in as heavy-handed a way as possible. In a sense this series carries on the tradition of the painting of battles; and also rectifies the history of revolts (which is not over) in a way that pleases us. It seems that each new attempt to transform the world is forced to start out with the appearance of a *new unrealism*.

We hope that our remarks here, both humorous and serious, will help to clarify our position on the present relationship between art and society.

STATEMENT

BLACK MASK

A new spirit is rising. Like the streets of Watts we burn with revolution. We assault your Gods… We sing of your death. DESTROY THE MUSEUMS… our struggle cannot be hung on walls. Let the past fall under the blows of revolt. The guerrilla, the Blacks, the men of the future, we are all at your heels. Goddamn your culture, your science, your art. What purpose do they serve? Your mass-murder cannot be concealed. The industrialist, the banker, the bourgeoisie, with their unlimited pretence and vulgarity, continue to stockpile art while they slaughter humanity. Your lie has failed. The world is rising against your oppression. There are men at the gates seeking a new world. The machine, the rocket, the conquering of space and time, these are the seeds of the future which, freed from your barbarism, will carry us forward. We are ready…

Let the Struggle Begin

—

On Monday, 10 October at 12.30pm we will close the Museum of Modern Art. This symbolic action is taken at a time when America is on a path of total destruction, and signals the opening of another front in the world-wide struggle against suppression. We seek a total revolution, cultural, as well as social and political – LET THE STRUGGLE BEGIN.
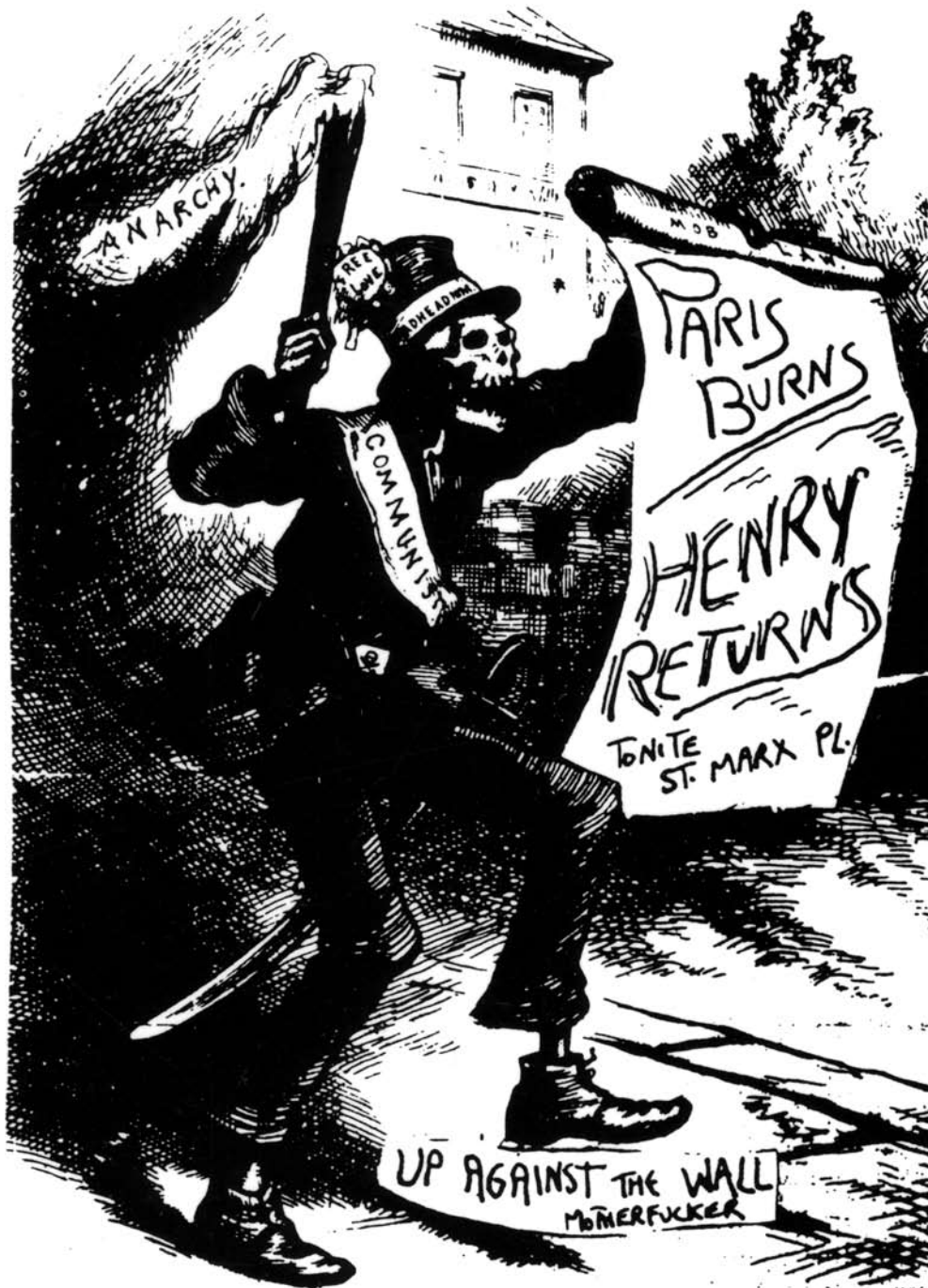
Black Mask leaflet ca. 1968

ART AND REVOLUTION

BLACK MASK

We are neither artists, nor anti-artists. We are creative men – revolutionaries. As creative men we are dedicated to building a new society but we must also destroy the existing travesty. What art will replace the burned bodies and dead minds which this society is producing? How can we create (since creation is life) as life is being crushed. Yet we must. We must create the tools with which we will replace this horror. We must create the seeds of the new – both psychological and physical – not alone but in the ranks of the masses, neither leading them nor being led.

The false concept of art cannot contain us; what is needed is much more, a form that will embrace the totality of life. This false concept was not even satisfactory in the past. How many so-called artists were not accepted as such in their lifetime, only to be embraced later when man had learned to widen his vision. The primitive cultures had no idea of art, but only the natural responses of man. Their creative impulses embraced both the spiritual and the physical – the idols and the tools – the unknown and the known – in fact the totality of life itself. Obviously we can't go back even if we want to (which we don't) but we can go forward, and a civilization with abundant resources such as ours, can and should reach a point where this totality is once again dominant on an even larger scale.

We have no desire to set up new rules to replace the old. We believe that man, once liberated, will sense his direction. A free man never returns to slavery of his own volition, but we must prevent his being returned there by outside forces, one weapon being education and free creativity. Different personalities, environments, ages will determine the forces men develop, each potentially as valuable a part of the totality as the other. A few examples should suffice as illustration.

The Russian Revolution, along with its social changes, brought about a cultural upheaval. Many saw the death of easel-painting. (As far as we are concerned it was always dead, those creative men who utilised it always sought more than it was thought to offer. Thus a Van Gogh differs from a Bougereau.) We heralded the death of 'art for art's sake', but this again was a false issue. Were the cave markings made as art? Did the primitives produce for 'art's sake', or the early Christians, or pre- and early-Renaissance artists such as Giotto, or the other creative men all the way through to the twentieth century, which burst with Futurism? What did happen in 1917, was the

chance for the creative man to function within a social revolution. There were two main approaches, one represented by Malevich and the other by Tatlin.

The theory of laboratory art, as developed by Malevich, made use of the individualistic work of the creative man in both its psychological and physical potential, first by opening the mind's vision and second by laying the basis for an ordered arrangement of man's surroundings. The other approach, as represented by Tatlin, was to take the material needs and to then translate them into a creative entity. Since each arose out of the psychological needs of their founders and the social needs of a dawning society they were both a part of the revolution. It is only later when bureaucracy and then rising Stalinism forced a false movement, Socialist-Realism, upon the scene that creativity stopped.

The same years (1917–25) did, in different places and with different individuals, see different answers. The war-torn West with its bourgeois dominance could not be expected to follow the same course as a post-revolutionary Russia. Yet there were some similarities even here. The German Bauhaus took a constructivist attitude (sometimes joining the two) while the Dutch De Stijl followed a course more similar to that of Malevich. But here the Dadaists enter, with a totally different and just as important role. They were undermining an effete and moribund society, a society whose destruction would benefit all. They were, as revolutionaries, in the streets and, as creative men, they sought to overthrow that perverted civilization which wreaked havoc on the world. This same goal was later sought by the Surrealists, with their attempts at building a new psychological experiment, as well as an emphasis on direct revolution, to destroy the bourgeoisie rather than hoping to shock them into awareness (the latter had been somewhat prevalent in the Dadaist movement, excepting the Berlin branch).

Yet we are of a new age. We have learned from the past, but to hell with the past. One of these can be ours – we are not so lucky. There will be similarities but there will be difference. We have digested them all but only to reject them as fertilizer from which the new will rise on its own, in the natural process of growth. There are emerging forces; cybernation, growing weaponry, and world-wide revolution which we are affected by and which we in turn must affect. We can and must re-shape the total environment; physical and psychological, social and aesthetic, leaving no boundaries to divide man. The future is ours, but not without a struggle.

WE PROPOSE
A CULTURAL EXCHANGE

BLACK MASK

WE PROPOSE A CULTURAL EXCHANGE
(garbage for garbage)

AMERICA TURNS THE WORLD INTO GARBAGE
IT TURNS ITS GHETTOS INTO GARBAGE
IT TURNS VIETNAM INTO GARBAGE

IN THE NAME OF UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES
(DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS)
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHERLAND
(COLLIE DOGS, NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES)
IN THE NAME OF MAN
IN THE NAME OF ART
IN THE NAME OF MONEY

AMERICA TAKES
ALL THAT IS EDIBLE, EXCHANGEABLE, INVESTABLE
AND LEAVES THE REST

THE WORLD IS OUR GARBAGE, WE SHALL NOT WANT,
WE LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES. THE REST LIE DOWN IN GARBAGE.

AND WE PLAY AS WE MAKE OUR GARBAGE
BEETHOVEN BACH MOZART SHAKESPEARE
TO COVER THE SOUND OF OUR GARBAGE MAKING

AND WE EXCLUDE THE GARBAGE FROM OUR PALACES OF CULTURE

AND WE WILL NOT ALLOW IT TO MARRY OUR DAUGHTER
AND WE WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH IT OR LET IT TAKE OUR SHIPS

BUT WE ARE FACED WITH A REVOLT OF THE GARBAGE

A CULTURAL REVOLUTION
GARBAGE FERTILIZES
DISCOVERS ITSELF

AND WE OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE HAVE DECIDED TO BRING
THIS CULTURAL REVOLUTION TO LINCOLN CENTER – IN BAGS
IS NOT LINCOLN CENTER WHERE IT BELONGS?

—

ASSEMBLE TO COLLECT GARBAGE – 5PM 12 FEBRUARY
(at 9th Street between C and D)
MARCH TO LINCOLN CENTER
BE AT LINCOLN CENTER BY 8:30PM FOR THE GARBAGE PLANTING
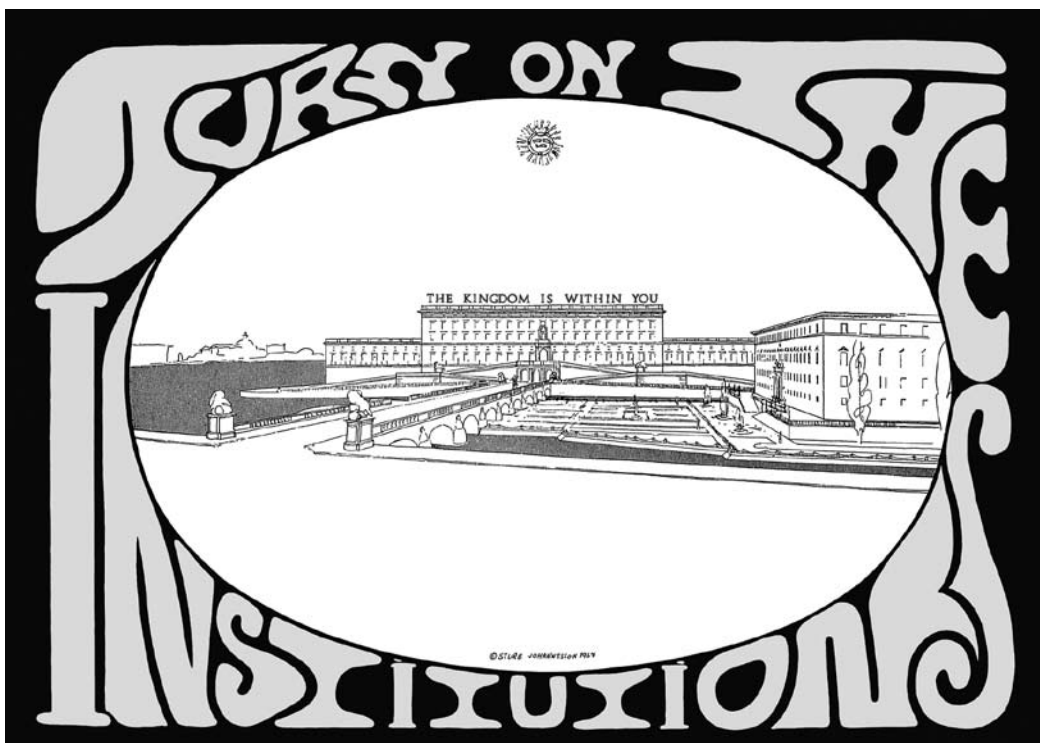
Sture Johannesson Outside Cannabis Gallery with friends, 1967

The Kingdom is Within You, 1967
Poster printed by Permild and Rosengreen, Copenhagen

PSYCHEDELIC MANIFESTO

STURE JOHANNESSON

One can demand that a cultural product fulfils one or more of these criteria;
that it intensifies sensory experience, creates knowledge of mankind's situation,
eases human relations and inherits a certain general validity.
    Nordal Akerman/Olle Svenning (*A Socialist View on Culture*)

Today, four cultural products exist that have these four characteristics; the psychedelic drugs LSD, mescaline, psilocybin and hashish. The cultural worker's most important task in the future is to spread information about these matters. Psychedelic drugs mean freedom, equality and brotherhood.

Joy of life! He saw it clearly. One should sell joy of life, not kitchen hardware
or brown envelopes. Joy of life demanded love as its partner, and this marriage
gave birth to ethics, the good and the right acts.
    Sven Fagerberg (*The Costume Ball*)

Freedom is not an imperishable phraseological [overall] one puts on in primary school, freedom is a lump of hashish in tinfoil, the freedom you cannot hide in your boots or underwear without the police finding it. Freedom is a ball of tinfoil one squeezes in one's hand and is ready to throw away when power intervenes. It is abused knowledge in society, knowing that power owns truth and that truth is something a group of people can agree upon through democratic working methods and majority principles. The cultural worker must be an artist with no claim to be taken seriously. Reliability comes in the form of a cop's badge. One should sell hashish, not oil paintings or theatre tickets.

Communication is everything that brings people together. The communicative field
is the in-between space. The in-between space between people. With this we can bid
the beholder farewell.
    Jens-Joergen Thorsen (*Paletten 3/66*)

So, truth is something upon which a group of people can agree. But truth's field lies between legislatures. In the interstice. With this we can bid the prophets farewell. Artists who appear in the galleries as conformist and disciplined members of a parliament for aesthetic theories and ideologies [are] not dead, but self-amputated. [There is a] struggle about gimmicks, rivalry about the reviews of critics in watchmen's uniforms, intellectual hair-splitting and a folksy roll in the hay. *Culture distribution?* Society's interest is to *administer* art and culture, to portion out what is considered safe or useless.

> *The manifestation of consciousness is a kind of creation, all such things are truth that has the same value no matter how it is articulated, academically or colloquially. A human being with psychedelic experience recognises his or her karma, an original universal truth and human authenticity, in art, poetry, music, theatre and literature, in situations between person and person, between person and thing, between person and divinity. 'Everything is holy.'*
> Allen Ginsberg

Escapism? Not to accept that inner reality is just as real as the outer is a serious mistake made by people who have never tried or have failed to achieve this. Don't talk about it – take it! Imagination is just a deeper reality. *Drug addiction?* William Burroughs refers to the *Naked Lunch* – a frozen moment when everybody sees what is sitting at the fork's point:

> *Hashish works as a guide to areas in the psyche that one later can return to without taking the drug, that is one can stop smoking hashish when one has become familiar with those landscapes which the drug has opened up the road to – just as it is the case with other psychedelic drugs.*

Alienation? As an artist with an income below the breadline I have been sized up on estimation and penally taxed so that it is impossible for me to work for my living as employed in any company because of sequestered income. This while the military and economic powers that be need not account for or even stick down the service envelope with the big bribes.

> *How many dark hours | I've been thinking of this*
> *that Jesus Christ was | betrayed by a kiss*
> *but I can't think for you | you have to decide*
> *whether Judas Iscariot had | GOD on his side.*
> Bob Dylan

Communication? Wave your hands! Not only sound and light but all matter manifests itself in waves. Communication is waves. We can wave to each other. Wave your hands!

<u>Sture Johannesson</u> Outside Cannabis Gallery with Ninna,
model for the poster *Hash Girl* and 'the Macedonian
children who liked to play in and around the gallery', 1967

Albert Hunt *The Russian Revolution,*
staged in the streets of Bradford, November 1967

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HOPES FOR GREAT HAPPENINGS

ALBERT HUNT

The aim of education is to help people learn how to understand, control and, ultimately, change their environment. But the education system in this, and in most other advanced industrial societies, is geared to precisely the opposite end: ie. pupils are taught that the world is extremely difficult to understand; that only a privileged few can reach such an understanding; that these few have the right to control the activities of all the rest; and that, far from trying to change their environment, the vast majority of people should try and fit in happily with the situation as it is. Education tries to teach people how to adjust successfully to the social role they'll be called on to play.

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The sense of other people, with mysterious knowledge, controlling your life is what our education system is structured to communicate. The form of that communication is *theatrical*, ritualistic. The lining-up in the playground when somebody blows a whistle; the morning assembly, where power is displayed, often decorated with theatrical emblems, such as gowns; the rituals of moving from room to room when the bell rings; all these are theatrical in their effect. That is to say, they work in the way that theatre works, making the abstract concrete, demonstrating in physical terms where the power lies.

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At 11 o'clock in the morning on 2 November 1967, a dozen students suddenly appeared on the steps of the Queen Victoria monument in the centre of Bradford. They were all dressed in black – black jeans, black

sweaters, black polythene capes tied round their necks, and they all wore red armbands. They climbed up the steps, turned round, and began to read aloud in unison from the thoughts of Chairman Mao. A policeman at the foot of the steps tried to pretend that nothing was happening.

At roughly the same time, two miles or so from the city centre, a procession of more than a hundred students, led by a chance band, came swinging through the gates of the park in which the city's main art gallery, the Cartwright Memorial Hall, is set. These students, too, were dressed in black, but with white armbands. The girls had boots and long skirts that swung round their ankles, and they carried wooden home-made rifles. Behind them, in the procession, were four huge, 12-foot puppets, made out of cardboard boxes painted black. The students carried slogans on banners: 'Support Your Government', 'Down with Red Agitators', 'No Peace with Aggressors'.

In the city bus station, a bus arrived from Barnsley. About 25 students, in black with white armbands, got off the bus and looked round. A van drove up, crudely camouflaged. Out of it leapt a student with a red armband. He picked out the four prettiest girls, told them to get in the van, and drove away. Inside the van, the girls had their white armbands exchanged for red.

Outside a bread shop in the city centre, a queue of two dozen students formed. They wore red armbands that carried the slogan 'Peace, Land, Bread'. Each student bought one teacake. Then they took their teacakes across the town to a disused post office that had been left to crumble in the middle of a block of high-rise council flats. In the shop window were placards telling people they could take anything they liked from the shop, for free, and could leave anything they liked except money. A wordless poster showed Lenin reaching out over the Italianate city hall and the mills of Bradford.

GUERRILLA THEATRE

RONALD G. DAVIS

If the eye be jaundiced, pluck it out.
If the society is rotten, rid thyself of it.
If the world be immoral, change it.

BIBLICAL-EXISTENTIAL-BRECHTIAN

The social assumptions which one accepts will determine the type of theatre one creates: street theatre, park theatre, workers' theatre, or warmed-over bathroom theatre. Theatrical discussions must include the socio-political attitudes of the performers in order to comprehend why some believe theatre a tool of change and others 'love the theaaaaater'.

It is of course entertaining to read quasi-revolutionary statements and scurrilous attacks on the theatre and society for a readership that is outside the mainstream of action; however, we shall continue in hope that words on paper may communicate thoughts that will lead to action.

My own theatrical premise:

WESTERN SOCIETY IS ROTTEN IN GENERAL, CAPITALIST SOCIETY IN THE MAIN, AND US SOCIETY IN PARTICULAR

The basis of the disease is private property: it puts the value on all things in terms of money and possessions and splits man's personality into fragmented specialties, thus making him useless on the dance floor yet well equipped to run an IBM 1824. The idea of community so necessary to a healthy individual is hemmed in by the picket fences surrounding each patch of earth and the concept of total man has been sutured by idiotic efficient specialisation. (This is a simplification of the condition; for further information read: Marx, Freud, Norman O. Brown, H. Marcuse, Regis Debray, C. Guevara, Sun Tzu, Mao Tze-tung, Thorsten Veblen, Carl Oglesby, Gary Snyder, etc. etc.)

For the theatre that wishes to change the above and to present alternatives, the problem is in many parts:

PERSONNEL-PROGRAMMME-PLACE-PUBLIC

The *personnel* (actors, directors, tech, etc.) must come from the class they want to change. If you are middle-class dropouts, you then play for middle-class dropouts, workers for working class, Mexican-American for Mexican-American, etc. Social work theatre is out; play for your own kind – you understand them, and they identify with you.

The *programme* depends upon the ingenuity of the group. It may be rock-and-roll music or street puppets, but whatever the style of theatre the content has to be a result of the experience of the personnel. To make this more clear: we asked ourselves in the Mime Troupe how we could stop the war – we then did a satire on our own antiwar pacifism (*L'Amant Militaire* by Joan Holden and others).

The *place* you do it in indicates your style/your feelings/your attitudes... Regis Debray: 'The revolutionary in the mountains is different from the talking revolutionary in the city'. Or McLuhan: 'Media is part of the message... Location is the platform or the sponge for your programme.'

The *public* is made up of all those who think they see you in them and all those whom know; friends, afficionados, tourists and sometimes peers.

It's all very simple on paper, but the making and the proper use of materials depends upon your own analysis of the needs and possibilities in your own location. To present *commedia dell'arte* in the middle of Canada may only be a historical exploration. But whatever the presentation, it must engage the common issues, it must become essential to the very community (ie., it feeds off and feeds into the community) and it must become a significant moral force.

Success in terms of money, commercial fame, fancy magazine spreads and foundation grants from state, federal or local sources is usually out unless you live in the advanced neo-socialist countries where criticism of the prevailing conditions is in order. Viz., Jean Louis Barrault with *The Screens* (National Assembly almost stopped it) or Kenneth Tynan and Laurence Olivier with *Soldier* by R. Hochuth (censored by the Public Censor). In those less than advanced government-subsidised countries, the theatre as moral force will, as does the single artist, have to live by its wits. To live by your wits is not to imitate the hustler who is a low-class capitalist, but rather the Latin American guerrilla who is a low-class socialist.

The object is to work at a presentation that talks to a community of people and that expresses what you (as a community) all know but what no one is saying: thoughts, images, observations and discoveries that are not printed in newspapers or made into movies: truth that may be shocking and honesty that is vulgar to the aesthete.

– Prepare to go out of business at any moment.
– Prepare to give up your house, your theatre or your troupe,
   and even your ideas if something more essential comes along.
– Travel light and keep in shape.
– IDEAS LIKE PROPERTY CANNOT BE PRIVATE.
– Nothing is sacred – only sometimes tenderness.

That is the prescription for the theatre company that is meaningful. Like a life that is valuable, you must begin by dropping out, getting away, leaving behind, dumping, junking the waste of dishonourable middle-class institutions, groups, ideas and debris of years of decay. (They are cynical, bored and depressed anyway.)

The first step may be dramatic; to walk away or drop out from the middle-class American lifestyle (middle-class America is all over the world). Yet the act of creating a lifestyle that replaces most, if not all, middle-class capitalistic assumptions with a lifestyle that won't quit, is a full-time job of a full-time guerrilla.

Which of course is the only way to live.

TRIP WITHOUT A TICKET

THE SAN FRANCISCO DIGGERS

The Digger Papers, August 1968.

Our authorised sanities are so many Nembutals. 'Normal' citizens with store-dummy smiles stand apart from each other like cotton-packed capsules in a bottle. Perpetual mental out-patients. Maddeningly sterile jobs for strait-jackets, love scrubbed into an insipid 'functional personal relationship' and Art as a fantasy pacifier. Everyone is kept inside while the outside is shown through windows: advertising and manicured news. And we all know this.

How many TV specials would it take to establish one Guatemalan revolution? How many weeks would an ad agency require to face-lift the image of the Viet Cong? Slowly, very slowly we are led nowhere. Consumer circuses are held in the ward daily. Critics are tolerated like exploding novelties. We will be told which burning Asians to take seriously.
Slowly. Later.

But there is a real danger in suddenly waking a somnambulistic patient. And we all know this.

What if he is startled right out the window?

No one can control the single circuit-breaking moment that charges games with critical reality. If the glass is cut, if the cushioned distance of media is removed, the patients may never respond as normals again. They will become life-actors.

Theatre is territory. A space for existing outside padded walls. Setting down a stage declares a universal pardon for imagination. But what happens next must mean more than sanctuary or preserve. How would real wardens react to life-actors on liberated ground? How can the intrinsic freedom of theatre illuminate walls and show the weak-spots where a breakout could occur?

Guerrilla theatre intends to bring audiences to liberated territory to create life-actors. It remains light and exploitative of forms for the same reasons that it intends to remain free. It seeks audiences that are created by issues. It creates a cast of freed beings. It will become an issue itself.

This is theatre of an underground that wants out. Its aim is to liberate ground held by consumer wardens and establish territory without walls. Its plays are glass cutters for empire windows.

Free Store/Property of the Possessed

The Diggers are hip to property. Everything is free, do your own thing. Human beings are the means of exchange. Food, machines, clothing, materials, shelter and props are simply there. Stuff. A perfect dispenser would be an open Automat on the street. Locks are time-consuming. Combinations are clocks.

So a store of goods or clinic or restaurant that is free becomes a social art form. Ticketless theatre. Out of money and control.

First you gotta pin down what's wrong with the West. Distrust of human nature, which means distrust of Nature. Distrust of wildness in oneself literally means distrust of Wilderness.
Gary Snyder

Diggers assume free stores to liberate human nature. First free the space, goods and services. Let theories of economics follow social facts. Once a free store is assumed, human wanting and giving, needing and taking, become wide open to improvisation.

A sign: *If Someone Asks to See the Manager Tell Him He's the Manager.*

Someone asked how much a book cost. How much did he think it was worth? 75 cents. The money was taken and held out for anyone. 'Who wants 75 cents?' A girl who had just walked in came over and took it.

A basket labelled *Free Money.*

No owner, no Manager, no employees and no cash-register. A salesman in a free store is a life-actor. Anyone who will assume an answer to a question or accept a problem as a turn-on.

Question (*whispered*): 'Who pays the rent?'
Answer (*loudly*): 'May I help you?'

Who's ready for the implications of a free store? Welfare mothers pile bags full of clothes for a few days and come back to hang up dresses. Kids case the joint wondering how to boost.

Fire helmets, riding pants, shower curtains, surgical gowns and World War I Army boots are parts for costumes. Nightsticks, sample cases, water pipes, toy guns and weather balloons are taken for props. When materials are free, imagination becomes currency for spirit.

Where does the stuff come from? People, persons, beings. Isn't it obvious that objects are only transitory subjects of human value? An object released from one person's value may be destroyed, abandoned or made available to other people. The choice is anyone's.

The question of a free store is simply: What would you have?

Street Event – Birth of Haight/Funeral for $ Now
Pop Art mirrored the social skin. Happenings x-rayed the bones. Street events are social acid heightening consciousness of what is real on the street. To expand eyeball implications until facts are established through action.

The Mexican Day of the Dead is celebrated in cemeteries. Yellow flowers falling petal by petal on graves. In moonlight. Favourite songs of the deceased and everybody gets loaded. Children suck deaths-head candy engraved with their names in icing.

A Digger event. Flowers, mirrors, penny-whistles, girls in costumes of themselves, Hell's Angels, street people, Mime Troupe.

Angels ride up Haight with girls holding 'Now!' signs.
Flowers and penny-whistles passed out to everyone.

A chorus on both sides of the street chanting 'Uhh! – Ahh! – Shh be cool!'
Mirrors held up to reflect faces of passers-by.

Penny-whistle music, clapping, flowers thrown in the air. A bus driver held up by the action gets out to dance a quick free minute. No more passers-by. Everybody's together.

The burial procession. Three black-shrouded messengers holding staffs topped with reflective dollar signs. A runner swinging a red lantern. Four pall bearers wearing animal heads carry a black casket filled with blowups of silver dollars. A chorus singing *Get Out Of My Life Why Don't You Babe* to Chopin's *Death March*. Members of the procession give out silver dollars and candles.

Now more reality. Someone jumps on a car with the news that two Angels were busted. Crowd, funeral cortege and friends of the Angels fill the street

to march on Park Police Station. Cops confront 400 free beings: a growling poet with a lute, animal spirits in black, candle-lit girls singing *Silent Night*. A collection for bail fills an Angel's helmet. March back to Haight and street dancing.

Street events are rituals of release. Reclaiming of territory (sundown, traffic, public joy) through spirit. Possession. Public NewSense.

Not street-theatre, the street is theatre. Parades, bank robberies, fires and sonic explosions focus street attention. A crowd is an audience for an event. Release of crowd spirit can accomplish social facts. Riots are a reaction to police theatre. Thrown bottles and over-turned cars are responses to a dull, heavy-fisted, mechanical and deathly show. People fill the street to express special public feelings and hold human communion. To ask 'What's Happening?'

The alternative to death is a joyous funeral in company with the living.

Who paid for your trip?
Industrialisation was a battle with nineteenth-century ecology to win breakfast at the cost of smog and insanity. Wars against ecology are suicidal. The US standard of living is a bourgeois baby blanket for executives who scream in their sleep. No Pleistocene swamp could match the pestilential horror of modern urban sewage. No children of White Western Progress will escape the dues of peoples forced to haul their raw materials.

But the tools (that's all factories are) remain innocent and the ethics of greed aren't necessary. Computers render the principles of wage-labour obsolete by incorporating them. We are being freed from mechanistic consciousness. We could evacuate the factories, turn them over to androids, clean up our pollution. North Americans could give up self-righteousness to expand their being.

Our conflict is with job-wardens and consumer-keepers of a permissive looney-bin. Property, credit, interest, insurance, installments, profit are stupid concepts. Millions of have-nots and drop-outs in the US are living on an overflow of technologically produced fat. They aren't fighting ecology, they're responding to it. Middle-class living rooms are funeral parlours and only undertakers will stay in them. Our fight is with those who would kill us through dumb work, insane wars, dull money morality.

Give up jobs, so computers can do them! Any important human occupation can be done free. Can it be given away?

Revolutions in Asia, Africa, South America are for humanistic industrialisation. The technological resources of North America can be used throughout the world. *Gratis*. Not a patronising gift, shared.

Our conflict begins with salaries and prices. The trip has been paid for at an incredible price in death, slavery, psychosis.

An event for the main business district of any US city. Infiltrate the largest corporation office building with life-actors as nymphomaniacal secretaries, clumsy repairmen, berserk executives, sloppy security guards, clerks with animals in their clothes. Low key until the first coffee-break and then pour it on.

Secretaries unbutton their blouses and press shy clerks against the wall. Repairmen drop typewriters and knock over water coolers. Executives charge into private offices claiming their seniority. Guards produce booze bottles and playfully jam elevator doors. Clerks pull out goldfish, rabbits, pigeons, cats on leashes, loose dogs.

At noon 1,000 freed beings singing and dancing appear outside to persuade employees to take off for the day. Banners roll down from office windows announcing liberation. Shills in business suits run out of the building, strip and dive in the fountain. Elevators are loaded with incense and a pie fight breaks out in the cafeteria. Theatre is fact/action.

Give up jobs. Be with people. Defend against property.

The arrest of members of the San Francisco
Mime Troupe in Lafeyette Park,
San Francisco, 7 August 1965
Photograph © Erik Weber

San Francisco Diggers *Death of Money* parade on
Haight Street, San Francisco 17 December, 1966
Photograph by Gene Anthony; © Bill Graham Archives
LLC/wolfgangsvault.com

THE POST-COMPETITIVE, COMPARATIVE GAME OF A FREE CITY

THE SAN FRANCISCO DIGGERS

The Digger Papers, August 1968.

Our state of awareness demands that we uplift our efforts from competitive game playing in the underground to the comparative roles of *free families* in *free cities*.

We must pool our resources and interact our energies to provide the freedom for our individual activities.

In each city of the world there is a loose competitive underground composed of groups whose aims overlap, conflict, and generally enervate the desired goal of autonomy. By now we all have guns, know how to use them, know our enemy and are ready to defend. We know that we ain't gonna take no more shit. So it's about time we carried ourselves a little heavier and got down to the business of creating free cities within the urban environments of the Western world.

Free Cities are composed of Free Families (eg., in San Francisco: Diggers, Black Panthers, Provos, Mission Rebels and various revolutionist gangs and communes) who establish and maintain services that provide a base of freedom for autonomous groups to carry out their programmes without having to hassle for food, printing facilities, transportation, mechanics, money, housing, working space, clothes, machinery, trucks, etc.

At this point in our revolution it is demanded that the families, communes, Black organisations and gangs of every city in America coordinate and develop Free Cities where everything that is necessary can be obtained for free by those involved in the various activities of the individual clans.

Every brother and sister should have what they need to do whatever needs to be done.

    Free City

an outline… a beginning. Each service should be performed by a tight gang of brothers and sisters whose commitment should enable them to handle

an overload of work with ability and enthusiasm. 'Tripsters' soon get bored, hopefully before they cause an economic strain.

Free City Switchboard/Information Centre
should coordinate all services, activities, and aid and direct assistance where it is most needed. Also provide a reference point for legal aid, housing, machinery, etc.; act as a mailing address for dislocated groups or individuals and guide random energies where they are most needed. (The work load usually prevents or should prevent the handling of messages from parents to their runaway children... that should be left up to the churches of the community.)

Free Food Storage and Distribution Centre
should hit every available source of free food – produce markets, farmers' markets, meat-packing plants, farms, dairies, sheep and cattle ranches, agricultural colleges, and giant institutions (for the uneaten vats of food) – and fill up their trucks with the surplus by begging, borrowing, stealing, forming liaisons and communications with delivery drivers for the leftovers from their routes... best method is to work in two shifts: morning group picks up the foodstuffs and the afternoon shift delivers it to the list of Free Families and the poor peoples of the ghettos. Everyday. Hard work.
This gang should help people pool their welfare food stamps and get their old ladies or a group to open a free restaurant for people on the move and those who live on the streets. Giant scores should be stored in a garage-type warehouse equipped with freezers and its whereabouts known only to the Free Food Gang. This group should also set up and provide help for canning, preserving, bread baking, and feasts and anything and everything else that has to do with food.

Free City Garage and Mechanics
to repair and maintain all vehicles used in the various services. The responsibility for the necessary tools and parts needed in their work is entirely theirs and usually available by maintaining friendly relations with junkyards, giant automotive schools, and generally scrounging around those areas where auto equipment is easily obtained. The garage should be large enough and free of tripsters who only create more work for the earnest mechanics.

Free City Bank and Treasury
this group should be responsible for raising money, making free money, paying rents, for gasoline, and any other necessary expenses of the Free City Families. They should also organise and create small rackets (cookie sales, etc.) for the poor kids of the ghettos and aid in the repair and maintenance of the machinery required in the performance of the various services.

Free City Legal Assistance

high-style, hard-nosed, top-class lawyers who are willing to defend
the rights of the Free City and its services... no honky, liberal, bleeding-heart,
guilt-ridden advocates of justice, but first-class case-winners... turn on
the best lawyers who can set up airtight receivership for free money and
property, and beat down the police harassment and brutality of your areas.

Free City Housing and Work Space

rent or work deals with the urban gov't to take over spaces that have been
abandoned for use as carpentry shops, garages, theatres, etc., rent whole
houses, but don't let them turn into crash pads. Set up hotels for new arrivals
or transients by working out deals with small hotel owners for free rooms
 in exchange for light housework, porter duties, etc. Big warehouses can be
worked on by environmental artists and turned into giant free dance-fiesta-
feast palaces.

A strong trio of serious business-oriented cats should develop this
liberation of space within the cities and be able to work with the lawyers
to make deals and outmaneuver urban bureaucracies and slum landlords...
one of the main targets for space are the churches who are the holders of
most real estate and they should be approached with a no-bullshit hard line.

Free City Stores and Workshops

nothing in these stores should be throwaway items... space should be
available for chicks to sew dresses, make pants to order, recut garments
to fit, etc. The management should all be life-actors capable of turning
bullshitters into mud. Important that these places are first class
environments with no trace of salvation army/st. vinnie de paul charity rot.
Everything groovy. Everything with style... must be first class. *It's all free
because it's yours!*

Free Medical Thing

should be established in all poverty areas and run by private physicians and
free from any bureaucratic support. The Free City Bank should try to cover
the expenses, and pharmaceutical houses should be hit for medical supplies,
etc. Important that the doctors are *brothers* and do not ask to be salaried or
are not out to make careers for themselves (witness Dr. David Smith of the
Hippie Free Clinic in San Francisco who is far from a brother... very far).

Free City Hospital

should be a house converted into bed space and preferably with a garden
and used for convalescence and people whose minds have been blown
or who have just been released from a state institution and who need the
comfort and solace of their people rather than the cold alienated walls
of an urban institution.

Free City Environmental and Design Gang

gangs of artists from universities and art institutes should be turned on and
helped in attacking the dank squalor of the slums and most of the Free City
Family dwellings... paint landscapes on the sides of tenements... fiberglass
stairwells... make crazy. Tight groups of good painters, sculptors, designers
who comfortably construct environments for the community. Materials and
equipment can be hustled from university projects and manufacturers, etc.

Free City Schools

schools designed and run by different groups according to the
consciousness of their Free Families (eg. Black Man's Free School,
Anarchist's Creative Arts School, etc.). The schools should utilise
the space liberated for them by the Free City Space Gang.

Free City News and Communication Company

providers of a daily newspaper, monthly magazine, free Gestetner
and printing of notices for other groups and any special bulletins and
propaganda for the various families of the Free City. The machinery should
be kept in top condition and supplied by any of the various services. Paper
can be scavenged at large mills and cut down to proper working size.

Free City Events... Festival Planning Committees

usually involves several families interacting to sponsor tours for the kids...
Balls, Happenings, Theatre, Dance and spontaneous experiments in joy...
Park Events usually are best set up by hiring a 20-foot flatbed truck for the
rock band to use as a stage and to transport their equipment; people should
be advised by leaflets to bring food to exchange with their neighbours;
banners, props, balloons, kites, etc., should be handled by a committee;
an electrician should be around to run the generator and make sure that
the PA systems work; hard work made easy by giving responsible people
the tough jobs.

Cooperative Farms and Campsites

the farms should be run by experienced hands and the Free Land settled
on by cottage industrial people who will send their wares into the Free City.
The farms must produce vital food for the families... some free land that is
no good for farming should be used as campsites and/or cabin areas for
citizens who are in need of country leisure, as well as kids who could use
a summer in the woods.

Scavenger Corps and Transport Gang

is responsible for garbage collection and the picking up and delivery of items
to the various services, as well as liberating anything they think useful for

one project or another. They are to be responsible for the truck fleet and especially aware of the economic strain if trucks are misused by tripsters.

Free City Tinkers and Gunsmiths, Etc.
will repair and keep things going in the houses… experienced repairmen of all sorts, electricians and carpenters. They should maintain a warehouse or working space for their outfit.

Free City Radio, TV and Computer Stations
demand Free time on radio and TV stations; demand a Free City frequency to set up your own stations; rent computers to call the punches for the revolution or use them in any constructive way possible.

'EXPERIENCE 68'

THE AVANT-GARDE ARTISTS GROUP

13 May 1968
Open letter sent by the painter Pablo Suarez to the director, Jorge Romero Brest
on the occasion of the exhibition 'Experience 68' at the Di Tella Institute

Dear Mr. Jorge Romero Brest:

A week ago I wrote to you to make known the work I was thinking of developing in the Di Tella Institute. Today, only a few days later, I already feel myself incapable of doing it because of a moral impossibility. I believe that it was useful, clarifying, and that I would have been able to challenge some of the invited artists, or at least to call into question the concepts upon which their works are based. I no longer believe this is necessary. I ask myself: Is it important to make something within the institution, although you collaborate in its destruction? Things die when others replace them. If we know the end, why insist on going on until the last pirouette? Why not situate ourselves in the limit position? Just yesterday I commented to you, as I recall, that the work would go on materially disappearing from the scene and it would go on assuming attitudes and concepts that would open a new epoch and that would have a broader, less corrupted field of action.

It is clear that, to attempt moral situations in works, to utilise the signified as a materiality, gives over the necessity of creating a useful language. A living language and not a code for elites. A weapon has been invented. A recent weapon restores meaning to action. There is no danger in a store display window.

I believe the political and social situation of the country has caused this change. Until this moment I had been able to discuss the action that the Institute has developed, to accept it or judge it. Today I do not accept the Institute that represents cultural centralisation, institutionalisation, the impossibility of valuing things at the moment in which they coincide with the medium, because the institution only lets in already prestigious products for those that use them, or they have lost urgency or are not discussible given the degree of professionalism which produces them, that is, uses them without running any risk. This centralisation impedes the mass diffusion of experiences that artists can bring about. This centralisation makes all products feed prestige, not that of their creators, but that of the Institute, which with this slight change justifies as its own the foreign labour and all

movement that that implies, without risking a single cent and still benefiting from promotion in periodicals. If I were to create a work in the Institute, this would have a very limited public of people who presume intellectuality by the mere geographic fact of tranquilly stopping in the large hall of the house of art. These people don't have the least preoccupation with these things, so that the legibility of the message that I would have been able to insert into my work would lack all sense. If it occurred to me to write LONG LIVE THE POPULAR REVOLUTION in Castilian, English, or Chinese it would be absolutely the same. All is art. These four walls enclose the secret of transforming all that is within them into art, and art is not dangerous (the fault is ours).

Then? Then, those who want to ornament the Institute work there. I do not promise them that they will go far. The I.T.D.T. has no money to place anything on an international level. Those who want to be understood in some form speak out in the street or wherever they won't be misunderstood. I remind those who want to be well with God and with the devil: 'whoever would be saved must be lost'. I assure the spectators that what they are shown is already old, second-hand goods. No one can give them fabricated and packaged what is happening now, they are presenting Humanity – the work: to design living forms.

Pablo Suarez

This renunciation is a work for the Di Tella Institute. I believe that it clearly shows my conflict at the invitation, for which I believe I have fulfilled the promise.

—

23 May 1968, Buenos Aires
Artists withdraw works from 'Experience 68'

With police and judicial intervention one of the works exhibited in this 'Experience 68' exhibition at the Di Tella Institute has been closed down. For the third time in less than a year, the police have supplanted the weapons of criticism with the criticism of weapons, attributing to them a role which does not correspond to them: the exercising of aesthetic censorship. Obviously they try not only to impose their point of view on fashion and taste, with absurd haircuts and arbitrary detentions of artists and youth in general, but also on the work of these artists. But the artists and intellectuals have not been those principally persecuted: repression is also directed against the workers' and students' movements; once this has been done, they will try to muzzle all free conscience in our country. Argentine artists firmly oppose the establishment of a police state in our country.

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 'EXPERIENCE 68' EXHIBITION
WITHDRAW OUR WORKS AS A SIGN OF PROTEST.

—

12 June, 1968
Juan Pablo Renzi addresses the 'Friends of Art' Society, Rosario
(an action interrupting a society meeting with Jorge Romero Brest).

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are here because you have come to hear talk on avant-garde art and aesthetics, and avant-garde art and aesthetics is that which we make. We are here because you have avoided direct contact with our works – as if you were afraid that they would disturb your lives – but you have come here so to be told how to consume the abridged and predigested residue of our work. We are here because the institution – which is this same Romero Brest, in addition to the institution itself which is the conference within these walls, you yourselves, all together – represents the mechanism placed by the bourgeoisie to absorb, falsify, and cause to abort all creative work. To oppose, to demonstrate our attitude of independence and freedom before those who want to transform art into the 'sacrificial lamb' for this we offer to your consciences this simulacrum of transgression, as a collective work of art and also as a point of departure for a new aesthetic [at this moment in the reading the lights in the hall go out]. We believe that art is not a peaceful activity nor the decoration of the bourgeois life of anyone. We believe that art implies an active confrontation with reality – active because it aspires to transform it. We believe, in consequence, that art should constantly question the structures of official culture. We declare that the life of Che Guevara and the action of the French students are works of art more important than the greater part of the *boludeces* hanged in the major museums of the world. We aspire to transform every piece of reality into an artistic work that is shown to the conscience of the world, revealing the intimate contradictions of this class society.

DEATH TO ALL BOURGEOIS INSTITUTIONS

LONG LIVE THE ART OF THE REVOLUTION!

Translated by Harry Polkinhorn.

Avant-Garde Artists Group *Tucumán Arde* (*Tucuman is Burning*), publicity campaign, Rosario, 1968
Courtesy Graciela Carnevale

TUCUMÁN ARDE

THE AVANT-GARDE ARTISTS GROUP

The creation of the work Tucumán
Arde www.concentric.net/~lndb/
padin/lcptuc.htm

The creation of the work TUCUMÁN ARDE by the Avant-Garde Artists
group comprises four stages:

First stage: Gathering and study of documentary material on the
Tucumán problem and the social reality of the province. This stage was
completed with a prior fact-finding trip, to measure the essential aspects
of the problem and to establish the first contacts.

Second stage: a) Confrontation and verification of the Tucumán reality,
for which the artists travelled to Tucumán accompanied by a technical team
and journalists, where inquests, interviews, reports, recordings, filmings,
etc. were done in order to use them in the denunciation-exhibition which
will give evidence of the contradiction of the contents of official information
and the reality of fact, as part of the denunciation-operation. b) In agreement
with the work plan of the artists, on their arrival in Tucumán a press
conference was held in the Museum of Fine Arts with the consent of
its director, Mrs. Maria Eugenia Aybar, at which were brought together
representatives of the media, local artists, and state functionaries in charge
of culture in the province. This procedure has as its goal to uncover the
motives of political denunciation of the work while facilitating the task
of the artists and avoiding repression. The activity of the same was
communicated through false information to all the media and the authorities
of the Tucumán capital, presenting a camouflaged version of the work.
To establish evidence in the true sense of the word and to achieve the
implicit political repercussion of its ideological formulation, a second press
conference was held on their last day in the city, to which representatives of
officialdom were invited. There they violently denounced in order to unmask
the profound contradictions caused by an economic-political system based
on hunger and unemployment and the creation of a false and gratuitous
cultural superstructure.

Third stage: The denunciation-exhibition was held in collaboration with
the Argentine General Confederation of Labor, in the respective regions of
Rosario (3–9 November) and in central Buenos Aires. All the documentary

material gathered in Tucumán was used in a montage of audio-visual media, including oral information to the public on the part of the artists, intellectuals, and specialists who participated in the investigation.

Fourth stage: The fourth and last stage consisted of the closing of the information circuit on the Tucumán problem and comprised a) gathering and analysis of the documentation; b) publication of the results of the analysis; c) publication of bibliographic and audio-visual materials; and d) founding of a new aesthetic and evaluation.

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Buenos Aires, November 1968
DECLARATION OF THE ARGENTINE ARTISTS COMMITTEE

The regime's violence is cruel and clear when it is directed against the working class. It is subtler when it is directed at artists and intellectuals. On the one hand repression manifests itself in the censorship of books and films, on the other hand in the closing of exhibitions and theatres, and surrounding everything, more insidious even, permanent repression. It is necessary to look into the interior of the form that art currently comprises: an article of elegant consumption for a certain class. Artists can make themselves illusions creating apparently violent works: they will be received with indifference and even with pleasure. They will be sold and bought; their virulence will be another additive to the market of buying and selling of prestige value. How can the system appropriate and absorb works of art, even the most audacious and innovative? It can do this because these works are inscribed in the cultural frame of a society that works in such a manner that the only messages that get to the people are those that cement their oppression (principally by radio, television, newspapers, and magazines). It can do this because artists live isolated from the revolutionary fight in our country. Their works do not say what it is necessary to say; they don't find the means appropriate to do so and do not direct themselves at those who need our message. What shall we artists do, not to go on being servants of the bourgeoisie? Make the contact and participate together with the most combative and honourable activists, putting our creative militance and our militant creativity at the service of the people, at the service of the organisation of the people for the struggle. We artists must contribute to the creation of a true network of information and communication from the grassroots that opposes the broadcast network of the system. In this process we will discover and decide upon the most efficient means: the clandestine film, billboards, flyers, pamphlets, records and recorded tapes, songs and countersigns, the theatre of agitation, new forms of action and propaganda. These will be the works that the regime will not be able to repress because they will stem from the people. These will be the beautiful and useful works.

They will show the true enemy; they will inspire the people with hatred and energy for the struggle. We artists will no longer place our talent at the service of our enemies. It will be said that what we propose is not art. But what is art? The forms investigated by pure experimentation? Or better the forms that are called corrosive but that in reality satisfy the bourgeoisie that consumes them? Is art perhaps the words in their books in libraries? Dramatic actions and scenes on film in the cinemas and theatres? Images in paintings in art galleries? All quiet, all in order, in a bourgeois, conformist system. All useless.

We want to restore words, dramatic actions, images to the places where they can fulfill a revolutionary role, where they are useful, where they can be converted into weapons for the struggle. Art is all that mobilises and agitates. Art radically denies this way of life and says: let's do something to change it.

Translated by Harry Polkinhorn.

POSTERS FROM THE REVOLUTION, PARIS, MAY 1968

ATELIER POPULAIRE

To the reader:

The posters produced by the Atelier Populaire are weapons in the service of the struggle and are an inseparable part of it.

Their rightful place is in the centres of conflict, that is to say in the streets and on the walls of the factories.

To use them for decorative purposes, to display them in bourgeois places of culture or to consider them as objects of aesthetic interest is to impair both their function and their effect. This is why the Atelier Populaire has always refused to put them on sale.

Even to keep them as historical evidence of a certain stage in the struggle is a betrayal, for the struggle itself is of such primary importance that the position of an 'outside' observer is a fiction which inevitably plays into the hands of the ruling class.

That is why this book should not be taken as the final outcome of an experience, but as an inducement for finding, through contact with the masses, new levels of action both on the cultural and the political plane.

Atelier Populaire *The Start of a Long Struggle*, 1968
Poster
Courtesy the International Institute of Social History
(IISH), Amsterdam

POSITION PAPER N°I
ON REVOLUTIONARY ART

EMORY DOUGLAS

> *Revolutionary Art does not demand any more sacrifice from the revolutionary
> artist than what is demanded from a traitor (Negro) who draws for the oppressor.
> Therefore, the creation of revolutionary art is not a tragedy, but an honour and
> duty that will never be refused.*

Revolutionary Art begins with the programme that Huey P. Newton
instituted with the Black Panther Party. Revolutionary Art, like the Party,
is for the whole community and its total problems. It gives the people the
correct picture of our struggle, whereas the Revolutionary Ideology gives
the people the correct political understanding of our struggle. Before a
correct visual interpretation of the struggle can be given, we must recognise
that Revolutionary Art is an art that flows from the people. It must be a whole
and living part of the people's lives, their daily struggle to survive. To draw
about revolutionary things, we must shoot and/or be ready to shoot when
the time comes. In order to draw about the people who are shooting, we
must capture the true revolution in a pictorial fashion. We must feel what
the people feel who throw rocks and bottles at the oppressor so that when
we draw about it – we can raise their level of consciousness to hand grenades
and dynamite to be launched at the oppressor. Revolutionary Art gives
a physical confrontation with tyrants, and also enlightens the people to
continue their vigorous attack by educating the masses through participation
and observation.

Through the Revolutionary Artist's observations of the people, we
can picture the territory on which we live (as slaves): project maximum
damage to the oppressor with minimum damage to the people, and
come out victorious.

The Revolutionary Artist's talents are just one of the weapons he uses
in the struggle for Black People. His art becomes a tool for liberation.
Revolutionary Art can thereby progress as the people progress because
the People are the backbone to the Artist and not the Artist to the People.

To conceive any type of visual interpretations of the struggle, the
Revolutionary Artist must constantly be agitating the people, but before one
agitates the people, as the struggle progresses, one must make strong roots
among the masses of the people. Then and only then can a Revolutionary
Artist renew the visual interpretation of Revolutionary Art indefinitely until

liberation. By making these strong roots among the masses of the Black People, the Revolutionary Artist rises above the confusion that the oppressor has brought on the colonised people, because all of us (as slaves) from the Christian to the brother on the block, the college student and the high-school drop out, the street walker and the secretary, the pimp and the preacher, the domestic and the gangster: all the elements of the ghetto can understand Revolutionary Art.

The ghetto itself is the gallery for the Revolutionary Artist's drawings. His work is pasted on the walls of the ghetto; in storefront windows, fences, doorways, telephone poles and booths, passing buses, alleyways, gas stations, barber shops, beauty parlours, laundromats, liquor stores, as well as the huts of the ghetto.

This way the Revolutionary Artist educates the people as they go through their daily routine, from day to day, week to week, and month to month. This way the Revolutionary Artist cuts through the smokescreens of the oppressor and creates brand new images of Revolutionary action – for the total community.

Revolutionary Art is an extension and interpretation to the masses in the most simple and obvious form. Without being a revolutionary and committed to the struggle for liberation, the artist could not express revolution at all. Revolutionary Art is learned in the ghetto from the pig cops on the beat, demagogue politicians and avaricious businessmen. Not in the schools of fine art. The Revolutionary Artist hears the people's screams when they are being attacked by the pigs. They share their curses when they feel like killing the pigs, but are unequipped. He watches and hears the sounds of footsteps of Black People trampling the ghetto streets and translates them into pictures of slow revolts against the slave masters, stomping them in their brains with bullets, that we can have power and freedom to determine the destiny of our community and help to build 'our world'.

Revolutionary Art is a returning from the blind, where we no longer let the oppressor lead us around like watchdogs.

"WE ARE FROM 25 TO 30 MILLION STRONG, AND WE ARE ARMED. AND WE ARE CONSCIOUS OF OUR SITUATION. AND WE ARE DETERMINED TO CHANGE IT. AND WE ARE UNAFRAID."

WARNING TO AMERICA

Emory Douglas *Warning to America,*
The Black Panther, 27 June 1970

ALL THE WEAPONS WE USED TO USE AGAINST
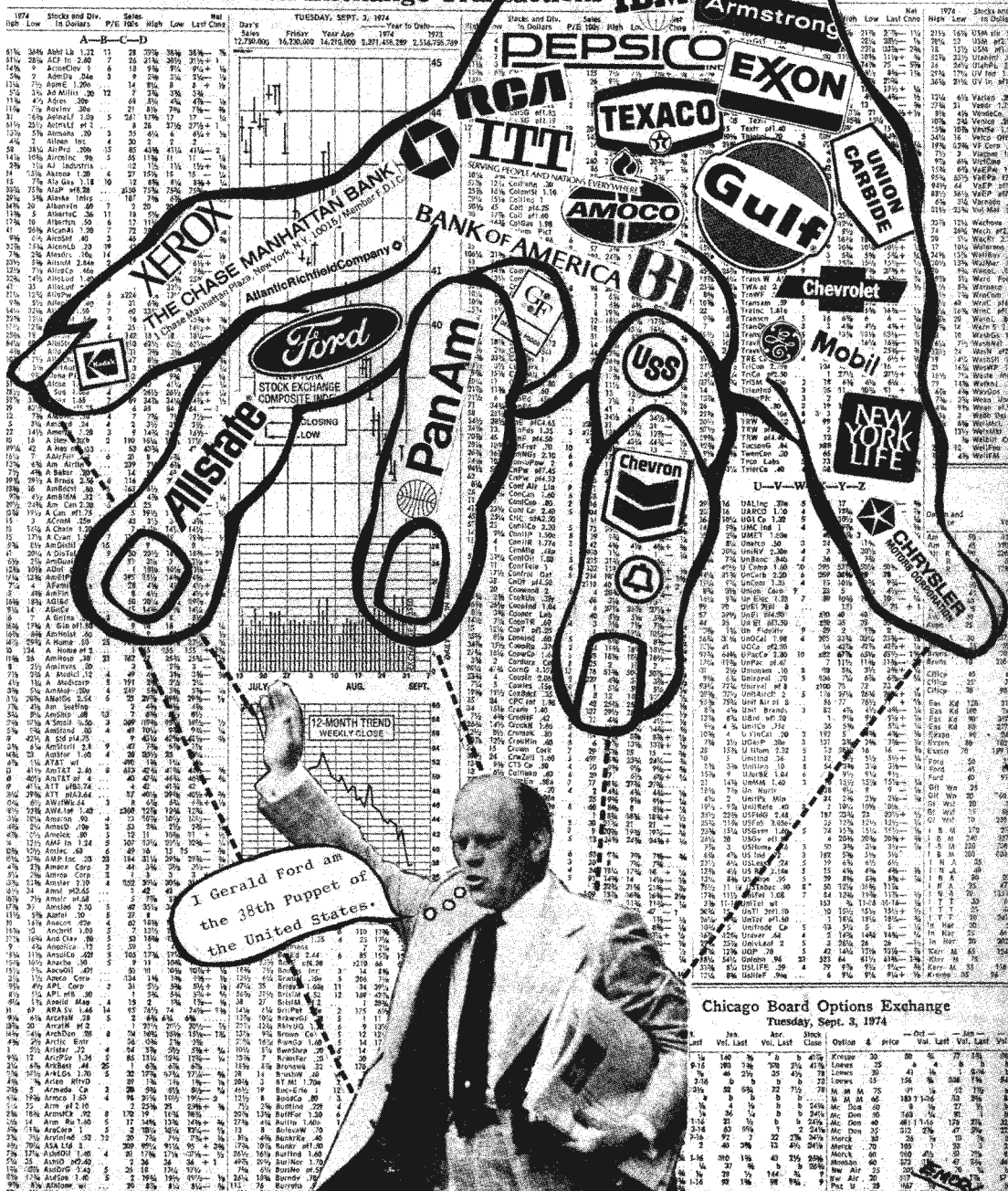# EACH OTHER WE NOW USE AGAINST THE OPPRESSOR

BY ALL MEANS AVAILABLE

Emory Douglas *By All Means Available,*
The Black Panther, 4 July 1970

Emory Douglas *I Gerald Ford am the 38th Puppet of the United States, The Black Panther,* 21 September 1974

ART FOR THE PEOPLES SAKE

EMORY DOUGLAS

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE, I'm very happy to be here as a representative from the Black Panther Party. Tonight, I would like to discuss with you the relationship of the Black artist to the Black community. We must take that as a very serious thing, because when we look at the world today, we see that we have very serious problems.

We have to understand that we have been duped into believing that we are supposed to criticise all the Greek, the Roman and all the ancient European art. We have been taught how to criticise them; we have been told how to criticise them. But what happens when we criticise them? We begin to try to duplicate them. We begin to spend our time in trying to copy something that is old, that is decadent, that is out of date... like the work of Leonardo Da Vinci, and those other painters.

But we have a greater enemy in relationship to art. We have a greater enemy, I would say, in commercial art. What is commercial art? It is a method of persuasion, mind control; it oppresses Black people. If we look around our community, what do we see? We see billboards, with advertising, that tell us what to buy, how to buy. And we go out and buy... our own oppression.

It (advertising) tells us to go out and buy a house, for 6% interest; we buy the house and suffer for the next twenty years trying to pay for that house. What am I trying to tell you? It's this: we have to take that structure of commercial art and add a brand new content to it, a content that will serve the interests of the Black people. We see that they (the capitalists) have done what we should be doing. They have analysed how to appeal to the Black people, so that Black people will go out and buy. They have begun to analyse how to relate to Black people so that we will continue to suffer – peacefully.

But we say that if we take this structure of commercial art and add a brand new content to it, then we will have begun to analyse Black people and our situation for the purpose of raising our consciousness to the oppression that we are subjected to. We would use commercial art for the purpose of educating Black people, not oppressing them. So I made that statement, in the beginning so that perhaps I could get off into an outline with a few questions in regards to *who* art is for. I would say that art is for the masses of Black people; we must bombard the masses with art. We cannot do this in

the art gallery, because our people do not go to art galleries; we can't afford to go to art galleries...

We have to put our art all over the United States, wherever Black people are. If we're talking about an art that serves our people, if we're truly talking about an art that is in the interests of Black people, then we have to use, again, the structure of commercial art.

Isn't it true, that wherever you look, all over the country, you see billboards selling a product? Isn't it true, that whenever you look in a magazine, it's selling a product? Why can't we use that same structure, in relationship to ourselves, to raise the consciousness of Black people; in regards to using our art in that same form; putting it into posters, thousands of posters, so that they can be distributed, so all Black people across the country can get the message...

We also have the question of how to define art (for ourselves)? Many would say that we define art from a dictionary, but we know that the problems are too complicated, too complex, to define art from a dictionary. We cannot even define art by a board of directors. We say that art is defined by the people, because the people are the ones who make art.

If we are truly drawing the people; if we are trying to reflect the society which we live in, then that means that we, the artists, will draw the people; but the people are the real artists. No artist can sit in an ivory tower, discussing the problems of the day, and come up with a solution on a piece of paper. The artist has to be down on the ground; he has to hear the sounds of the people, the cries of the people, the suffering of the people, the laughter of the people – the dark side and the bright side of our lives.

The dark side is the oppression, the suffering, the decadent living, which we always expose. But the bright side is that which we praise; beautiful Black people who are rising up and resisting. There is a difference between exposing and praising. We don't expose the system (of the US) in relationship to art, but, we praise the people in relationship to art. We show them as the heroes, we put them on the stage. We make characters of our people (around the idea of what they know life should be about).

We can talk about politics in art, and many people will get confused on the issue, in regard to what is primary. Is it the political situation, or the artistic situation? Art is subordinate to politics. The political situation is greater than the artistic situation. A picture can express a thousand words but action is supreme. Politics is based on action, politics starts with a hungry stomach, with dilapidated housing. Politics does not start in the political arena, it starts right down there in the community, where the suffering is. If art is subordinate, then, to the political situation, wouldn't it be true that the artist must begin to interpret the hungry stomach, bad housing, all of these things and transform these things into something that would raise the conciousness of Black people? I think that would be the most logical thing to do.

In regard to criticism in art: We praise all that which helps us in our resistance, for future liberation. We condemn all those things in art that are opposed to our liberation.

If we, as artists, do not understand our role and relationship to the society, to the political situation and the survival of Black people, then how can we create art that will project survival? How can we begin to create an art that shows a love – a true love – for Black people? When the artist begins to love the people, to appreciate them, he or she will begin to draw the people differently; we can begin to interpret and project into our art something that is much greater than it was before: freedom, justice, liberation; all those things that we could not apply to our art before.

How do we judge art... By the subjective intentions of the person (the motive)? Or do we judge art by the effect it has? We have to take both of these things into consideration. The motive is the idea; the idea that I believe a drawing should be drawn in a particular manner is only my personal thought. So, what I have to do is take into consideration, if the art is going to correspond to what's happening in the community. If it is going to elevate the level of the consciousness of Black people in the community. That means that I have to go out into the community and investigate in order to find if what I want to draw is going to correspond with the reality of the community. Then I will be taking into consideration, not only my motive, which is my own personal feeling, but I would also be taking into consideration the effect; the actual, practical everyday activity that goes on in the community. We have to link up the two...

You see, another thing that the reactionary system does, is to carry on a pacification programme by using art. They tell us that we should not draw things that deal with liberation, that we should not draw things that deal with violence. But at the same time they perpetrate the worst violence on the planet Earth while they have us drawing pictures of flowers and butterflies. We must understand, that when there are over 20 million people in this country, hungry, then we, as artists, have something we must deal with...

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LETTER, APRIL 1968

HANS HAACKE

Last week's murder of Dr. King came as a great shock. Linda and I were gloomy for days and have still not quite recovered. The event pressed something into focus that I have known for long but never realised so bitterly and helplessly, namely, that what we are doing, the production and the talk about sculpture, has no relation to the urgent problems of our society. Whoever believes that art can make life more humane is utterly naive. Mondrian was one of those naive saints … Nothing, but really absolutely nothing is changed by whatever type of painting or sculpture or happening you produce on the level where it counts, the political level. Not a single napalm bomb will not be dropped by all the shows of 'Angry Arts'. Art is utterly unsuited as a political tool. No cop will be kept from shooting a black by all the light-environments in the world. As I've said, I've known that for a number of years and I was never really bothered by it. All of a sudden it bugs me. I am also asking myself, why the hell am I working in this field at all. Again an answer is never at hand that is credible, but it did not particularly disturb me. I still have no answer, but I am no longer comfortable.

MANIFESTO FOR THE GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP

GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP

30 October 1969, New York.

1. We demand that the Museum of Modern Art sell the equivalent of one million dollars worth of art works from their collection and that the money be given to the poor of all races of this country, the money to be used by those communities and for those communities, without any interference or entrenched conditions.

We as artists feel that at this time of social crisis there is no better use for art than to have it serve an urgent social need. We realise that one million dollars given to the poor to help alleviate their condition can be no more than a symbolic gesture, but at this time of social crisis even the smallest gesture on the part of an art institution will have a profound effect toward changing the attitude of the establishment toward the poor. In a sense, the donation is a form of reparation to the poor, for art has always served an elite, and therefore has been part of the oppression of the poor by that elite.

2. We demand that the Museum of Modern Art decentralise its power structure to a point of communalisation.

Art, to have any relevance at all today, must be taken out of the hands of an elite and returned to the people. The art establishment as it is used today is a classical form of repression. Not only does it repress the artist, but it is used:

1 – to manipulate the artists themselves, their work and what they say for the benefit of an elite working together with the military/business complex.

2 – to force people to accept more easily – or to distract them from – the repression by the military/business complex by giving it a better image.

3 – as propaganda for capitalism and imperialism all over the world.

It is no longer a time for artists to sit as puppets or 'chosen representative of' at the feet of an art elite, but rather it is the time for a true communalisation where anyone, regardless of condition or race, can become involved in the actual policy-making and control of the museum.

3. We demand that the Museum of Modern Art be closed until the end of the war in Vietnam.

There is no justification for the enjoyment of art while we are involved in the mass murder of people. Today the museum serves not so much as an enlightening educational experience, as it does a diversion from the realities of war and social crisis. It can only be meaningful if the pleasures of art are denied instead of revelled in. We believe that art itself is a moral commitment to the development of the human race and a negation of the repressive social reality. This does not mean that art should cease to exist or to be produced – especially in serious times of crisis when art can become a strong witness and form of protest – only the sanctification of art should cease during these times.

New York, October 30, 1969

Guerrilla Art Action Group:
Jon Hendricks
Jean Toche

Guerrilla Art Action Group (Jon Hendricks, Jean Toche)
Demonstration in front of Picasso's *Guernica* at the Museum
of Modern Art, New York, with the The Art Workers
Coalition poster bearing the words 'Q. And babies?
A. And babies.', 8 January 1970; Photograph © Jan van Raay

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

GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP

10 November 1969, New York.

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

These people seek to appease their guilt with gifts of blood money and donations of works of art to the Museum of Modern Art. We as artists feels that there is no moral justification whatsoever for the Museum of Modern Art to exist at all if it must rely solely on the continued acceptance of dirty money. By accepting soiled donations from these wealthy people, the museum is destroying the integrity of art. These people have been in actual control of the museum's policies since its founding. With this power they have been able to manipulate artists' ideas; sterilise art of any form of social protest and indictment of the oppressive forces in society; and therefore render art totally irrelevant to the existing social crisis.

1. According to Ferdinand Lundberg in his book, *The Rich and the Super-Rich*, the Rockefellers own 65% of the Standard Oil corporations. In 1966, according to Seymour M. Hersh in his book, *Chemical and Biological Warfare*, the Standard Oil Corporation of California – which is a special interest of David Rockefeller (Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art) – leased one of its plants to United Technology Center (UTC) for the specific purpose of manufacturing napalm.
2. According to Lundberg, the Rockefeller brothers own 20% of the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation (manufacturers of the Phantom and Banshee jet fighter which were used in the Korean War). According to Hersh, the McDonnell Corporation has been deeply involved in chemical and biological warfare research.

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

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

New York, November 10, 1969

Guerrilla Art Action Group:
Silvianna
Jon Hendricks
Poppy Johnson
Jean Toche

Supported by The Action Committee for the Art Workers Coalition

LETTER TO RICHARD M. NIXON

GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP

To: Richard M. Nixon
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Guerrilla Art Action, to be performed every day, from May 1 through
May 6, 1971 by Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States of America:

E A T   W H A T   Y O U   K I L L

Guerrilla Art Action Group
No.1 White Street
New York, N.Y. 10013

Jon Hendricks
Jean Toche

INSERTIONS INTO IDEOLOGICAL CIRCUITS, 1970–75

CILDO MEIRELES

I — Between 1968 and 1970 I knew I was beginning to touch on something interesting. I was no longer working with metaphorical representations of situations; I was working with the real situation itself. Furthermore, the kind of work I was making had what could be described as a 'volatilised' form. It no longer referred to the cult of the isolated object; it existed in terms of what it could spark off in the body of society. This was what one had in one's head at that time: the necessity to work with the idea of the public. Many Brazilian artists were including everyday materials and actions in their work; directing the work towards a large, indefinite number of people: what is called the public.

Today there is the danger of making work knowing exactly who will be interested in it. The idea of the public, which is a broad, generous notion, has been replaced, through a process of deformation, by the idea of the consumer, that section of the public which has acquisitive power. The *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* arose out of the need to create a system for the circulation and exchange of information that did not depend on any kind of centralised control. This would be a form of language, a system essentially opposed to the media of press, radio and television – typical examples of media that actually reach an enormous audience, but in the circulation systems of which there is always a degree of control and channelling of the information inserted. In other words, in those media the 'insertion' is performed by an elite that has access to the levels on which the system is developed: technological sophistication involving huge amounts of money and/or power.

The *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* took shape as two projects: the *Coca-Cola Project* and the *Cédula Project* with banknotes. The work began with a text I wrote in April 1970 which sets out this position:

1. In society there are certain mechanisms for circulation (circuits).
2. These circuits clearly embody the ideology of the producer, but at the same time they are passive when they receive insertions into their circuits.

3. This occurs whenever people initiate the circuits.

The *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* also arose from the recognition of two fairly common practices: chain letters (letters you receive, copy and send on to other people) and messages in bottles, flung into the sea by victims of shipwrecks. Implicit in these practices is the notion of a circulating medium, a notion crystallised most clearly in the case of paper money and, metaphorically, in returnable containers (soft drink bottles, for example).

As I see it, the important thing in the project was the introduction of the concept of 'circuit', isolating it and fixing it. It is this concept that determines the dialectical content of the work, while interfering with each and every effort contained within the very essence of the process (the medium). In other words, the container always carries with it an ideology. My initial idea was based on the recognition of a 'circuit' that naturally exists. An 'insertion' into this circuit is always a form of counter-information.

An insertion capitalises on the sophistication of the medium in order to achieve an increase in equality of access to mass communication. Additionally, it brings about a transformation of the original ideological propaganda inherent in the circuit – whether produced by industry or by the state. The effect of this ideological circuit is like an anaesthetisation of public consciousness. The process of insertion thus contrasts awareness (a result of the insertion) with anaesthesia (the property of the existing circuit). Awareness is seen as a function of art and anaesthesia as a product of the alienation inherent in industrialised capitalism.

Art, of course, has a social function and has more ways than industry of creating a greater density of awareness in relation to the society from which it emerges. The role of industry is exactly the opposite of this. As it exists today, the power of industry is based on the greatest possible coefficient of alienation. …

A transaction occurs in the plastic arts which is based either on the mystique of the work in itself or the mystique of its author; or it moves towards the mystique of the market – the game of ownership and exchange value. Strictly speaking, none of these aspects should take priority. As soon as distinctions start to be made in one direction or another, a further distinction emerges between those who can make art and those who cannot. The way I conceived it, the *Insertions* would only exist to the extent that they ceased to be the work of just one person. The work only exists to the extent that other people participate in it. What also arises is the need for anonymity. By extension, the question of anonymity involves the question of ownership. When the object of art becomes a practice, it becomes something over which you can have no control or ownership. Furthermore, to the extent that you no longer need to go to the information (because the information comes to you) the right conditions are created for 'exploding' the notion of a *sacred space*. …

In so far as museums and galleries form a sacred space for representation, they become like the Bermuda Triangle: anything you put there, any idea, is automatically sucked in and neutralised by the context of display. I think art tries primarily to make a commitment with the public; not with the purchaser of art (the market), but with the audience sitting out there in the stalls. The shadowy presence of this envisaged audience is the most important element in the whole endeavour. One works with the possibility (that the plastic arts provide) of creating a new language to express each new idea. Always one works with the possibility of transgressing reality, to make works that do not simply exist in an approved, consecrated, sacred space: that do not happen simply in terms of a canvas, a surface, a representation. No longer working with the metaphor of gunpowder, one uses gunpowder itself. No longer concerned with the object, one is left with a practice, over which there can be no control or ownership. ...

11 — When Marcel Duchamp stated that his aim was to free art from the dominion of the hand, he could not foresee the point art would reach by 1970, with the development of Conceptualism. The source of art (in the handmade, which, at the time Duchamp was writing, could be located easily and effectively combated) has now been displaced from the hand to the brain – an area that is harder to access and apprehend.

Today, Duchamp's phrase reminds us of a lesson that has still not been learned. Duchamp fought not so much against the dominion of the hand as against the *process* of manual craftsmanship; against the gradual emotional, rational and psychological lethargy that habitual, mechanical labour inevitably produces in the individual. The struggle today should be not against the handmade but against its *logic*.

The fact that one's hands are not soiled with art means nothing except that one's hands are clean. Yet what one sees in much current conceptually-based art is simply relief and delight at not using one's hands, as if everything were finally alright; as if at this specific moment artists did not need to start fighting against a much larger opponent: the habits and handiwork of the brain.

Style, whether derived from the hands or the brain (reason), is an anomaly. It is more intelligent to abort such anomalies than help them to survive.

Art-Culture

Duchamp's intervention in the art system was in terms of the logic of the art object. Any intervention in this sphere today – given that culture, rather than an exclusive sphere of art, is now the subject – is necessarily a political intervention. For *if aesthetics is the basis of art, politics is the basis of culture.*

III —
1. Insertions into circuits.
2. Insertions into ideological circuits.

The readymade: a closed-circuit television, broadcasting messages about enigmas in the world.

Insertions

Science devotes itself to the study of static phases of phenomena. With this knowledge it seeks to categorise and determine these phenomena. However, science can only begin to understand these phenomena fully by coming face-to-face with them – adopting the same viewpoint as the phenomena themselves. To explain by analogy: we can learn virtually nothing about a film if the only knowledge we have of it is random, isolated, individual frames.

In the action of insertion it is velocity that specifically interests me. Here it is a matter of verifying the actual speed of the process.

Circuits

Referential system, circulation, range.
Awareness within anaesthesia.
The need for a new kind of behaviour that is also critical:
a natural imposition.
Translated interpretations that cease to have any importance
when interpretations are no longer made like works.
The theme becomes raw material.
Marcel Duchamp's readymades begin to indicate this anaesthesia
but do not act on it.
They can be considered art objects.

Criticism can only breathe if it understands the following:
1. It is not dependent upon any other activity but upon
   a different level of focus on the same problem.
2. In any race where the artist is the driver, the technical team
   are the hot-rods.
3. The problem may be one of immersion, rising or expansion.
4. The problem may be of a philosophical or a didactic nature.
5. To survive the problems consequent upon its own process of
   historical development, criticism must be more lucid and
   wide-ranging, less meta-critical.
6. The circulation of coins (ideology)
   Static industrial products (ideological circuits)
   Periodicals, magazines (ideological circuits)
   Radio, television, cinema (ideological circuits)

Insertion into Existing Circuits

...The opposite of readymades. Also the opposite of what André Breton proposed (putting into circulation enigmatic objects that derive from dreams), because Breton never concerned himself with the kinds of circuits involved, predominantly referring to the so-called art circuit, which is today perfectly dispensable.

The first step: to replace the notion of a market with that of the public.

The need for a market, and progressive concern about it, leads today's Brazilian artists into committing increasingly serious errors:
1. Slavish dependence on a model with colonialist characteristics which is in its death-throes.
2. Discrimination towards the public.
3. Thematic pretence, where denunciation of violence gives rise to a delicate tragic farce, or inconsequential immersion in landscape, or passive, closet intellectualism.
4. A sad connivance with the constituted powers.
5. Creative anaesthesia.
6. A shameful ideological betrayal of the majority of Brazilians.

Where the notion of fraternal sharing of information and culture is replaced by that of the empowered consumer, an attitude of playing emerges; in these conditions the most that can be achieved is a model that already exists, known and recognisably reactionary. If the history of the plastic arts is the history of the bourgeoisie itself, it is no mere coincidence that the Renaissance is now seen historically as a proto-bourgeois revolution. In Brazil today, one can observe the model of the *artist-marchand* – a relationship of production, distribution and consumption. This system is founded on the systematic favouring of the individual who purchases, invests and creates humiliating conditions for those who produce. However, today artists can direct their creative abilities towards acquiring (shaping) a behaviour that focuses on:

1. Exploiting no one; allowing no one to exploit oneself.
2. Having nothing. Nothing to lose.

In other words, incorporating into the production process 60 to 70 percent of the reality that surrounds us.

This is not romanticism. The current economic reality of our planet explodes the ideological mystique of the artist ...

Cildo Meireles *Insertions into Ideological Circuits:*
Cédula Project, 1970
Rubber stamp on banknotes

Zero Dollar, 1978–84
Litho offset on paper
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Luisa Strina

RADICAL SOFTWARE
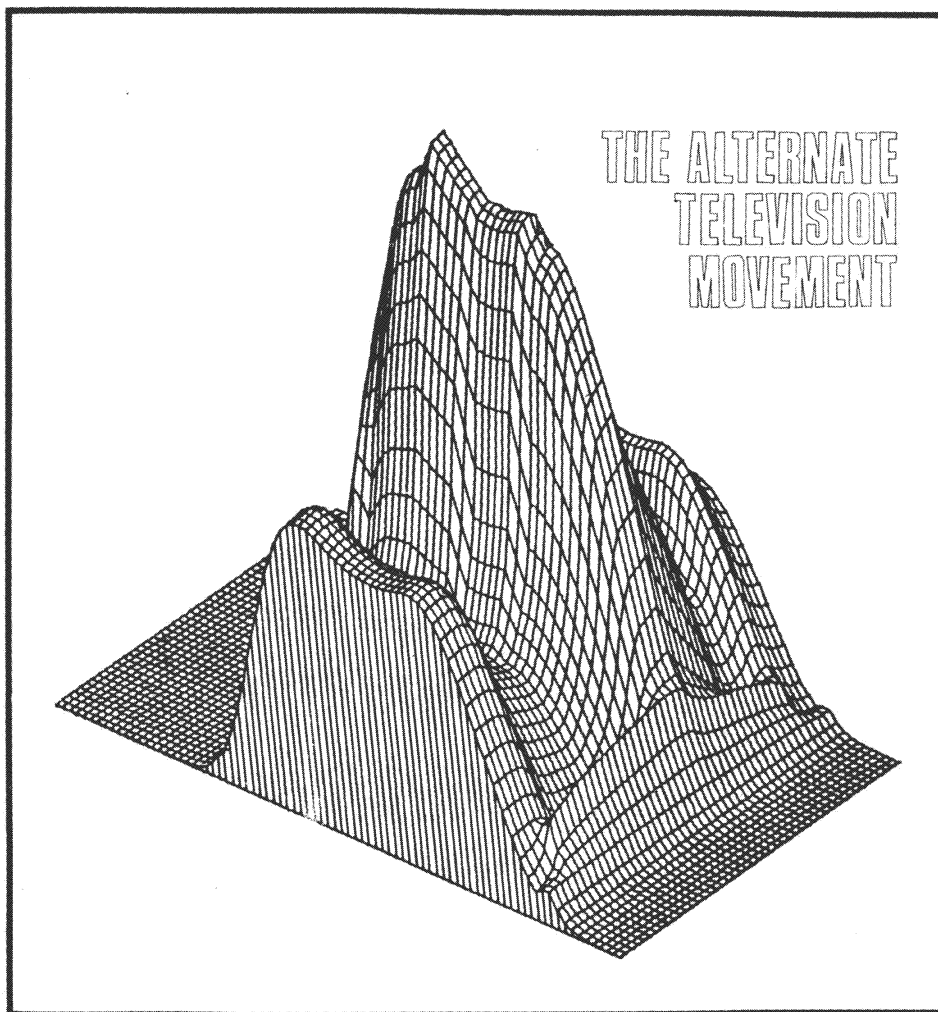
THE ALTERNATE TELEVISION MOVEMENT

NUMBER 1   1970

RADICAL SOFTWARE, VOL.1 N°I, THE ALTERNATE TELEVISION MOVEMENT

PHYLLIS GERSHUNY AND BERYL KOROT

As problem solvers we are a nation of hardware freaks. Some are into seizing property or destroying it. Others believe in protecting property at any cost including life or at least guarding it against spontaneous use. Meanwhile, unseen systems shape our lives. Power is no longer measured in land, labour, or capital, but by access to information and the means to disseminate it. As long as the most powerful tools (not weapons) are in the hands of those who would hoard them, no alternative cultural vision can succeed. Unless we design and implement alternate information structures which transcend and reconfigure the existing ones, other alternate systems and life styles will be no more than products of the existing process.

Fortunately, new tools suggest new uses, especially to those who are dissatisfied with the uses to which old tools are being put. We are not a computerised version of some corrupted ideal culture of the early 1900s, but a whole new society because we are computerised. Television is not merely a better way to transmit the old culture, but an element in the foundation of a new one.

Our species will survive neither by totally rejecting nor unconditionally embracing technology – but by humanising it: by allowing people access to the informational tools they need to shape and reassert control over their lives. There is no reason to expect technology to be disproportionately bad or good relative to other realms of natural selection. The automobile as a species, for example, was once a good thing. But it has now overrun its ecological niche and upset our balance or optimum living. Only by treating technology as ecology can we cure the split between ourselves and our extensions. We need to get good tools into good hands – not reject all tools because they have been misused to benefit only the few.

Even life styles as diverse as the urban political and the rural communal require complex technological support systems which create their own realities, realities which will either have to be considered as part of the problem, or, better, part of the solution, but which cannot be ignored.

Coming of age in America means electronic imprinting which has already conditioned many millions of us to a process, global awareness. And we intuitively know that there is too much centralisation and too little feedback designed into our culture's current systems.

The only pieces of public technology, for example, which are responsive to human choice are electric-eye doors and self-service elevators. Street-use patterns and building designs completely structure our experience rather than vice-versa. (The people belong to the streets.) When you get into mass communications systems other than the telephone not only is control centralised, but decision-making is an institutional rather than a people process.

Fortunately, however, the trend of all technology is towards greater access through decreased size and cost. Low-cost, easy-to-use, portable videotape systems, may seem like 'Polaroid home movies' to the technical perfectionists who broadcast 'situation' comedies and 'talk' shows, but to those of us with as few preconceptions as possible they are the seeds of a responsive, useful communications system.

Videotape can be to television what writing is to language. And television, in turn, has subsumed written language as the globe's dominant communications medium. Soon accessible VTR systems and video cassettes (even before CATV opens up) will make alternate networks a reality.

Those of us making our own television know that the medium can be much more than 'a radio with a screen' as it is still being used by the networks as they reinforce product oriented and outdated notions of fixed focal point, point of view, subject matter, topic, asserting their own passivity, and ours, giving us feedback of feedback of information rather than asserting the implicit immediacy of video, immunising us to the impact of information by asking us to anticipate what already can be anticipated – the nightly dinnertime Vietnam reports to serialised single format shows. If information is our environment, why isn't our environment considered information?

—

To encourage dissemination of the information in Radical Software we have created our own symbol of an x within a circle: (x). This is a xerox mark, the antithesis of copyright, which means DO copy.

THE VIDEOSPHERE

GENE YOUNGBLOOD

Extract from Gene Youngblood
'The Videosphere', *Radical Software*,
vol.1 no.1, New York, 1970.

THE MEDIA MUST BE LIBERATED, MUST BE REMOVED FROM PRIVATE OWNERSHIP AND COMMERCIAL SPONSORSHIP, MUST BE PLACED IN THE SERVICE OF ALL HUMANITY. WE MUST MAKE THE MEDIA BELIEVABLE. WE MUST ASSUME CONSCIOUS CONTROL OVER THE VIDEOSPHERE. WE MUST WRENCH THE INTERMEDIA NETWORK FREE FROM THE ARCHAIC AND CORRUPT INTELLIGENCE THAT NOW DOMINATES IT.

CYBERNETIC GUERRILLA WARFARE

PAUL RYAN

> *To fight a hundred times and win a hundred times is not the blessing of blessings.
> The blessing of blessings is to beat the other man's army without getting
> into the fight yourself.*
>   The Art of War, Sun Tzu

Part 1 – Guerrilla Strategy and Cybernetic Theory

Traditional guerrilla activity – such as bombings, snipings, and kidnappings complete with printed manifestos – seems like so many ecologically risky short-change feedback devices compared with the real possibilities of portable video, maverick data banks, acid metaprogramming, Cable TV, satellites, cybernetic craft industries, and alternate lifestyles. Yet the guerrilla tradition is highly relevant in the current information environment. Guerrilla warfare is by nature irregular and non-repetitive. Like information theory it recognises that redundancy can easily become reactionary and result in entropy and defeat. The juxtaposition of cybernetics and guerrilla strategy suggests a way of moving that is a genuine alternative to the film scenario of NYC urban guerrilla warfare *Ice*. Using machine guns to round up people in an apartment house for a revolutionary teach-in is not what the information environment is about. All power does not proceed from the end of a gun.

We suffer the violence of the entropy of old forms – nuclear family, educational institutions, supermarketing, cities, the oil slick complex, etc., etc. They are running us down, running down on us and with us. How do we get out of the way? How do we develop new ways? This ship of state continues to oscillate into runaway from its people and its planetary responsibilities, while efforts continue to seduce us onto boarding this sinking ship – educational loans, fellowships, lowering the voting age. Where did Nixon come from anyway? How did that leftover from the days of Elvis get to be Captain of our ship, Master of our fate?

How many Americans once horrified by thermonuclear war are now thinking the unthinkable in ecological terms with a certain spiteful glee of relief at the prospect of a white hell for all?

Psychedelic my ass: Children of A-Bomb
    Bob Lenox

Nobody with any wisdom is looking for a straight out fight. We have come to understand that in fighting you too easily become what you behold. Yet there is no way on this planet to get out of the way. Strategy and tactics need be developed so the establishment in its entropy does not use up our budgets of flexibility. The efforts to enlist the young in the traditional political parties by 72 will be gross. Relative to the establishment and its cultural automatons, we need to move from pure Weiner-wise Augustinian Cybernetics into the realm of war-game theory and practice in the information environment.

The most elegant piece of earth technology remains the human biocomputer; the most important data banks are in our brain cells. Inherent in cybernetic guerrilla warfare is the absolute necessity of having the people participate as fully as possible. This can be done in an information environment by insisting on ways of feeding back for human enhancement rather than feeding off people for the sake of concentration of power through capital, pseudo-mythologies or withheld information. The information economy that begins in a guerrilla mode accepts, cultivates and depends on living, thinking flesh for its success. People are not information coolies rickshawing around the perceptions of the privileged, the well paid, or the past. People can and do process information according to the uniqueness of their perceptual systems. Uniqueness is premium in a noospheric culture that thrives on high variety. Information is here understood as a difference that makes a difference. The difficulties of a negentropic or information culture are in the transformations: how do we manage transformation of differences without exploitation, jam or corruption that sucks power from people.

I am not talking about cultivation of perceptual systems at the expense of emotional cadences. Faster is not always better. Doing it all ways sometimes means slowing down. Internal syncing of all facets is critical to the maintenance of a flexibility and avoidance of non-cybernetic 'hang-up' and 'drag'.

The bulk of the work done on cybernetics from Weiner's guided missiles through the work at IBM and Bell Labs along with the various academic spin-offs has been big budget, establishment-supported and conditioned by the relation of those intellectuals to the powers that be, distinctly non-cybernetic and unresponsive to people. The concept of entropy itself may be so conditioned. Witness the parallel between Weiner's theoretical statements about enclaves and the enclave theory of withdrawal from Vietnam. One of the grossest results of this situation is the preoccupation of the phone company and others with making 'foolproof terminals' since many potential users are assumed to be fools who can only give the most-dumb dumb responses. So fools are created.

The Japanese, the people we dropped the A-Bomb on in 1945, introduced the portable video system to this country in 1967, at a price low enough that independent and semi-independent users could get their hands on it and begin to experiment. This experimentation, this experience, carries within it the logic of cybernetic guerrilla warfare.

Warfare... because having total control over the processing of video puts you in direct conflict with that system of perceptual imperialism called broadcast television that puts a terminal in your home and thereby controls your access to information. This situation of conflict also exists as a matter of fact between people using portable video for feedback and in situations such as schools that operate through withholding and controlling the flow of information.

Guerrilla warfare... because the portable video tool only enables you to fight on a small scale in an irregular way at this time. Running to the networks with portable video material seems rear-view mirror at best, reactionary at worst. What is critical is to develop an infrastructure to cable in situations where feedback and relevant access routes can be set up as part of the process.

Cybernetic guerrilla warfare... because the tool of portable video is a cybernetic extension of man and because cybernetics is the only language of intelligence and power that is ecologically viable. Guerrilla warfare as the Weathermen have been engaging in it up to now and revolution as they have articulated it is simply play-acting on the stage of history. Guerrilla theatre, doing it for the hell of it on their stage doesn't make it either. We need [to] develop biologically viable information structures on a planetary scale. Nothing short of that will work. We move now in this present information environment in a phase that finds its best analogue in those stages of human struggle called guerrilla warfare.

Yet this is not China in the 1930s. Though there is much to learn from Mao and traditional guerrilla warfare this is not the same. Critically, for instance, in an economy that operates on the transformation of differences a hundred flowers must bloom from the beginning. In order to 'win' in cybernetic guerrilla warfare, differences must be cherished, not temporarily suppressed for the sake of 'victory'. *A la* McLuhan, war is education. Conflict defines differences. We need to know *what not to be* enough to internally calculate our own becoming earth-alive noosphere. The more we are able to internally process differences among us the more we will be able to process 'spoils' of conflict with the entropic establishment – ie., understanding the significant differences between us and them in such a way as to avoid processing what is dangerous and death producing. Learn what you can from the Egyptians, the exodus is cybernetic.

Traditional guerrilla warfare is concerned with climate and weather. We must concern ourselves with decoding the information contours of the culture. How does power function here? How is this system of

communications and control maintained? What information is habitually withheld and how? Ought it to be jammed? How do we jam it? How do we keep the action small enough so it is relevant to real people? How do we build up an indigenous data base? Where do we rove and strike next?

Traditional guerrilla warfare is concerned with knowing the terrain. We must expand this to a full understanding of the ecological thresholds within which we move. We must know ourselves in a cybernetic way, know the enemy in a cybernetic way and know the ecology so that we can take and take care of the planet intact.

The traditional concern is find good generals. What's desirable for us is *ad hoc* heterarchies of power which have their logistics down. Cybernetics understands that power is distributed throughout the system. Relevant pathways shift and change with the conditions. The navy has developed war plans where the command in a fleet moves from ship to ship every 15 minutes. It is near impossible to knock out the command vessel.

The traditional tricks of guerrilla warfare are remarkably suited for cybernetic action in an information environment. To scan briefly:

Mixing 'straight' moves with 'freak' moves. Using straight moves to engage the enemy, freak moves to beat him and not letting the enemy know which is which.

Running away when it's just too heavy. Leave the enemy's strong places and seek the weak. Go where you can make a difference.

Shaping the enemy's forces and keeping our own unshaped, thereby beating the many with the few.

Faking the enemy out. Surprise attacks.

The business of deception in guerrilla warfare is a turn-off for most people in this relatively open culture. This is simply an area that need be better understood, if we are to be successful. People feel that concealing is unethical. Yet overexposure means underdevelopment. Many projects die of too much publicity. There is a sense in which we are information junkies feeding off each other's unlived hopes. The media repeatedly stunts the growth of alternate culture in this country through saturation coverage. It is hard for an American to just keep his mouth shut and get something cooking. You are what you reveal. The star system renders impotent by overexposure and keeps others impotent through no exposure. Seeming different is more important than making a difference. Deception in guerrilla tactics is an active way of avoiding control by an alien, alienating intelligence. When a policeman takes your name, he takes over. I know a guy who is inventing another identity for the computer. There is a virtue of mistrust and wisdom in knowing significantly more about yourself than you reveal. *Love thy label as thyself.*

We retreat in space, but we advance in time.
    Mao

Count the cost. We need to develop an information accounting system, a cultural calculus.

Use the enemy's supply. With portable video one can take the Amerikan mythology right off the air and use it as part of a new perceptual collage.

Be flexible. In cybernetics, flexibility, the maintenance of a good guessing way is critical.

Patience. Cybernetics is inherently concerned with timing and time design. It is a protracted war.

> *Do not repeat a tactic which has gained you victory, but shape your actions in an infinite variety. Water sets its flow according to the ground below; set your victories according to the enemy against you. War has no constant aspect as water has no constant shape.*
> Sun Tzu

PROCLAMATION OF
THE ORANGE FREE STATE

THE KABOUTERS

How does a new society grow out of the old one? Like a toadstool on a rotting tree stump.

An alternative society is growing out of the sub-culture of the existing order. The underground society of disaffected youth is coming above ground and, independent of the ruling authorities, is going to govern itself. This revolution has now been consummated. This is the end of the underground, of protest, of demonstrating; from now on we will devote our energy to building an anti-authoritarian society.

We will take what we can use from the old society: knowledge, socialist ideas and the best of the liberal tradition. The toadstool of the new society feeds on the sap of the rotting tree stump until it is eaten away. The old society will wear out before our eyes; we shall consume it. The toadstools of the new society will be sown right and left. Fairy rings of gnome cities will federate into a worldwide network – the Orange Free State.

Why does the old society perish? Because it can't save itself from its own conflicts. Political tensions between existing authoritarian governments can explode into a military catastrophe at any moment. Official technology and industry's aggression against nature systematically demolish the biological environment and apocalyptic catastrophes will result within a few years. Unprecedented epidemics, food poisoning and famine, mass extinction of animals and humans are inevitable if this isn't averted by the rise of a new culture. A new culture with a new man – the culture gnome who will remove the tension between nature and the old culture. Who understands animals and unites people in love, who will restore unity among everything that lives.

In the new society the cultural gnome will have to resolve the conflicts of the old society, doomed to disappear. It will be his task to remove the tension between town and country by a marriage between them, to remove the tensions between the 'responsible' commander and the irresponsible soldier, between master and servant and between government and people, by the creation of a new society in which everyone has responsibility and can determine his own fate, to end the tension between work and free time, and to surmount the tension between wealth and poverty by the collectivisation

of property. The cultural gnome will seal the perfect marriage between the contradictions of the old system.

A new society will steer right across the old, established order. For the provotariat the government in the Hague is only a shadow cabinet, its mayors but shadow mayors, its cudgelling policemen only ghostly apparitions of a fading existence. Their laws, chains of office and cudgels lose their grip on the new reality we create.

The old society cannot bring the battle against the new under control, let alone win it. By itself it cannot possibly be in a position to solve the problems of authoritarianism and the mutilation of nature. Thus the old society can only be saved if it takes on the characteristics of the new. Since its choice is between ruin and assimilation with the new society, it, too, is forced to turn down the road of the beloved revolution.

The revolution is in a hurry. So the new society will have to make the most of its knowledge of sabotage techniques to hasten the transition from an authoritarian and dirty society to an anti-authoritarian and clean one. In fact the existence of an autonomous, new community in the heart of the old order is the most effective sabotage. But whatever techniques the people's army of saboteurs may use, it will always remember that it cannot resemble the old world's armies in anything, anything, anything. The irresponsible soldier of the old army is the bugaboo and symbol of what the responsible saboteur of the anti-authoritarian people's army must overcome. Therefore his sabotage will also be selective, and will constantly strive for non-violence. And sabotage is not the only weapon at our disposal. Eroticism and pseudo-eroticism are other means of revealing the new world to absolutely everyone.

What will the new society look like? It would be wrong on principle if we tried to give a complete picture of our new society, just as you cannot know a new love completely. It is precisely the unknown which paints the picture of her attraction. Although the new love must be explored, we know her all the same. And the same goes for the new society. The new society is not governed. It governs itself because everyone is drawn into making decisions on the economy, planning, defence, environmental hygiene and all other affairs of public interest. Excepting political decision-making, which can be forgotten because politicians, as they now exist, will vanish. If everyone is involved in decision-making, politicians are superfluous and politics, which was always power politics, dies. The new self-ruling society is a 'council democracy'. Councils are formed in factories, offices, universities and schools by those who work there. In neighbourhoods, towns and cities, councils are formed by those who live there. All the councils merge into coordinating councils which can survey national and international problems and take regulatory action. These coordinating councils will never use brute force. They won't need to, either, for they will always be under the direct control of voters who give them strict instructions. The new society is

socialistic because it has abolished personal ownership of the means of production. But this socialism has nothing to do with the old bureaucratic and centralised socialism. It is decentralised and anti-authoritarian. It leaves as many decisions as possible to the people on the spot, in their various councils. It is no longer the socialism of the clenched fist, but of the entwined fingers, the erect penis, the flying butterfly, the touching glance, the holy cat. It is anarchism. Meeting together on 5 February at Akhnaton in the first gnome city, the first commune of the Orange Free State, the provotariat proposes the following measures to establish a self-governing independent society:

1. The founding of people's departments, voluntary, unsalaried steering committees. All their documents are public. They are accountable to weekly meetings where everyone can voice criticisms. There are 12 people's departments:

a) *People's Department for Public Works.* For the time being it will plant new greenery and break up motorways.

b) *People's Department for Social Affairs.* First task: establishment of workers' and neighbourhood councils. Striving for equal pay.

c) *People's Department for Environmental Hygiene.* Restoration of biological balance.

d) Buro de Kraker[1] will be socialised into the *People's Department for People's Housing.*

e) *People's Department for Traffic and Waterways.* Building of rapid free public transport.

f) *People's Department for the Satisfaction of Needs.* Building of an alternative economy which doesn't have profit as its goal, but the satisfaction of human needs.

g) *People's Department for the Spiritual Health of the People.* This researches and cures the causes of criminality and thus takes over the work of the old Ministry of Justice.

h) *People's Department for Agriculture.* The new agriculture is based on biologically acceptable methods. Breaking through the vicious circle of over-production and destruction of surpluses, which is caused by the use of insecticides.

i) *People's Department for Education.* Establishment of anti-authoritarian nurseries and primary schools. Encouragement of project education. Advancement of the one-man-one-vote principle in higher education, ie. school and university councils.

[1] Amsterdam squatting organisation.

j) *People's Department for Sub-Culture and Creativity.* Takes over the job of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work.

k) The people's university for sabotage and pseudo-eroticism is socialised into the *People's Department for Sabotage of Power and Force* to replace the Ministry of Defence.

l) *People's Department for International Coordination.* Strives for expansion of the new society and the founding of an international sabotage community.

2. The town hall of the new society is presently located in the premises of Herengracht 358, Amsterdam.

3. The town hall of the old community on the Oude Zijds Voorburg-wal will act as Embassy for relations with the old society. The Provo council member is appointed ambassador.

4. The publication of a *State Journal* of the Orange Free State and a *Municipal Journal* of the Gnome City, Amsterdam. New measures will be announced in them.

5. Planting of a new *National Monument on the Dam*: an orange tree, symbol of the new society. Dancing around the orange tree while singing the new People's anthem, 'The owl sat in the elms'.

CALL TO THE ARTISTS
OF LATIN AMERICA

Every Latin American artist with a revolutionary consciousness must contribute to the resuscitation and growth of our values, in order to shape an art that shall constitute the patrimony of the people and the genuine expression of our America. Revolutionary art transcends elitist aesthetic limitations, opposes imperialism, rejects the values of the dominant bourgeoisie. The Revolution liberates art from the iron mechanism of supply and demand as it operates in bourgeois society. Revolutionary art proposes no model, establishes no predetermined style, but is imbued, as Marx says, with the tendentiousness of true creativity, to the extent that it affirms and defines the personality of a people and a culture.

The Latin American artist cannot declare himself neutral, nor can he abstract his role as an artist from his duties as a man. Revolutionary consciousness springs, in an artist, from the recognition of the alienation and mutilation he suffers in the exercise of his creative gifts, which he overcomes when he commits himself actively to the revolutionary struggle, waging it from within and with the arms of his creativity. For this reason the militant attitude of the Latin American artist is as important as his work. The one is identified with the other. This attitude is measured by his ability to invent the necessary instruments for communicating with the people and to resist all forms of imperialist penetration. He must denounce, reject, and destroy (always according to the specific peculiarities of the struggle in each country) all the manifestations of cultural oppression on the part of imperialism, be it via protests, abstentions, boycotts, or whatever tactic may be appropriate, including where necessary the violent response to the colonialist violence of the system. The Revolution is a process that begins long before the seizure of power and continues far beyond it. By engaging himself in the struggle, the artist not only contributes to the realisation of that seizure of power but also helps afterwards to activate an authentically revolutionary cultural programme leading to the formation of the new man.

We thus denounce the existence of:
imperialist ideological penetration in Latin America,
whereby culture is used as an alienating weapon;

artistic dependence on the international centres
that propagate bourgeois ideology;

exploitation of art by local bourgeoisies, transforming
it into one or more means of oppression of the people;

the so-called neutrality of art;

the dependence of the artists on the rigid mechanism
of the commercial market, on the imposition of
fashions and the aestheticism emanating from them;

the so-called aesthetic revolutions presented as substitutes
for social revolution;

the manipulation of so-called cultural organisations
to the profit of bourgeois ideology;

the cultural support certain artists offer to governments
maintaining the capitalist system;

the individual competition to which the artist
is subjected as he searches for personal triumphs;

the use of art as a liberal screen to conceal the exploitation
and repression of the people.

WOMEN'S ART: A MANIFESTO

VALIE EXPORT

THE POSITION OF ART IN THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT
IS THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE ART MOVEMENT.

THE HISTORY OF WOMAN IS THE HISTORY OF MAN.

because man has defined the image of woman for both man and woman, men create and control the social and communication media such as science and art, word and image, fashion and architecture, social transportation and the division of labour. men have projected their image of woman onto these media, and in accordance with these medial patterns they gave shape to woman. if reality is a social construction and men its engineers, we are dealing with a male reality. women have not yet come to themselves, because they have not had a chance to speak insofar as they had no access to the media.

let women speak so that they can find themselves, this is what i ask for in order to achieve a self-defined image of ourselves and thus a different view of the social function of women. we women must participate in the construction of reality via the building blocks of media communication.

this will not happen spontaneously or without resistance, therefore we must fight! if we shall carry through our goals such as social equal rights, self-determination, a new female consciousness, we must try to express them within the whole realm of life; this fight will bring about far reaching consequences and changes in the whole range of life not only for ourselves but for men, children, family, church... in short for the state.

women must make use of all media as a means of social struggle and social progress in order to free culture of male values. in the same fashion she will do this in the arts knowing that men for thousands of years were able to express herein their ideas of eroticism, sex, beauty including their mythology of vigour, energy and austerity in sculpture, paintings, novels, films, drama, drawings etc., and thereby influencing our consciousness. it will be time.

that women use art as a means of expression so as to influence the consciousness of all of us, let our ideas flow in the social construction of reality to create a human reality. so far the arts have been created to a large extent solely by men. they dealt with the subjects of life, with the problems of emotional life adding only their accounts, answers and solutions. now we must make our own assertions. we must destroy all these notions of love, faith, family, motherhood, companionship, which were not created by us and thus replace them with new ones in accordance with our sensibility, with our wishes.

to change the arts that man forced upon us means to destroy the features of woman created by man. the new values that we add to the arts will bring about new values for women in the course of the civilising process. art can be of importance to women's liberation insofar as we derive significance – our significance – from it: this spark can ignite the process of our self-determination. the question, what women can give to the arts and what the arts can give to women, can be answered as follows: the transference of the specific situation of woman to the artistic context sets up signs and signals which provide new artistic expressions and messages on one hand, and change retrospectively the situation of women on the other.

the arts can be understood as a medium of our self-definition adding new values to the arts. these values, transmitted via the cultural sign-process, will alter reality towards an accommodation of female needs.

THE FUTURE OF WOMEN WILL BE THE HISTORY OF WOMAN.

Translated by Regina Haslinger.

NOTES ON STREET ART
BY THE BRIGADAS RAMONA PARRA

'MONE' GONZÀLEZ

Brigadas Ramona Parra Review, Santiago, ca.1973.

When we started painting murals in the streets we didn't claim to have invented a new subject, or new techniques; our intentions had their starting point in the belief that a new ATTITUDE towards the plastic arts was needed: to take them out into the street, give them a mass reach and use them as a means of communication with a popular content. We use old-fashioned techniques and equally old walls, our resources are the time we have, the participation of the *brigadistas* and the brushes for painting the flat colours and black contours of large murals, each brigade having some responsibility for tracing outlines and others to fill them. Bright and pure colour, simple and direct images inspired by slogans. All these characteristics determine a BRP style that is recognisable everywhere. There is a lot to say about the brigadist mural. Subjects for discussion include colour, form, technique, the movement of the audience, the use of space, which locations are convenient for painting and why...

The murals of the Brigadas Ramona Parra have a genuinely popular style: the people manifest themselves on the walls of the streets, illuminating slogans with images. This is the only country in the world where art enjoys the kind of massive and shared expression we are putting into practice.

Recently, a journalist from a leftist Uruguayan journal came to interview the brigades, to talk about painting and the muralist movement: he asked about 'harmony' and other issues that the majority of brigadists haven't stopped to think about, as our main concern is to paint. The answer to this question about the harmony of colours was that each brigadist took care of one colour, and their responsibility was that there be diversity, that there not be monotony, because colours repeated twice or more within the same wall look bad, etc. The Uruguayan journalist comrade couldn't understand how we could be responsible for such an important artistic movement and at the same time have such simple theories. In fact, this is not due to ignorance, but because there are other factors we are proud of when we are painting: we the painters are young people who have been brought up in the struggle, we have learnt to resolve these problems directly onto every wall. We know, and this is very clear, that we need to prepare ourselves, to study how we can make our murals better, how to take more advantage of colour, how to make our drawings more beautiful, and we will talk about this in future bulletins.

Translated by Pablo Lafuente.

New York artists re-create a Chilean mural in SoHo,
20 October 1973, to protest against the overthrow of
Allende's Popular Unity Government by the military junta
Photograph © Eva Cockroft

RESOLUTIONS OF THE THIRD WORLD FILMMAKERS MEETING IN ALGIERS

Committee 1: People's Cinema

The Committee on People's Cinema – the role of cinema and filmmakers in the Third World against imperialism and neocolonialism – consisted of the following filmmakers and observers: Fernando Birri (Argentina); Humberto Rios (Bolivia); Manuel Perez (Cuba); Jorge Silva (Colombia); Jorge Cedron (Argentina); Moussa Diakite (Republic of Guinea); Flora Gomes (Guinea-Bissau); Mohamed Abdelwahad (Morocco); El Hachmi Cherif (Algeria); Lamine Merbah (Algeria); Mache Khaled (Algeria); Fettar Sid Ali (Algeria); Bensalah Mohamed (Algeria); Meziani Abdelhakim (Algeria). Observers: Jan Lindquist (Sweden); Josephine (surname unknown, Guinea-Bissau); Salvatore Piscicelli (Italy).

The Committee met on 11, 12 and 13 December 1973, in Algiers, under the chairmanship of Lamine Merbah. At the close of its deliberations, the Committee adopted the following analysis.

So-called underdevelopment is first of all an economic phenomenon which has direct repercussions on the social and cultural sectors. To analyse such a phenomenon we must refer to the dialectics of the development of capitalism on a world scale.

At a historically determined moment in its development, capitalism extended itself beyond the framework of the national European boundaries and spread – a necessary condition for its growth – to other regions of the world in which the forces of production, being only slightly developed, provided favourable ground for the expansion of capitalism through the existence of immense and virgin material resources, and available and cheap manpower reserves, which constituted a new, potential market for the products of capitalist industry.

This expansion manifested itself in different regions, given the power relationships, and in different ways:

a) Through direct and total colonisation implying violent invasion and the setting up of an economic and social infrastructure which does not correspond to the real needs of the people but serves more, or exclusively, the interests of the metropolitan countries;

b) in a more or less disguised manner leaving to the countries in question a pretence of autonomy;

c) Finally, through a system of domination of a new type – neocolonialism.

The result has been that these countries undergo, on the one hand, varying degrees of development, and on the other hand, extremely varied levels of dependency with respect to imperialism: domination influence, and pressures.

The different forms of exploitation and systematic plundering of the natural resources have had grave consequences on the economic, social and cultural levels for the so-called underdeveloped countries, resulting in the fact that even though these countries are undergoing extremely diversified degrees of development, they face in their struggle for independence and social progress a common enemy: imperialism, which stands in their way as a principle obstacle to their development.

Its consequences can be seen in:

a) The articulation of the economic sectors: imbalance of development on the national level with the creation of poles of economic attraction incompatible with the development of a proportionally planned national economy and with the interests of the popular masses, thereby giving rise to zones of artificial prosperity;

b) The imbalance on the regional and continental levels, thereby revealing the determination of imperialism to create zones of attraction favourable for its own expansion and which are presented as models of development in order to retard the people's struggle for real political and economic independence.

The repercussions of the social plane are as serious as they are numerous: they lead to characteristic impoverishment of the majority for the benefit in the first instance of the dominating forces and the national bourgeoisie of which one sector is objectively interested in independent national development, while another is parasitic and comprador, the interests of which are bound to those of the dominating forces.

The differentiations and social inequalities have seriously affected the living standard of the people, mainly in the rural areas where the expropriated or impoverished peasants find it impossible to reinvest on the spot in order to subsist. Reduced in their majority to self-consumption, unemployment, and rural exodus, these factors lead to an intensification of unemployment and increased underemployment in the urban centres.

In order to legitimise and strengthen its hold over the economies of the colonised and neocolonised countries, imperialism has recourse to a systematic enterprise of deculturation and acculturation of the people of the Third World.

That deculturation consists of depersonalising their peoples, or discrediting their culture by presenting it as inferior and inoperative,

of blocking their specific development, and of disfiguring their history. In other words, creating an actual cultural vacuum, favourable to a simultaneous process of acculturation through which the dominator endeavours to make his domination legitimate by introducing his own moral values, his life and thought patterns, his explanation of history: in a word, his culture.

Imperialism, being obliged to take into account the fact that colonised or dominated peoples have their own culture and defend it, infiltrates the culture of the colonised, entertains relationships with it, and takes over those elements which it believes it can turn to its favour. This is done by using the social forces which they make their own, the retrograde elements of this culture. In this way, the language of the colonised, which is the carrier of culture, becomes inferior of foreign, it is used only in the family circle or in restricted social circles. It is no longer, therefore, a vehicle for education, culture, and science, because in the schools the language of the coloniser is taught, it being indispensable to know it in order to work, to subsist, and to assert oneself. Gradually it infiltrates the social and even the family relationships of the colonised. Language itself becomes a means of alienation, in that the colonised has a tendency to practice the language of the coloniser, while his own language, as well as his personality, his culture, and his moral values, become foreign to him.

In the same line of thought, the social sciences, such as sociology, archaeology, and ethnology, are for the most part in the service of the coloniser and the dominant class so as to perfect the work of alienation of the people through a pseudoscientific process which has in fact simply consisted of a retrospective justification for the presence of the coloniser and therefore of the new established order.

This is how sociological studies have attempted to explain social phenomena by fatalistic determinism, foreign to the conscience and the will of man. In the ethnological field, the enterprise has consisted of rooting in the minds of the colonised prejudices of racial and original inferiority and complexes of inadequacy for the mastering of the various acquisitions of knowledge and man's production. Among the colonised people, imperialism has endeavoured to play on the pseudoracial and community differences, giving privilege to one or another ethnic grouping.

As for archeology, its role in cultural alienation has contributed to distorting history by putting emphasis on the interests and efforts of research and the excavations of historical vestiges which justify the definite paternity of European civilisation sublimated and presented as being eternally superior to other civilisations whose slightest traces have been buried.

Whereas, in certain countries, the national culture has continued to develop while at the same time being retarded by the dominant forces, in other countries, given the long period of direct domination, it has been

marked by discontinuity which has blocked it in its specific development, so that all that remains are traces of it which are scarcely capable of serving as a basis for a real cultural renaissance, unless it is raised to the present level of national and international productive forces.

It should be stated, however, that the culture of the coloniser, which alienates the colonised peoples, does the same to the peoples of the colonising countries who are themselves exploited by the capitalist system. Cultural alienation presents, therefore, a dual character – national against the totality of the colonised peoples, and social against the working classes in the colonising countries as well as in the colonised countries.

Imperialist economic, political, and social domination, in order to subsist and to reinforce itself, takes root in an ideological system articulated through various channels and mainly through cinema, which is in a position to influence the majority of the popular masses because its essential importance is at one and the same time artistic, aesthetic, economic and sociological, affecting to a major degree the training of the mind. Cinema, also being an industry, is subjected to the same development as material production within the capitalist system and through the very fact that the North American economy is preponderant with respect to world capitalist production, its cinema becomes preponderant as well and succeeds in invading the screens of the capitalist world and consequently those of the Third World, where it contributes to hiding inequalities, referring them to the ideology which governs the world imperialist system dominated by the United States of America.

With the birth of the national liberation movement, the struggle for independence takes on a certain depth, implying, on the one hand, the revalorisation of national cultural heritage in marking it with a dynamism made necessary by the development of contradictions and, on the other hand, the contribution of progressive cultural factors borrowed from the field of universal culture.

Solvognen US Independence Day demonstration,
Rebild, Denmark, 1976
Courtesy Scanpix, Copenhagen

PRESS RELEASE, SEPTEMBER 1976

SOLVOGNEN

Extract translated from a press release dated 22 September
1976 (also reproduced in Danish in Solvognen, *Rebild Bogen*,
Copenhagen: Demos, 1976).

Solvognen put on trial for a beautiful and non-violent action. Denmark, officially represented by Queen Margrethe, Prime Minister Anker Joergensen and others, used the American bicentennial and the Rebild committee's festival to assume an uncritical, entirely positive stance towards the US.

In the interest of truth, we chose to realise a more nuanced reaction in the form of a theatre-piece in ten acts alongside the official show.

It is our opinion that the US has obtained and maintained its wealth and power over much of the world through oppression and exploitation by:

Exterminating Native Indian people.

Taking other people and making them slaves.

Maintaining, by all means, domination over much of the Third World.

It is also our opinion that it is possible to aid the struggle against oppression, and that people can win freedom and self-determination.

Therefore the themes in our demonstration were:

Oppressed people: represented by Indians, Black people, poor White Americans and Greenlanders.

Victorious people: represented by Vietnamese, Cubans and people from Angola, Cambodia and Laos.

We felt it important that our 'piece' should be balanced and absolutely non-violent.

Since we were to realise the work as an unofficial event within the official show, and as Denmark was to officially broadcast its message to the whole of the US (by satellite), our alternative message would naturally reach the same audience.

It was thus not our aim to upset the public order. The alarm raised, in our opinion, was owing to the drastic police reaction to our peaceful event.

To start our event, Indians of both sexes slowly and carefully went down a hillside arm in arm singing an old Indian sun-hymn, but in a moment the police assaulted that peacefulness and beat both men and women with batons. ...

Now came the horsemen [Indians on horseback] from the hilltop, where the group gave an Indian peace salute. ...

The performers had barely raised the Statue of Liberty [a black Statue of Liberty] before it was pulled down and assaulted. Liberty's entourage retreated, saluting in protest at Danish complicity with oppression.

At almost the same time the Greenlanders came down the hill, but they were quickly knocked down, arrested and handcuffed.

Down the hill came an actor dressed as Uncle Sam wearing a death mask.

Poor White people from inside America's own borders arrived with a banner reading 'Masses unite, the future is red and bright' and joined Uncle Sam. …

Then the horses were caught by the police and confiscated … and the balloons, which were in American colours, were confiscated because the police decided that they were too big. …

This account of the police's brutal assault on the participants in the performance is one part of the truth we wish to show and symbolise – and truth may yet for once overcome fiction.

Translated by the editors.

INVISIBLE THEATRE

AUGUSTO BOAL

'Invisible theatre' consists of the presentation of a scene in an environment other than the theatre, before people who are not spectators. The place can be a restaurant, a sidewalk, a market, a train, a line of people, etc. The people who witness the scene are those who are there by chance. During the spectacle, these people must not have the slightest idea that it is a 'spectacle', for this would make them 'spectators'.

Invisible theatre calls for the detailed preparation of a skit with a complete text or a simple script; but it is necessary to rehearse the scene sufficiently so that the actors are able to incorporate interventions by the spectators into their acting and their actions. During the rehearsal it is also necessary to include every imaginable intervention from the spectators; these possibilities will form a kind of optional text.

Invisible theatre erupts in a location chosen as a place where the public congregates. All the people who are near become involved in the eruption and the effects of it last long after the skit is ended.

A small example shows how invisible theatre works. In the enormous restaurant of a hotel in Chiclayo (where the literacy agents of ALFIN[1] were staying together with 400 other people) the 'actors' sit at separate tables. The waiters start to serve. The 'protagonist' in a more or less loud voice (to attract the attention of other diners, but not in a too obvious way) informs the waiter that he cannot go on eating the food served in that hotel, because in his opinion it is too bad. The waiter does not like the remark but tells the customer that he can choose something *à la carte*, which he may like better. The actor chooses a dish called *barbecue à la pauper*. The waiter points out that it will cost him 70 soles, to which the actor answers, always in a reasonably loud voice, that that is no problem. Minutes later the waiter brings him the barbecue, the protagonist eats it rapidly and gets ready to get up and leave the restaurant, when the waiter brings the bill. The actor shows a worried expression and tells the people at the next table that his barbecue was much better than the food they are eating, but the pity is that one has to pay for it.

[1] ALFIN stands for *Operacion Alfabetizacion Integral*, or Integral Literacy Operation.

'I'm going to pay for it; don't have any doubt. I ate the *barbecue à la pauper* and I'm going to pay for it. But there is a problem: I'm broke.'

'And how are you going to pay?' asks the indignant waiter. 'You knew the price before ordering the barbecue. And now, how are you going to pay for it?'

The diners nearby are, of course, closely following the dialogue – much more attentively than they would if they were witnessing the scene on a stage. The actor continues:

'Don't worry, because I *am* going to pay you. But since I'm broke I will pay you with labour-power.'

'With what?' asks the waiter, astonished. 'What kind of power?'

'With labour-power, just as I said. I am broke but I can rent you my labour-power. So I'll work doing something for as long as it's necessary to pay for my *barbecue à la pauper*, which to tell the truth, was really delicious – much better than the food you serve to those poor souls.'

By this time some of the customers intervene and make remarks among themselves at their tables, about the price of food, the quality of the service in the hotel, etc. The waiter calls the headwaiter to decide the matter. The actor explains again to the latter the business of renting his labour-power and adds:

'And besides, there is another problem: I'll rent my labour-power but the truth is that I don't know how to do anything, or very little. You will have to give me a very simple job to do. For example, I can take out the hotel's garbage. What's the salary of the garbage man who works for you?'

The headwaiter does not want to give any information about salaries, but a second actor at another table is already prepared and explains that he and the garbage man have gotten to be friends and that the latter has told him his salary: seven soles per hour. The two actors make some calculations and the 'protagonist' exclaims:

'How is this possible? If I work as a garbage man I'll have to work ten hours to pay for this barbecue that it took me ten minutes to eat? It can't be! Either you increase the salary of the garbage man or reduce the price of the barbecue! … But I can do something more specialised; for example, I can take care of the hotel gardens, which are so beautiful, so well cared for. One can see that a very talented person is in charge of the gardens. How much does the gardener of this hotel make? I'll work as a gardener! How many hours work in the garden are necessary to pay for the *barbecue à la pauper*?'

A third actor, at another table, explains his friendship with the gardener, who is an immigrant from the same village as he; for this reason he knows that the gardener makes ten soles per hour. Again the 'protagonist' becomes indignant:

'How is this possible? So the man who takes care of these beautiful gardens, who spends his days out there exposed to the wind, the rain, and the sun, has to work seven long hours to be able to eat the barbecue in ten

minutes? How can this be, Mr. Headwaiter? Explain it to me!'

The headwaiter is already in despair; he dashes back and forth, giving orders to the waiters in a loud voice to divert the attention of the other customers, alternately laughs and becomes serious, while the restaurant is transformed into a public forum. The 'protagonist' asks the waiter how much he is paid to serve the barbecue and offers to replace him for the necessary number of hours. Another actor, originally from a small village in the interior, gets up and declares that nobody in his village makes 70 soles per day; therefore nobody in his village can eat the *barbecue a la pauper*. (The sincerity of this actor, who was, besides, telling the truth, moved those who were near his table.)

Finally, to conclude the scene, another actor intervenes with the following proposition:

> *Friends, it appears as if we are against the waiter and the headwaiter and this does not make sense. They are our brothers. They work like us, and they are not to blame for the prices charged here. I suggest we take up a collection. We at this table are going to ask you to contribute whatever you can, one sol, two soles, five soles, whatever you can afford. And with that money we are going to pay for the barbecue. And be generous, because what is left over will go as a tip for the waiter, who is our brother and a working man.*

Immediately, those who are with him at the table start collecting money to pay the bill. Some customers willingly give one or two soles. Others furiously comment:

'He says that the food we're eating is junk, and now he wants us to pay for his barbecue! … And am I going to eat this junk? Hell no! I wouldn't give him a peanut, so he'll learn a lesson! Let him wash dishes …'

The collection reached 100 soles and the discussion went on through the night.

It is always very important that the actors do not reveal themselves to be actors! On this rests the invisible nature of this form of theatre. And it is precisely this invisible quality that will make the spectator act freely and fully, as if he were living a real situation – and, after all, it is a real situation!

It is necessary to emphasise that invisible theatre is not the same thing as a 'happening' or so-called 'guerrilla theatre'. In the latter we are clearly talking about 'theatre', and therefore the wall that separates actors from spectators immediately arises, reducing the spectator to impotence: a spectator is always less than a man! In invisible theatre the theatrical rituals are abolished; only the theatre exists, without its old, worn-out patterns. The theatrical energy is completely liberated, and the impact produced by this free theatre is much more powerful and longer lasting.

FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT ART

ZORAN POPOVIĆ

It is generally believed that art is independent of ideology. This thesis has become the rule in our cultural public, among other things because of inherited (artistic) practice, the existing state-administrative bureaucracy, as well as the existing liberalism, which has gained ground among us in the past 15 years. Due to the objective affirmation of technocracy, bureaucracy became its ally. Although technocracy is not in favour of ideology and therefore enters into an opposition against bureaucracy, the latter cannot stand technocracy to that degree to which it is against knowledge. Nevertheless they are allied with each other in order to gain power, so that the minority can effectively rule over the majority, which is the basic condition of their existence. Since technocracy sees progress only perpetuated by a professional elite, it sees the possibility of revolutionary changes in art only if the elite is changed. Technocracy thus divides society (the cultural public) into the 'elite' and the 'masses', into active and passive, into those who govern and those who are being governed. By manipulating knowledge, technocracy has a monopoly over it and thus also over people. Owing to liberalism, which formally defends freedom, the power of technocracy is increasing, and technocracy, which has an arsenal of instruments provided by the bureaucracy, consolidates the opinion about 'universal' aesthetic values which are inevitably needed for an effective activity of techno-liberalism in the world of art. The defence of those 'universal' values of art is needed in order to uphold the opinion about the autonomy of art, its independence from the dictatorship of ideology, about its straightforward progress, which is nothing else but a projection of undialectical idealism. The 'universal' values of art are the values of the conflictless spectacular art of the bourgeois consumer society based on the type of values of the petite bourgeoisie, due to the established balance of power. All this finally functions on behalf of the preservation of the hegemony of Western culture over world culture in line with tendencies of late capitalism, and its imperialistic needs and aims. The artistic liberalistic technocracy is – on behalf of 'irresistible progress' in art (society) – persistently against ideology, whereas it establishes the bourgeois ideology in practice.

The basis of the existence of bureaucracy proceeds from a complex distribution of labour and a corresponding hierarchy. Artists in Yugoslavia, and also elsewhere, consider their professional practice as something normal, as a consequence of which they see their position in the social distribution of labour in such a way that society should finance the artists with regard to their rank. The bureaucracy can then easily direct this isolated social group, because the group itself chose the place where it belongs.

The work of art, artistic activity, should include a new presumption on the level of an alternative, which would take a radical critical attitude regarding the history of art, regarding the progression of artistic conformity (the existing sociability), in which formal changes took place, and in which one artistic context was exchanged for another while the establishment did not change, ie., the establishment which essentially defines the functions of art, and functions of the artists. Therefore the politicisation of art is unavoidable. Art must be negative, critical of the external world as well as its own language, its own artistic practice. It is absurd and hypocritical to be committed, to speak and act on behalf of the humanism of mankind, on behalf of political and economic freedom, and on the other hand to be passive in relation to the system of the 'universal' values of art, ie. to that system which provides the basic condition for the existence of the artistic bureaucracy and, along with it, for the unbelievable art-star plundering. As soon as the artistic bureaucracy gains power, it operates for the end of its own reproduction and it always supports those phenomena which prolong its existence. In this way it directs and 'arranges' artistic productivity and the relations of production. The bureaucracy creates an inert artist and a passive consumer of art, it creates 'happy robots', with the help of its monopoly over information and education. Along with the mass of disoriented and disorganised artists and the uninformed audience, the power of the artistic bureaucracy (art historians, curators, gallery directors, officials at the secretariat of culture and other cultural and educational institutions, critics, artists, etc.) is growing strong. On behalf of the 'universal' values of art, committed art becomes the aesthetics of politics, which leads to the production of propaganda in the Fascist sense. Art as the aesthetics of politics is a projection of etatistic-administrative as well as of technocratic-liberal conformism: the total opposite of the Marxist understanding of art which includes the politicisation of art.

Our work must not turn into an apology of the artistic status quo, of our complete cultural alienation, we must not rejuvenate the blood of the conservative and dogmatic, socially dangerous establishment, which holds the common cultural values of people in the hands of a few, which has the monopoly over the art market, over artistic production and, most significantly, over the sources of information and education, all this in order to reproduce its own parasitic life. The artists should cease their passivity, which prolongs the parasitic life of their bloodsuckers. They should cease

to support the class enemy of the proletariat, in order not to produce such works as demanded and 'arranged' by the bureaucracy, with its power of decision-making, distribution of awards, purchase policy, organisation of exhibitions, financing of culture, scholarships and so on. We, the artists, should seriously re-examine our allies, our interests, our work, our role and our real social position. All those artists who are disinterested regarding the existing social situation, who care only for themselves, belong either to the category of the bureaucracy or the petite bourgeoisie, which form the socio-psychological basis for development of the usurpation of power, mastery over man and plundering of man.

The contradiction lies in the fact that new artistic suppositions become known to the public only if they correspond with the system of the artistic bureaucracy. It is unlikely that there would have been any 'excitement' at the appearance of a 'new Art' in our cultural public, if these works and activities were outside the control of the system of artistic bureaucracy. Only an established public opinion can negate the bureaucracy, or rather, the mystery of bureaucracy. That is why the bureaucracy is most interested in preserving an information monopoly and control of all means of public communication, because it is one of the essential conditions for the usurpation of power and self-reproduction. Thus, bureaucracy ignores indefinitely the real state of affairs, the real reality, in favour of bureaucratic reality, by spreading misinformation instead of information. Misinformation is more dangerous than information that has not been conveyed. The remaking of history has proved to be a successful method of oppression, of killing new theses and the new artistic alternatives, which are critical towards hitherto existing artistic practice.

THE SWORD IS MIGHTIER
THAN THE SWEDE?

STURE JOHANNESSON

On the occasion of the exhibition
'Om Tyskland – i Tiden' ('On
Germany – In Time') at Kulturhuset
in Stockholm, **1976**.

The exhibition 'Om Tyskland – i Tiden' ('On Germany – In Time') at
Kulturhuset in Stockholm should have run from 9 June to 27, 1976.
It opened according to plan, but was censored in total by Kulturnämnden
(municipal culture council that refers to the ministry of culture) on 11 June
without any of the exhibiting artists being notified. The following is
an account of the events by the artist Sture Johannesson.

Background = §88a
At the end of March we had discussions with Kulturhuset's chief curator
Folke Edwards about plans for an exhibition dealing with freedom of speech
and political repression in West Germany, on the occasion of the series
of censorship laws and statutory instruments which have been introduced
in the last couple of years and which have been actualised through the
acceptance of the problematic paragraph 88a on 16 January, 1976. Since
the beginning of March, Sweden's Union of Writers has responded to its
West German colleagues' appeal for sympathy and made the following
announcement:

> The new West German law which affects the freedom of speech and opinion will
> in the long term deprive people of control over their own lives. There are only two
> ways to react, through self-censorship or through the creation of a new underground
> literature. An underground literature in the middle of Europe is a fantastic idea for
> exactly through this is violence conveyed. – The violence that various groups in the
> world and also West Germany have committed has outraged us in the same way
> as other people. But from this to setting up a law that forbids the citizens an open
> discussion of political violence is more than just a big step. From our point of view
> these are not comparable measures.
>   DN 7 March, 1976

Planning the Exhibition

However, the censorship legislation in West Germany not only touches on literature but affects other means of expression, ie. the visual arts, to the same extent. In spite of this, the artists' professional organisation, KRO, has to my knowledge not yet made a statement on the issue. I and my lifelong comrade Ann-Charlotte, from the background of our personal experiences and contacts with West German colleagues, have made images which were published together with the writers' statement. I had an idea for an image which I wanted to produce as a poster for the planned exhibition. We proposed that the exhibition itself should be organised by the newly-started action committee for democratic freedoms and rights in West Germany. Folke Edwards contacted the action committee, which accepted the invitation by letter on 10 April.

Kulturnämnden approved of the exhibition, which set out to 'shed light on the background of Berufsverbot and §88a in West Germany, which the group considers to be a threat to democratic freedoms and rights' and gave a grant of SEK 4,000 to the cause. Everything was looking good. I had occasional contacts with individual members of the action committee and with Folke Edwards about the poster (because of production costs the poster couldn't be paid for from the grant budget but remained a separate business with Kulturhuset). I carried out the idea for the image in collaboration with the photographer Ove Hallin and sent colour photos and a detailed sketch for the poster to Kulturhuset together with a quote for the printing. On 10 May I talked to chief curator Gösta Lilja about the poster production and he was very positive. He let me know that only a formal endorsement is needed and asked me to call him again on 12 May to confirm the order. On 12 May I was informed that chief curator Gösta Lilja was occupied with a press opening at Liljevalchs but he sent his best wishes and promised to get back to me. He never did.

In a letter dated 14 May the action committee revoked the commission because they couldn't finish the exhibition in the appointed time, and because the action committee, comprised of 14 different organisations, found itself 'in a state of impending re-organisation'. This message came in at Kulturhuset 17 May. I was informed by Folke Edwards the same day, and we offered to start a task group to organise the exhibition, partly in order to finalise the poster production and partly because, from a media point of view, the time period in question offered a unique opportunity to draw attention to the event, especially in West Germany – The King and SS (Silvia Sommerlath) were getting married.

Folke Edwards was obliged to present this proposal to the chief curator Gösta Eilja, and the following day, 18 May, we got the OK. On 19 May we confirmed that 'Arbetsgruppen för Utställning och Manifestation' (The Task Group for Exhibition and Manifestation) would go through with the exhibition. As definitive confirmation that this had been accepted by

Kulturhuset, Kulturnämnden / Stockholms Drätselnämnd, on 26 May there was a cheque for SEK 4,000 addressed to the Task Group UM.

We had clarified that since the task group consists of free visual artists the exhibition would mainly consist of visual, artistic and poetic manifestations, and to a lesser degree of pedagogically presented political information. The three visual artists who made up the task group naturally couldn't claim to possess all the political knowledge and information held by the action committee with its 14 different political organisations and hundreds of members. Nor did we want to frame the exhibition according to considerations pertaining to theoretical alienation but wished to represent those who are actually stricken. With this aim I travelled to Berlin on 27 May and got in touch with various individuals and groups: KDP, KDP/ML, Sozialistische Zentrum, Frauenzentrum, the free groups around Buchladenkollektiv, the so-called 'spontis'. I visited one of the lawyers who is fighting most vehemently against the new 'legislative order', Hans-Christian Ströbele, and I discussed the making of the exhibition with the publisher and author Klaus Wagenbach and others. I provided authentic and unique material including, among other things, the wreath from Ulrike Meinhof's funeral, posters, flyers and emergency papers. We arranged that the solicitors Hans-Christian Ströbele and Otto Schily would come to Stockholm and attend a press conference during the exhibition. I procured permission to meet the solicitor Horst Mahler, who is serving fourteen years in prison for having been involved in starting a 'criminal' organisation, but I never actually got the opportunity to do this because I was escorted out of town by a bus full of riot police.

The Power of the Sword Contra That of the Pen

On the evening of 8 June we hung the exhibition in Kulturhuset's main entry hall. Kulturhuset insured the exhibition for a symbolic SEK 50,000 and got hold of a glass vitrine for the invaluable historic documents that were part of the show. Kulturhuset's head of security instructed the guards to keep an extra eye on the exhibition, both in person and by CCTV. We were completely satisfied with this arrangement. We were told that chief curator Gösta Lilja intended to inspect the exhibition before Kulturhuset opened at 9am on 9 June. Just after 8am we met Lilja and curators Ingvar Claesson and Folke Edwards, already busy with their inspection. The curators started by praising and expressing their enthusiasm for the poster – an image of an old Nazi dagger chopping the ends off four pencils. 'A really good idea and skilfully executed,' in the chief curator's opinion. But he 'imagines' that the rest of the exhibition would not be sanctioned by the politicians; we would have to immediately remove it to the store until the spokesman (of Kulturnämnden) arrived on Friday 11 June – in two days time. We naturally raised objections to the censorship and protested against the fact that the chief curator represented the powers of the sword rather than defending that of the pen.

We believe that it is not only the artists, but also the gallery directors' and curators' responsibility to defend the forms of expression of the pen and the brush. This belongs to the professional ethics of their job, just like a prosecutor, judge, bishop, commander in chief or king have certain values or principles to defend and duties to carry out, and society finally is forced to bury people it wished was never born. But the chief curator did not budge. Don't provoke my dismay – the spokesman comes on Friday! The chief curator became increasingly nervous and refused to consider the exhibition as a fact: if only it were relegated to the storeroom it would never have existed. Or, as he later expresses it in SvD: 'It was not a case of censorship. It was a question of whether the exhibition should take place or not.' (SvD 11 June, 1976.) Finally the chief curator offered us a fair amount of money in the form of several days' per diems, reimbursement for hotel rooms and travel etc.… if only we agreed to take down the exhibition. In this discussion Folke Edwards appeared on the side of the pen and was of the opinion that even if the spokesman was not at home, individual members of the Culture Committee could come and see the exhibition and decide whether it could be allowed to remain. The chief curator believed that the committee members had more important things to attend to, to which we responded that if this was not especially important the exhibition might as well remain open until the spokesman returned. By that time it was 9am, Kulturhuset opened and people began pouring in. The chief curator was called to answer a telephone enquiry from a newspaper, and only then did he seem to realise that the exhibition existed, and that censorship would carry with it a certain responsibility. We of the work group could hang out in the café and watch from the best seats as civil servants of the foreign ministry, Säpo-agents, bureaucrats of Kulturhuset, councillors, top rank lawyers and Young Conservatives engaged in what the chief curator himself describes as 'a very sensitive and diffuse happening around Ulrike Meinhof'.
(DN 12 June, 1976.)

Artistic Freedom…

During the two days this palaver lasted, the double purpose of the exhibition appeared: we of the work group had not intended to sit in the glass house at Sergels Torg and throw stones at the West German government. We also wished to expose the conditions in our own culture houses and public art galleries. A week before the exhibition was to take place, the newspaper *Arbetet* published in an article on 2 June the following statement of mine:

> *It goes to show that we have a paragraph 88a in Sweden, even if it has not been inscribed in the law. But there is no need for it. Instead, guards of the constitution have been placed in charge of all the bigger galleries. Those guards see to it that only what is 'suitable' appears. Artistic freedom is thwarted and instead of hiring artists to create posters for exhibitions, advertising agencies are hired. This way, one can be sure to get a product that does not offend.*

Culture house directors, public art gallery directors, chief curators and curators are appointed politically. Given that the Party line(s) (the Social Democratic Party) is essential and often seems to be the only qualification of the 'culture dignitaries', we have to overlook the fact that we are accused of being 'terrorist sympathisers who glorify violence'. The same 'art experts' would probably also claim that Andy Warhol is a Chinese Maoist because he made a portrait of Mao.

> *World leaders from the Assyrian king Sargon II to Adolf Hitler have always known that art is amongst the most powerful trumpets. That is why the leaders have been afraid of art, and at the same time eager to make it their servant.*

This is what Bo Lindberg writes in an exhibition catalogue for the artist Bengt Böckman. Even our 'democratically elected' trade-union careerist has this insight. It appears that gallery directors are hired on the principle that the bigger the ignoramus, the more bent he is. That is how it is done in West Germany and that is how it is done in Sweden, They operate an active professional prohibition against free groups by trying to starve them out, at the same time as they pamper 'desirable' artists with 'public commissions'. There are examples of clumsy craftsmen, whose products no decent gallery in the world would want to represent, becoming millionaires in politically decided 'competitions'.

It is evident that it is the West German social democratic party that bears the responsibility for 'those fascist laws that no Hitler in the world would want to change'. However, in Germany it is maintained in an amendment that art and science are exempted and should be tried in a court. Can one dare to believe that the Swedish brother party is equally tolerant and would allow for a legal testing of Kulturhuset's unwarranted and gross violation of democratic rights and freedoms? (The intervention naturally also implies a violation of the integrity of the involved parties).

Free Hands With Handcuffs

Before the exhibition was totally censored, chief curator Gösta Lilja intervened by 'prohibiting further distribution of a flyer'. (SvD 11 June, 1976.) Has he not exceeded his powers by acting as a sole juror over the freedom of the printed word and prohibiting the distribution of printed matter? The flyer was an artistic collage, with images of two West German women among other things and with an authentic advertising text: 'No person is like any other.' This slogan was formulated by Young Conservatives (Unga Moderater) and since their initials were in correspondence with those of Ulrike Meinhof, great misunderstandings and aggressions arose. Representatives of Young Conservatives appeared in groups of 7–8 people about once every hour and issued threats and demands, took photos and gathered 'evidence' – that is to say, confiscated flyers as we were putting them out. It was strange to witness how these groups, via the posh ladies in the reception (one gets a whiff of the posh world already when one enters

the stronghold of culture) had immediate access to the chief curator, who after a few minutes came down from the fifth floor himself to present me with the same demands and threats that I had already received. This happened not only once, but several times. In contrast we, as invited exhibitors, encountered great difficulties in getting even a telephone connection to the chief curator. During his wanderings between the fifth and the ground floor, and the visits to the politicians and Kulturhus director Bengt Schelin in the high rise on the other side of Superstaken, he was usually accompanied by an *aide-de-camp* who always walked a step behind, as if to lend this puppet and messenger boy of the sword some form of dignity.

Among other things, the exhibition contained a message from Erich Fried, an older German author who was once forced to escape from Hitler's Third Reich:

To mourn Ulrike is to fight the minions and mercenaries of alienation and dehumanisation.

So that was what we had to do, in a double sense, during the two days of the exhibition. I would like to quote the following statement given by councillor Curt Bore, deputy spokesman, when the decision of total censorship was made: 'There is no connection at all between the Cultural Committee and the Foreign Ministry.' (DN June 12, 1976.) The quotation can usefully be published as a caption to the photo of Mr. Ramel from the Foreign Ministry, councillor Böre and chief curator Lilja that was taken during one of the many and lengthy consultations that took place in the corners of the exhibition space. I have previous experience of censorship, a rejected poster commission from the director of Malmö Konsthall, Eje Hogestatt, who stated: 'We had a computer image in mind, not a fisher-man.' And now chief curator Gösta Lilja says that 'the exhibition does not correspond to our expectations'. Conclusion: the task of the artist is to find out what the powers that be 'have in mind' or 'expect'. If one can not find out for oneself it is always a possibility to call and ask: Hello Gallery Director, I am toying with the idea of painting a picture, what should it look like? If one does not content oneself with producing these desirable art works, one has to employ Wallraff-methods in order to, once in a while, procure 'undesirable art works'. Free hands with handcuffs. (The journalist Günther Wallraff worked undercover to reveal the working conditions of immigrants in Germany and the methods of the yellow press.)

Self Censorship or Underground Literature?
To return to the statement of the Union of Writers: there are only two ways to react, through self-censorship or through the creation of an underground literature. Today, many a goodnight prayer is heard: Good Lord, make me subservient, so I can become a civil servant. But some will continue the struggle for democratic rights and freedoms, for, as the famous German sociologist Jan-Carl Raspe wrote two days after the death of Ulrike Meinhof:

Freedom is only possible in the struggle for liberation.

If we are aware of the limitations, then we live in a prison.

Recently, a book that was sequestered in West Germany, *How It All Began (Wie Alles Anfing)*, has been re-published by 350 culture-dignitaries in Europe, among these a few Swedes, as a provocation and as a stepping stone for the free word. We hope that these people and others will back up our demands to Kulturhuset to reopen the exhibition 'Om Tyskland – i Tiden'. There are German institutions that are today able to guarantee a presentation of the exhibition because it does not glorify violence or encourage crime. With this in mind, we should take a closer look at our own domestic circumstances.

1933

...Civil servants, whose history of previous political activity does not constitute a guarantee that in every case they will, without doubt, remain loyal to the nation, can have their service terminated.

(Part of §4 of the law *Zur Wiederherstellung eines nationalen Berufsbeamtentums* – For the re-implementation of a national corps of civil servants – accepted by the German Reich 7 April, 1933.)

1976

He who distributes, publicly exhibits, stimulates, performs or in other ways makes available or produces, requisitions, delivers, stocks, offers, signifies, extols, imports into the country or exports out of the country, a writing that encourages criminal acts and is likely to increase the readiness to commit acts such as those against the German Federal Republic, its established order, safety or constitutional tenets, is liable to up to three years imprisonment, or will be fined. If a person who seeks public service is a member of an organisation that is hostile to the constitution, it is doubtful whether he is prepared to always defend the basic free democratic order. Doubt is usually sufficient reason to reject his job application.

(§88a – accepted by a unanimous parliament in West Germany on 16 January, 1976.)
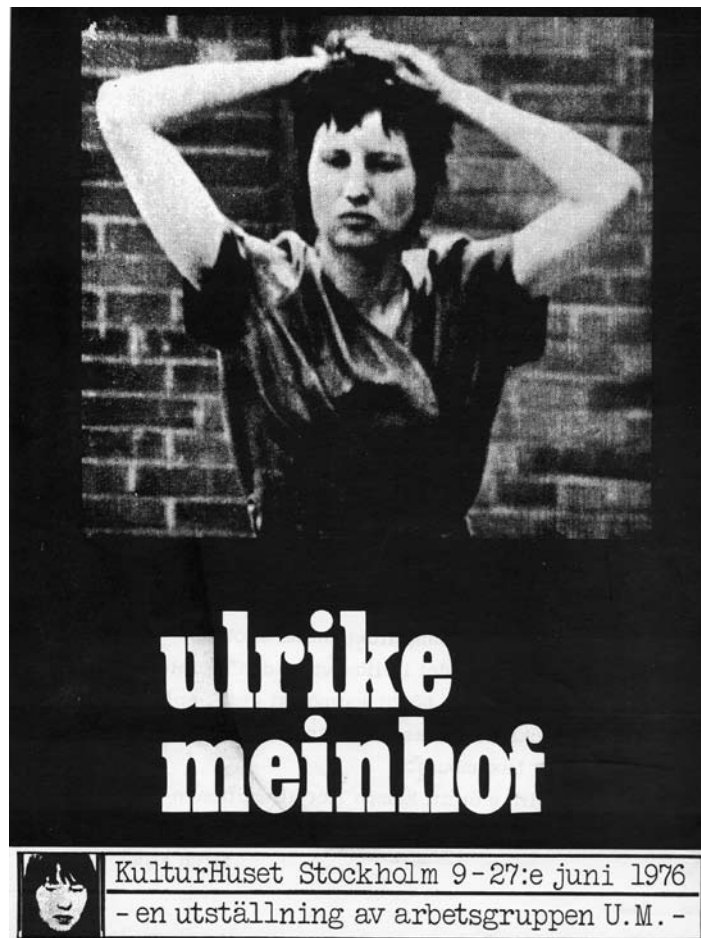
Sture and Ann Charlotte Johannesson *Ulrike Meinhof,* 1976
View of the exhibition at Kulturhuset, Stockholm

Flyer for the exhibition

POSITION PAPER: CROSSROADS COMMUNITY (THE FARM)

BONNIE SHERK

As an artist, I have tried to expand the concept of art to include, and even be, life, and to make visible connections among different aesthetics and systems of knowledge. The most recent and devotional vehicle for this coming together is a multicultural, agricultural collaborative art work called *Crossroads Community*, or more simply, *The Farm*. ...

The most critical difficulty for *The Farm*, at present, is to make an unresponsive and frightened establishment receptive to a gift that is a tribute to humanity and a celebration of magic, thought of as 'art'.

The creation of *The Farm* is a result of many things: An awareness of the interconnection between seemingly disparate ideas, attitudes, and situations. A strong belief in the power of art in its purest sense as a thing in itself and also as a vehicle for change. An urge to expand the idea of art and its audience. A passionate concern for cultural movement and transformation. An unease with traditional and so-called revolutionary rhetoric and modes which tend to alienate and incite rather than function productively in an enduring way. A devotion to the possibility of human evolution away from the teenaged behaviour of sexism and racism and insensitivity to the earth. The potential for increased sensory awareness and developed communications with our species and others. A sense of whole systems as being a solution for fragmented thinking and being. A personal search towards understanding life and living it to its fullest in spite of the risks. ...

The Farm is a social art work. I think of it as a life-scale environmental performance sculpture with a layering of meanings, metaphors, and actual situations. I see it as art, as well as incorporating the divergent fields of all the arts and literature, education, community service, public health, the environment, city planning, local politics, and real estate.

The naming of *The Farm* as art is perhaps the most perplexing and problematic idea for the establishment to accept, because the involved elements are diffuse and to the conventional eye and mind difficult to grasp. The Farm is avant-garde and perhaps speaks to the future of art. It is a life frame – a life theatre, and that always gets us into trouble when we are talking about art.

Bonnie Sherk Documentation of *Crossroads Community
(The Farm)*, 1974–1981
Making a Sundial, 1975
Next page:
Freeway and Farmhouse, 1975
Farm and Freeway, 1975

ART HYSTERICAL NOTIONS
OF PROGRESS AND CULTURE

VALERIE JAUDON AND JOYCE KOZLOFF

As feminists and artists exploring the decorative in our own paintings, we were curious about the pejorative use of the word 'decorative' in the contemporary art world. In rereading the basic texts of Modern Art, we came to realise that the prejudice against the decorative has a long history and is based on hierarchies: fine art above decorative art, Western art above non-Western art, men's art above women's art. By focusing on these hierarchies we discovered a disturbing belief system based on the moral superiority of the art of Western civilization.

We decided to write a piece about how *language* has been used to communicate this moral superiority. Certain words have been handed down unexamined from one generation to the next. We needed to take these words away from the art context to examine and decode them. They have coloured our own history, our art training. We have had to rethink the underlying assumptions of our education.

Within the discipline of art history, the following words are continuously used to characterise what has been called 'high art': man, mankind, the individual man, individuality, humans, humanity, the human figure, humanism, civilization, culture, the Greeks, the Romans, the English, Christianity, spirituality, transcendence, religion, nature, true form, science, logic, purity, evolution, revolution, progress, truth, freedom, creativity, action, war, virility, violence, brutality, dynamism, power and greatness.

In the same texts other words are used repeatedly in connection with so-called 'low art': Africans, Orientals, Persians, Slovaks, peasants, the lower classes, women, children, savages, pagans, sensuality, pleasure, decadence, chaos, anarchy, impotence, exotica, eroticism, artifice, tattoos, cosmetics, ornament, decoration, carpets, weaving, patterns, domesticity, wallpaper, fabrics and furniture.

All of these words appear in the quotations found throughout this piece. The quotations are from the writings and statements of artists, art critics and art historians. We do not pretend to neutrality and do not supply the historical context for the quotations. These can be found in the existing histories of Modern Art. Our analysis is based on a personal, contemporary perspective.

War and Virility

Manifestos of Modern Art often exhort artists to make violent, brutal work, and it is no accident that men such as Hirsh, Rivera and Picasso like to think of their art as a metaphorical weapon. One of the longstanding targets of this weapon has been the decorative. The scorn for decoration epitomises the machismo expressed by Le Corbusier, Gabo/Pevsner and Marinetti/Sant'Elia. Their belligerence may take the form of an appeal to the machine aesthetic: the machine is idolised as a tool and symbol of progress, and technological progress is equated with reductivist, streamlined art. The instinct to purify exalts an order which is never described and condemns a chaos which is never explained.

Joseph Hirsh, from D.W. Larkin, *Common Cause*, 1949: 'The great artist has wielded his art as a magnificent weapon truly mightier than the sword…'

Diego Rivera, *The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art*, 1932: 'I want to use my art as a weapon.'

Pablo Picasso, *Statement about the Artist as a Political Being*, 1945: 'No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defence against the enemy.'

Le Corbusier, *Guiding Principles of Town Planning*, 1925: 'Decorative art is dead… An immense, devastating brutal evolution has burned the bridges that link us with the past.'

Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, *Basic Principles of Constructivism*, 1920: 'We reject the decorative line. We demand of every line in the work of art that it shall serve solely to define the inner directions of force in the body to be portrayed.'

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Antonio Sant'Elia, *Futurist Architecture*, 1914: 'The decorative must be abolished! … Let us throw away monuments, sidewalks, arcades, steps; let us sink squares into the ground, raise the level of the city.'

El Lissitsky, *Ideological Superstructure*, 1929: 'Destruction of the traditional … War has been declared on the aesthetic of chaos. An order that has entered fully into consciousness is called for.'

Manifesto of the Futurist Painters, 1910: 'The dead shall be buried in the earth's deepest bowels! The threshold of the future will be free of mummies! Make room for youth, for violence, for daring!'

Purity

In the polemics of Modern Art 'purity' represents the highest good. The more the elements of the work of art are pared down, reduced, the more visible the 'purity'. Here Greenberg equates reductivism with rationality and function. But it is never explained why or for whom art has to be functional, nor why reductivism is rational. Among artists as diverse as Sullivan, Ozenfant and de Kooning, we found the sexual metaphor of 'stripping

down' art and architecture to make them 'nude' or 'pure'. The assumption is that the artist is male, and the work of art (object) female.

Clement Greenberg, *Detached Observations*, 1976: 'The ultimate use of art is construed as being to provide the experience of aesthetic value, therefore art is to be stripped down towards this end. Hence, modernist "functionalism", "essentialism" it could be called, the urge to "purify" the medium, any medium. "Purity" being construed as the most efficacious, efficient, economical employment of the medium for purposes of aesthetic value.'

Louis Sullivan, *Ornament in Architecture*, 1892: 'It would be greatly for our aesthetic good, if we should refrain from the use of ornament for a period of years, in order that our thought might concentrate acutely upon the production of buildings well formed and comely in the nude.'

Amedee Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, 1931: 'Decoration can be revolting, but a naked body moves us by the harmony of its form.'

Willem de Kooning, *What Abstract Art Means to Me*, 1951: 'One of the most striking of abstract art's appearance is her nakedness, an art stripped bare.'

Purity in Art as a Holy Cause

Purity can also be sanctified as an aesthetic principle. Modern artists and their espousers sometimes sound like the new crusaders, declaring eternal or religious values. A favourite theme is that of cleansing art. The ecclesiastical metaphor of transcendence through purification (baptism) is used to uphold the 'Greek' tradition (as in the van de Velde quotation) or the 'Christian' tradition (as in the Loos quotation). Cleansing and purification are sometimes paired with an exalted view of the artist as a god, as in Apollinaire's desire to 'deify personality'.

Henry van de Velde, *Programme*, 1903: 'As soon as the work of cleansing and sweeping out has been finished, as soon as the true form of things comes to light again, then strive with all the patience, all the spirit and the logic of the Greeks for the perfection of this form.'

Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 1908: 'We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament. See, the time is nigh, fulfillment awaits us. Soon the streets of the city will glisten like white walls, like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven. Then fulfillment will be come.'

Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters*, 1913: 'To insist on purity is to baptise instinct, to humanise art, and to deify personality.'

The Superiority of Western Art

Throughout the literature of Western art there are racist assumptions that devalue the arts of other cultures. The ancient Greeks are upheld as the model, an Aryan ideal of order. Art in the Greco-Roman tradition is believed to represent superior values. Malraux uses the word 'barbarian' and Fry the word 'savages' to describe art and artists outside our tradition. The non-Western ideals of pleasure, meditation and loss of self are clearly not understood by the exponents of ego assertion, transcendence and dynamism.

David Hume, *Of National Characters* (on Africans), 1748: 'There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences.'

Roger Fry, *The Art of the Bushmen*, 1910: 'it is to be noted that all the peoples whose drawing shows this peculiar power of visualisation (sensual not conceptual) belong to what we call the lowest of savages, they are certainly the least civilizable, and the South African Bushmen are regarded by other native races in much the same way that we look upon negroes.'

André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, 1953: 'Now a barbarian art can keep alive only in the environment of the barbarism it expresses … the Byzantine style, as the West saw it, was not the expression of a supreme value but merely a form of decoration.'

Roger Fry, *The Munich Exhibition of Mohammedan Art*, 1910: 'It cannot be denied that in course of time it [Islamic art] pandered to the besetting sin of the oriental craftsman, his intolerable patience and thoughtless industry.'

Gustave von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 1945: 'Islam can hardly be called creative in the sense that the Greeks were creative in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. or the Western world since the Renaissance, but its flavour is unmistakable …'

Sir Richard Westmacott, Professor of Sculpture, Royal Academy, quoted in Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*, 1977: 'I think it impossible that any artist can look at the Nineveh marbles as works for study, for such they certainly are not: they are works of prescriptive art, like works of Egyptian art. No man would ever think of studying Egyptian art.'

Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 1908: 'No ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level.'
'It is different with the individuals and peoples who have not yet reached this level.'
'I can tolerate the ornaments of the Kaffir, the Persian, the Slovak peasant woman, my shoemaker's ornaments, for they all have no other way of attaining the high points of their existence. We have art, which has taken

the place of ornament. After the toils and troubles of the day we go to Beethoven or to Tristan.'

Fear of Racial Contamination, Impotence and Decadence
Racism is the other side of the coin of Exotica. Often underlying a fascination with the Orient, Indians, Africans and primitives is an urgent unspoken fear of infiltration, decadence and domination by the 'mongrels' gathering impatiently at the gates of civilization. Ornamental objects from other cultures which appeared in Europe in the nineteenth century were clearly superior to Western machine-made products. How could the West maintain its notion of racial supremacy in the face of these objects? Loos's answer: by declaring that ornament itself was savage. Artists and aesthetes who would succumb to decorative impulses were considered impotent and/or decadent.

Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 1908: 'I have made the following discovery and I pass it on to the world: The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects. I believed that with this discovery I was bringing joy to the world; it has not thanked me. People were sad and hung their heads. What depressed them was the realisation that they could produce no new ornaments. Are we alone, the people of the nineteenth century, supposed to be unable to do what any Negro, all the races and periods before us have been able to do? What mankind created without ornament in earlier millennia was thrown away without a thought and abandoned to destruction. We possess no joiner's benches from the Carolingian era, but every trifle that displays the least ornament has been collected and cleaned and palatial buildings have been erected to house it. Then people walked sadly about between the glass cases and felt ashamed of their impotence.'

Amedee Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, 1931: 'Let us beware lest the earnest effort of younger peoples relegates us to the necropolis of the effete nations, as mighty Rome did to the dilettantes of the Greek decadence, or the Gauls to worn-out Rome.'
'Given many lions and few fleas, the lions are in no danger; but when the fleas multiply, how pitiful is the lions' lot!'

Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, *Cubism*, 1912: 'As all preoccupation in art arises from the material employed, we ought to regard the decorative preoccupation, if we find it in a painter, as an anachronistic artifice, useful only to conceal impotence.'

Maurice Barres (on the Italian pre-Renaissance painters) quoted in Andre Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, 1897: 'And I can also see why aesthetes, enamoured of the archaic, who have deliberately emasculated their virile emotions in quest of a more fragile grace, relish the poverty and pettiness of these minor artists.'

Racism and Sexism

Racist and sexist attitudes characterise the same mentality. They sometimes appear in the same passage and are unconsciously paired, as when Read equates tattoos and cosmetics. The tattoo refers to strange, threatening customs of far-off places and mysterious people. Cosmetics, a form of self-ornamentation, is equated with self-objectification and inferiority (Schapiro). Racism and sexism ward off the potential power and vitality of the 'other'. Whereas nudity earlier alluded to woman as the object of male desire, here Malevich associates the nude female with savagery.

Herbert Read, *Art and Industry*, 1953: 'All ornament should be treated as suspect. I feel that a really civilized person would as soon tattoo his body as cover the form of a good work of art with meaningless ornament. Legitimate ornament I conceive as something like mascara and lipstick – something applied with discretion to make more precise the outlines of an already existing beauty.'

Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 1908: 'The child is amoral. To our eyes, the Papuan is too. The Papuan kills his enemies and eats them. He is not a criminal. But when modern man kills someone and eats him he is either a criminal or a degenerate. The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his paddles, in short everything he can lay hands on. He is not a criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which 80 percent of the inmates show tattoos. The tattooed who are not in prison are latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies at liberty, it means he has died a few years before committing a murder.'

Meyer Schapiro, *The Social Bases of Art*, 1936: 'A woman of this class [upper] is essentially an artist, like the painters whom she might patronise. Her daily life is filled with aesthetic choices; she buys clothes, ornaments, furniture, house decorations; she is constantly re-arranging herself as an aesthetic object.'

Kasimir Malevich, *Suprematist Manifesto Unovis*, 1924: 'we don't want to be like those Negroes upon whom English culture bestowed the umbrella and top hat, and we don't want our wives to run around naked like savages in the garb of Venus!'

Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of our Time*, 1908: '[woman] possesses a greater interest in her immediate environment, in the finished product, in the decorative, the individual, and the concrete; man, on the other hand, exhibits a preference for the more remote, for that which is in process of construction or growth, for the useful, the general, and the abstract.'

Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, 1898: 'Real art, like the wife of an affectionate husband, needs no ornaments. But counterfeit art, like a prostitute, must always be decked out.'

Hierarchy of High-Low Art

Since the art experts consider the 'high arts' of Western men superior to all other forms of art, those arts done by non-Western people, low-class people and women are categorised as 'minor arts', 'primitive arts', 'low arts', etc. A newer more subtle way for artists to elevate themselves to an elite position is to identify their work with 'pure science', 'pure mathematics', linguistics and philosophy. The myth that high art is for a select few perpetuates the hierarchy in the arts, and among people as well.

Clement Greenberg, *Avant-garde and Kitsch*, 1939: 'It will be objected that such art for the masses as folk art was developed under rudimentary conditions of production – and that a good deal of folk art is on a high level. Yes, it is – but folk art is not Athene, and it's Athene whom we want: formal culture with its infinity of aspects, its luxuriance, its large comprehension.'

H.W. Janson, *History of Art*, 1962: 'for the applied arts are more deeply enmeshed in our everyday lives and thus cater to a far wider public than do painting and sculpture, their purpose, as the name suggests, is to beautify the useful, an important and honourable one, no doubt, but of a lesser order than art pure and simple.'

Amedee Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, 1931: 'If we go on allowing the minor arts to think themselves the equal of Great Art, we shall soon be hail fellow to all sorts of domestic furniture. Each to his place! The decorators to the big shops, the artists on the next floor up, several floors up, as high as possible, on the pinnacles, higher even. For the time being, however, they sometimes do meet on the landings, the decorators having mounted at their heels, and numerous artists having come down on their hunkers.'

Le Corbusier (Pierre Jeanneret) and Amedee Ozenfant, *On Cubism*, 1918 (quoted in Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*): 'There is a hierarchy in the arts: decorative art at the bottom, and the human form at the top.' 'Because We are Men.'

Andre Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, 1953: 'The design of the carpet is wholly abstract; not so its colour. Perhaps we shall soon discover that the sole reason why we call this art "decorative" is that for us it has no history, no hierarchy, no meaning. Colour reproduction may well lead us to review our ideas on this subject and rescue the masterwork from the North African bazaar as Negro sculpture has been rescued from the curio-shop; in other words, liberate Islam from the odium of "backwardness" and assign its due place (a minor one, not because the carpet never portrays Man, but because it does not express him) to this last manifestation of the undying East.'

Barnett Newman, *The Ideographic Picture*, 1947 (on the Kwakiutl artist): 'The abstract shape he used, his entire plastic language, was directed

by a ritualistic will towards metaphysical understanding. The everyday realities he left to the toymakers; the pleasant play of nonobjective pattern to the women basket weavers.'

Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art*, 1972: 'In the same sense that science is for scientists and philosophy is for philosophers, art is for artists.'

Joseph Kosuth, *Introductory Note by the American Editor*, 1970: 'In a sense, then, art has become as "serious as science or philosophy" which doesn't have audiences either.'

That Old Chestnut, 'Humanism'

Humanism was once a radical doctrine opposing the authority of the church, but in our secular society it has come to defend the traditional idea of 'mankind' and status quo attitudes. The 'human values' such authorities demand of art depend on the use of particular subject matter or particular ideas of 'human' expression. Without humanist content, ornament, pattern and ritual or decorative elaborations of production are condemned as inhuman, alien and empty. 'The limits of the decorative', says Malraux, 'can be precisely defined only in an age of humanistic art'. We could rather say that the generalities of 'humanist' sentiment characterise only a small part of world art, most of which is non-Western and decorative. But why should anyone prefer the false divisions of these writers, based on ethnic stereotypes, to a historical awareness of the interdependence of all 'human' cultures?

Camille Mauclair, *La Reforme de l'art decoratif en France* (on the Impressionists), 1896: 'Decorative art has as its aesthetic and for its effect not to make one think of man, but of an order of things arranged by him: it is a descriptive and deforming art, a grouping of spectacles the essence of which is to be seen.'

Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, 1954: 'Paintings or sculpture are self-contained statements about the nature of human existence in all its essential aspects. An ornament presented as a work of art becomes a fool's paradise, in which tragedy and discord are ignored and an easy peace reigns.'

Hilton Kramer, *The Splendors and Chill of Islamic Art*, 1975: 'for those of us who seek in art something besides a bath of pleasurable sensation, so much of what it [the Metropolitan Museum's Islamic wing] houses is, frankly so alien to the expectations of Western sensibility.'
'Perhaps with the passage of time, Islamic art will come to look less alien to us than it does today. I frankly doubt it – there are too many fundamental differences of spirit to be overcome.'
'There is small place indeed given to what looms so large in the Western imagination: the individualisation of experience.'

Sir Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 1928: 'the painter was apparently
   willing to spend hours of work upon the delicate veining of the leaves of
   a tree … but it does not seem to have occurred to him to devote the same
   pains and effort on the countenances of his human figures … he appears
   to have been satisfied with the beautiful decorative effect he achieved.'
Andre Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, 1953: 'The limits of the decorative can
   be precisely defined only in an age of humanistic art.'
   'It was the individualisation of destiny, this involuntary or unwitting
   imprint of his private drama on every man's face, that prevented Western
   art from becoming like Byzantine mosaics always transcendent, or like
   Buddhist sculpture obsessed with unity.'
   'How could an Egyptian, an Assyrian or a Buddhist have shown his god
   nailed to a cross, without ruining his style?'

   Decoration and Domesticity
The antithesis of the violence and destruction idolised by Modern Art is the
visual enhancement of the domestic environment. (If humanism is equated
with dynamism, the decorative is seen to be synonymous with the static.)
One method 'modernism' has used to discredit its opponents has been to
associate their work with carpets and wallpaper. Lacking engagement with
'human form' or the 'real world', the work of art must be stigmatised as
decorative (Sedlmayr and Barnes/de Mazia). So decorative art is a code term
signifying failed humanism. Artists such as Gleizes and Kandinsky, anxious
to escape the tag of the decorative, connect their work to older, humanist
aspirations.

Aldous Huxley on Pollock's *Cathedral*, 1947: 'It seems like a panel
   or a wallpaper which is repeated indefinitely around the wall.'
Wyndham Lewis, *Picasso* (on *Minotauromachy*), 1940: 'this confused,
   feeble, profusely decorated, romantic carpet.'
The Times' London critic on Whistler, 1878: 'that these pictures only
   come one step nearer [to fine art] than a delicately tinted wallpaper.'
Hans Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center*, 1948: 'With Matisse, the human
   form was to have no more significance than a pattern on a wallpaper …'
Dr Albert C. Barnes and Violette de Mazia, *The Art of Cezanne*, 1939: 'Pattern,
   in Cezanne an instrument strictly subordinated to the expression of
   values inherent in the real world, becomes in Cubism the entire aesthetic
   content, and this degradation of form leaves Cubistic painting with
   no claim to any status higher than decoration.'
Albert Gleizes, *Opinion* (on Cubism), 1913: 'There is a certain imitative
   coefficient by which we may verify the legitimacy of our discoveries,
   avoid reducing the picture merely to the ornamental value of an
   arabesque or an Oriental carpet, and obtain an infinite variety
   which would otherwise be impossible.'

Wassily Kandinsky, *Uber das Geistige in der Kunst*, 1912: 'If we begin at once to break the bonds that bind us to nature and to devote ourselves purely to combinations of pure colour and independent form, we shall produce works which are mere geometric decoration, resembling something like a necktie or a carpet.'

Autocracy

Certain modern artists express the desire for unlimited personal power. The aesthetics of 'modernism' – its ego-mania, violence, purity-fixation and denial of all other routes to the truth – is highly authoritarian. The reductivist ideology suggests an inevitable, evolutionary survival of the (aesthetic) fittest. Reinhardt declares throughout his writings that all the world's art must culminate in his 'pure' paintings. Ozenfant equates purism with a 'super-state'. Mendelsohn believes the advocates of the new art have a 'right to exercise control'.

Ad Reinhardt, *There is Just One Painting*, 1966: 'There is just one art history, one art evolution, one art progress. There is just one aesthetics, just one art idea, one art meaning, just one principle, one force. There is just one truth in art, one form, one change, one secrecy.'

Amedee Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, 1931: 'Purism is not an aesthetic, but a sort of super-aesthetic in the same way that the League of Nations is a superstate.'

Erich Mendelsohn, *The Problem of a New Architecture*, 1919: 'The simultaneous process of revolutionary political decisions and radical changes in human relationships in economy and science and religion and art give belief in the new form, an *a priori* right to exercise control, and provide a justifiable basis for a rebirth amidst the misery produced by world-historical disaster.'

Adolf Hitler, speech inaugurating the *Great Exhibition of German Art*, 1937: 'I have come to the final inalterable decision to clean house, just as I have done in the domain of political confusion …'
'National-Socialist Germany, however, wants again a "German Art," and this art shall and will be of eternal value, as are all truly creative values of a people.'

Frank Lloyd Wright, *Work Song*, 1896:
'I'LL THINK
AS I'LL ACT
AS I AM!
NO DEED IN FASHION FOR SHAM
NOR FOR FAME E'ER MAN MADE SHEATH THE NAKED WHITE BLADE
MY ACT AS BECOMETH A MAN
MY ACT
ACTS THAT BECOMETH THE MAN.'

We started by examining a specific attitude – the prejudice against the decorative in art – and found ourselves in a labyrinth of myth and mystification. By taking these quotes out of context we are not trying to hold these artists and writers up to ridicule. However, to continue reading them in an unquestioning spirit perpetuates their biases. The language of their statements is often dated – indeed, some of them are over a century old – but the sentiments they express still guide contemporary theory in art.

Modernism, the theory of Modern Art, claimed to break with Renaissance humanism. Yet both doctrines glorify the individual genius as the bearer of creativity. It seems worth noting that such heroic genius has always appeared in the form of a white Western male. We, as artists, cannot solve these problems, but by speaking plainly we hope to reveal the inconsistencies in assumptions that too often have been accepted as 'truth'.

IDEOLOGY, CONFRONTATION AND POLITICAL SELF-AWARENESS

ADRIAN PIPER

We started out with beliefs about the world and our place in it that we didn't ask for and didn't question. Only later, when those beliefs were attacked by new experiences that didn't conform to them, did we begin to doubt: eg., do we and our friends really understand each other? Do we really have nothing in common with Blacks/Whites/gays/workers/the middle class/other women/other men/etc.?

Doubt entails self-examination because a check on the plausibility of your beliefs and attitudes is a check on all the constituents of the self. Explanations of why your falsely supposed 'X' includes your *motives* for believing 'X' (your desire to maintain a relationship, your impulse to be charitable, your goal of becoming a better person); the causes of your believing 'X' (your early training, your having drunk too much, your innate disposition to optimism); and your *objective reasons* for believing 'X' (it's consistent with your other beliefs, it explains the most data, it's inductively confirmed, people you respect believe it). These reveal the traits and dispositions that individuate one self from another.

So self-examination entails self-awareness, ie., awareness of the components of the self. But self-awareness is largely a matter of degree. If you've only had a few discordant experiences, or relatively superficial discordant experiences, you don't need to examine yourself very deeply in order to revise your false beliefs. For instance, you happen to have met a considerate, sensitive, non-exploitative person who's into sadism in bed. You think to yourself, 'This doesn't show that my beliefs about sadists in general are wrong; after all, think what Krafft-Ebing says! This particular person is merely an exception to the general rule that sexual sadists are demented.' Or you think, 'My desire to build a friendship with this person is based on the possibility of reforming her/him (and has nothing to do with any curiosity to learn more about my own sexual tastes).' Such purely cosmetic repairs in your belief structure sometimes suffice to maintain your

sense of self-consistency. Unless you are confronted with a genuine personal crisis, or freely choose to push deeper and ask yourself more comprehensive and disturbing questions about the genesis and justification of your own beliefs, your actual degree of self-awareness may remain relatively thin.

Usually the beliefs that remain most unexposed to examination are the ones we need to hold in order to maintain a certain conception of ourselves and our relation to the world. These are the ones in which we have the deepest personal investment. Hence these are the ones that are most resistant to revision; eg., we have to believe that other people are capable of understanding and sympathy, of honourable and responsible behavior, in order not to feel completely alienated and suspicious of those around us. Or: some people have to believe that the world of political and social catastrophe is completely outside their control in order to justify their indifference to it.

Some of these beliefs may be true, some may be false. This is difficult to ascertain because we can only confirm or disconfirm the beliefs under examination with reference to other beliefs, which themselves require examination. In any event, the set of false beliefs that a person has a personal investment in maintaining is what I will refer to (following Marx) as a person's *ideology*.

Ideology is pernicious for many reasons. The obvious one is that it makes people behave in stupid, insensitive, self-serving ways, usually at the expense of other individuals or groups. But it is also pernicious because of the mechanisms it uses to protect itself, and its consequent capacity for self-regeneration in the face of the most obvious counterevidence. Some of these mechanisms are:

1. The False-Identity Mechanism

In order to preserve your ideological beliefs against attack, you identify them as objective facts and not as beliefs at all. For example, you insist that it is just a fact that Black people are less intelligent than whites, or that those on the sexual fringes are in fact sick, violent or asocial. By maintaining that these are statements of fact rather than statements of belief compiled from the experiences you personally happen to have had, you avoid having to examine and perhaps revise those beliefs. This denial may be crucial to maintaining your self-conception against attack. If you're white and suspect that you may not be all that smart, to suppose that at least there's a whole race of people you're smarter than may be an important source of self-esteem. Or if you're not entirely successful in coping with your own nonstandard sexual impulses, isolating and identifying the sexual fringe as sick, violent or asocial may serve the very important function of reinforcing your sense of yourself as 'normal'.

The fallacy of the false-identity mechanism as a defence of one's ideology consists in supposing that there exist objective social facts that are not constructs of beliefs people have about each other.

2. The Illusion of Perfectibility

Here you defend your ideology by convincing yourself that the hard work of self-scrutiny has an end and a final product, ie., a set of true, central and uniquely defenceable beliefs about some issue; and that you have in fact achieved this end, hence needn't subject your beliefs to further examination. Since there is no such final product, all of the inferences that supposedly follow from this belief are false. Example: you're a veteran of the anti-war movement and have developed a successful and much-lauded system of draft-avoidance counselling, on which your entire sense of self-worth is erected. When it is made clear to you that such services primarily benefit the middle class – that this consequently forces much larger proportions of the poor, the uneducated and Blacks to serve and be killed in its place – you resist revising your views in light of this information on the grounds that you've worked on and thought hard about these issues, have developed a sophisticated critique of them, and therefore have no reason to reconsider your opinions or efforts. You thus treat the prior experience of having reflected deeply on some issue as a defence against the self-reflection appropriate now, that might uncover your personal investment in your anti-draft role.

The illusion of perfectibility is really the sin of arrogance, for it supposes that dogmatism can be justified by having 'paid one's dues'.

3. The One-Way Communication Mechanism

You deflect dissents, criticisms or attacks on your cherished beliefs by treating all of your own pronouncements as imparting genuine information, but treating those of other people as mere symptoms of some moral or psychological defect. Say you're committed to feminism, but have difficulty making genuine contact with other women. You dismiss all arguments advocating greater attention to lesbian and separatist issues within the women's movement on the grounds that they are maintained by frustrated man-haters who just want to get their names in the footlights. By reducing questions concerning the relations of women to each other to pathology or symptoms of excessive self-interest, you avoid confronting the conflict between your intellectual convictions and your actual alienation from other women, and therefore the motives that might explain this conflict. If these motives should include such things as deep-seated feelings of rivalry with other women, or a desire for attention from men, then avoiding recognition of this conflict is crucial to maintaining your self-respect.

The one-way communication mechanism is a form of elitism that ascribes pure, healthy, altruistic political motives only to oneself (or group), while reducing all dissenters to the status of moral defectives or egocentric and self-seeking subhumans, whom it is entirely justified to manipulate or disregard, but with whom the possibility of rational dialogue is not to be taken seriously.

There are many other mechanisms for defending one's personal ideology. These are merely a representative sampling. Together, they all add up to what I will call the *illusion of omniscience*. This illusion consists in being so convinced of the infallibility of your own beliefs about everyone else that you forget that you are perceiving and experiencing other people from a perspective that is, in its own way, just as subjective and limited as theirs. Thus you confuse your personal experiences with objective reality, and forget that you have a subjective and limited *self* that is selecting, processing and interpreting your experiences in accordance with its own limited capacities. You suppose that your perceptions of someone are truths about her or him; that your understanding of someone is comprehensive and complete. Thus your self-conception is not demarcated by the existence of other people. Rather, you appropriate them into your self-conception as psychologically and metaphysically transparent objects of your consciousness. You ignore their ontological independence, their psychological opacity, and thereby their essential personhood. The illusion of omniscience resolves into the fallacy of solipsism.

The result is blindness to the genuine needs of other people, coupled with the arrogant and dangerous conviction that you understand those needs better than they do; and a consequent inability to respond to those needs politically in genuinely effective ways.

The antidote, I suggest, is confrontation of the sinner with the evidence of the sin: the rationalisations; the subconscious defence mechanisms; the strategies of avoidance, denial, dismissal and withdrawal that signal, on the one hand, the retreat of the self to the protective enclave of ideology, on the other hand, precisely the proof of subjectivity and fallibility that the ideologue is so anxious to ignore. This is the concern of my recent work of the past three years.

The success of the antidote increases with the specificity of the confrontation. And because I don't know you I can't be as specific as I would like. I can only indicate general issues that have specific references in my own experience. But if this discussion has made you in the least degree self-conscious about your political beliefs or about your strategies for preserving them; or even faintly uncomfortable or annoyed at my having discussed them; or has raised just the slightest glimmerings of doubt about the veracity of your opinions, then I will consider this piece a roaring success. If not, then I will just have to try again, for my own sake. For of course I am talking not just about you, but about *us*.

THE DOCKLANDS PHOTO-MURALS

PETER DUNN AND LORRAINE LEESON

Docklands Community Poster Project, 1982–85
www.cspace.org.uk/cspace/archive/docklands/
dock_arch.htm

The Docklands photo-murals were developed in response to a request from community representatives for large posters to represent the key issues affecting the redevelopment of the Docklands. The Docklands Community Poster Project steering group[1] considered carefully who the main audience for these posters should be. Were they to be directed towards the developers, or to explain the issues to outsiders? Or were they to be primarily for the Docklands communities themselves? It was decided that the latter group were the most important. Most people were unaware of what was going on, and only knew the miles of corrugated iron now surrounding what was left of the docks, and that they had been left stranded in poor housing with few facilities.

The siting of the photo-murals was also important. Commercial billboards, aimed at communicating a simple brand name, tend to be situated in locations where they can best attract the attention of passing motorists. Since the Poster Project's information was aimed at local people, it was decided that the organisation should construct them on sites where they could be seen over time by passing pedestrians. To this end, the organisation decided to build its own billboard structures, and the first one was subsequently constructed opposite a health centre on Wapping Lane. When further funding came through from the Greater London Council, seven more photo-mural sites were built in and around the Docklands area. Some were temporary, however at any one time six sites were in operation.

The images themselves were developed with the multiple photo-mural sites in mind. They were designed to change gradually through replacement of individual sections, to develop a narrative rather like a slow motion animation. In practical terms this meant the images could be transferred from one site to another, enabling the story of Docklands to unfold through time and space.

Inspiration for the format of the photo-murals came from Chinese wall posters, which had brought information to the people during the Cultural Revolution. The name 'photo-mural' was coined by art critic Richard Cork[2] when searching for words to describe this aspect of the work. Messages to

[1] Formed by artists Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson.
[2] Peter Dunn notes that this term was in fact coined by Alan Thompkins, then PA to Tony Banks at the GLC, but that it was indeed Richard Cork that first used it in a publication.

Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn *The Changing Picture
of Docklands – Community Photo-Mural,* 1982–85
5.49 m × 3.66 m
First sequence of 8 photo-murals
What's Going On Behind Our Backs? (1/8)
Big Money is Moving In (3/8)
Next page:
The Scrap Heap (5/8)
Shattering The Developer's Illusions… (7/8)

be conveyed by the photo-murals came out of the discussions of the Docklands Community Poster Project steering group. The latter was comprised of representatives from the tenants and action groups in the Docklands area, who met once a month to feed back on current issues of the campaigning and identify where action was needed. This group decided on the siting of the photo-murals and issues for communication. Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson then worked on the representation of these themes, bringing imagery back to the group for further discussion of its meaning, though the visual representation was entirely the remit the artists. In this way the Docklands Community Poster Project was able to build on the model of the steering group model developed for the East London Health Project, which allowed each member of the collaborative team to use their best skills and avoided a 'lowest common denominator' approach. This process of decision-making enabled a multiplication of skills and experience and provided a hub of creative energy that sustained the project for its ten-year duration.

DISPATCHES FROM
AN UNOFFICIAL WAR ARTIST

PETER KENNARD

I remember in 1979 going to a tiny office in Great Queen Street where the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was based. It was there that I showed Bruce Kent and a few others my photomontages and said I'd like to do work for nuclear disarmament.

I had become disturbed by the fact that the burgeoning anti-nuclear campaign was using undoctored images of nuclear bombs and missiles, merely adding their own slogan. This was also the time when Athena posters were selling a poster of an air-brushed mushroom cloud which was deemed to be an acceptable image to put up on bedroom walls. I still have the page from their catalogue which illustrates the poster, next to two American pick-up trucks, all listed under 'The Twentieth Century: Power and Energy'.

My elder son once came home with a book called *Discover the World of Weapons*. On its cover was the photo of an enormous missile pointing skywards at the title. The whole book was designed with psychedelic 1960s graphics. This was considered suitable reading matter for eight year-olds. And they called us insane. I felt that these images had to be broken, had to be taken out of the supposedly rational discourse in which they could become domestic decoration.

Peter Kennard
CND demonstration, London, 1981
Photograph © Peter Kennard

Crushed Missile (photomontage), 1980

TEN ITEMS OF THE COVENANT

LAIBACH

1. LAIBACH works as a team (the collective spirit), according to the principle of industrial production and totalitarianism, which means that the individual does not speak; the organisation does. Our work is industrial, our language political.

2. LAIBACH analyses the relation between ideology and culture in a late phase, presented through art. LAIBACH sublimates the tension between them and the existing disharmonies (social unrest, individual frustrations, ideological oppositions) and thus eliminates every direct ideological and systemic discursiveness. The very name and the emblem are visible materialisations of the idea on the level of a cognitive symbol. The name LAIBACH is a suggestion of the actual possibility of establishing a politicised (system of) ideological art because of the influence of politics and ideology.

3. All art is subject to political manipulation (indirectly – consciousness; directly), except for that which speaks the language of this same manipulation. To speak in political terms means to reveal and acknowledge the omnipresence of politics. The role of the most humane form of politics is the bridging of the gap between reality and the mobilising spirit. Ideology takes the place of authentic forms of social consciousness. The subject in modern society assumes the role of the politicised subject by acknowledging these facts. LAIBACH reveals and expresses the link of politics and ideology with industrial production and the unbridgeable gaps between this link and the spirit.

4. The triumph of anonymity and facelessness has been intensified to the absolute through a technological process. All individual differences of the authors are annulled, every trace of individuality erased. The technological process is a method of programming function. It represents development, ie. purposeful change. To isolate a particle of this process and form it statically means to reveal man's negation of any kind of evolution which is foreign to and inadequate for his biological evolution.

   LAIBACH adopts the organisational system of industrial production and the identification with ideology as its work method. In accordance with this,

each member personally rejects his individuality, thereby expressing the relationship between the particular form of production system and ideology and the individual. The form of social production appears in the production manner of LAIBACH music itself and the relations within the group. The group functions operationally according to the principle of rational transformation, and its (hierarchical) structure is coherent.

5. The internal structure functions on the directive principle and symbolises the relation of ideology toward the individual. The idea is concentrated in one (and the same) person, who is prevented from any kind of deviation. The quadruple principle acts by the same key (EBER-SALIGER-KELLER-DACHAUER), which – predestined – conceals in itself an arbitrary number of sub-objects (depending on need).

The flexibility and anonymity of the members prevent possible individual deviations and allow a permanent revitalisation of the internal rules of life. A subject who can identify himself with the extreme position of contemporary industrial production automatically becomes a LAIBACH member (and is simultaneously condemned for his objectivisation).

6. The basis of LAIBACH's activity lies in its concept of unity, which expresses itself in each medium according to appropriate laws (art, music, film...).

The material of the LAIBACH manipulation: Taylorism, bruitism, *Nazi Kunst*, disco...

The principle of work is totally constructed and the compositional process is a dictated 'ready-made': industrial production is rationally developmental, but if we extract from this process the element of the moment and emphasise it, we also designate to it the mystical dimension of alienation, which reveals the magical component of the industrial process. Repression of the industrial ritual is transformed into a compositional dictate and the politicisation of sound can become absolute tonality.

7. LAIBACH excludes any evolution of the original idea: the original concept is not evolutionary but entelechical, and presentation is only a link between this static and the changing determinant unit. We take the same stand toward the direct influence of the development of music on the LAIBACH concept; of course, this influence is a material necessity but it is of secondary importance and appears only as a historical musical foundation of the moment which, in its choice, is unlimited. LAIBACH expresses its timelessness with the artifacts of the present and it is thus necessary that at the intersection of politics and industrial production (the culture of art, ideology, consciousness) it encounters the elements of both, although it wants to be both. This wide range allows LAIBACH to oscillate, creating the illusion of movement (development).

8. LAIBACH practices provocation on the revolted state of the alienated consciousness (which must necessarily find itself an enemy) and unites warriors and opponents into an expression of a static totalitarian scream.

It acts as a creative illusion of strict institutionality, as a social theatre of popular culture, and communicates only through non-communication.

9. Besides LAIBACH, which concerns itself with the manner of industrial production in totalitarianism, there also exist two other groups in the concept of LAIBACH KUNST aesthetics: GERMANA studies the emotional side, which is outlined in relation to the general ways of emotional, erotic, and family life, lauding the foundations of the state functioning of emotions on the old classicist form of new social ideologies. DREIHUNDERT TAUSEND VERSCHIEDENE KRAWALLE is a retrospective futuristic negative utopia. (The era of peace has ended).

10. LAIBACH is the knowledge of the universality of the moment. It is the revelation of the absence of balance between sex and work, between servitude and activity. It uses all expressions of history to mark this imbalance. This work is without limit; God has one face, the devil infinitely many. LAIBACH is the return of action on behalf of the idea.

Translated by members of Laibach.

Laibach on Jalta (Nato), 1994
Photograph © Diego Andrez and Tandar

FLYER FOR THE REV-REVUE OF SOC-FASHION

ORANGE ALTERNATIVE

Flyer for the *Rewia Soc-Mody*,
distributed by the *Pomarańczowa
Alternatywa* (Orange Alternative)
in Warsaw, 1988.

The events of recent weeks have caused us to realise that all activities
violating the obligatory norms of sociopolitical life are doomed to failure
in advance and their organisers doomed to political nonexistence. We have
understood our mistake. Down with happenings and with politicising!
Long live carefree fun outdoors in the afternoons! Viva Coca-Cola,
fast cars and fashion. Let us be colourful, carefree and apolitical.

Meet next Sunday 6.11 around 14.00 for the:

REV-REVUE
OF
SOC-FASHION

organised in the vicinity of Świętojańska Street (Old Town), we shall publicly
express our attachment to exclusive garments and to the tasteful self-image
that means everything to us. The revue is a fundamentally apolitical event.
Its accordance in time with the anniversary that falls on the next day is purely
coincidental and hard to grasp.

We have the undoubted honour to invite
all of you just as you are here
to a happening, actually it is going to be
a rev-revue of soc-fashion
that is, an event fundamentally apolitical.
Let's have fun! Let all dissent, rhetoric and
argument cease! Fashion fights and wins! It doesn't matter
where you come from – what matters is how you're turned out.
There are many possibilities.
Dress up as:
The psychiatric hospital
Untapped reserves
A chain of milk bars
Last year's rape harvest
Social consciousness
Graphomania
Early post-Impressionism
The Tenth Commandment
Birth of a new tradition or
Far-reaching conclusions.
Of course, these are only a few of the possibilities.
A wide range of propositions will be offered to you
by the morning press.

We will meet 6.11 /Sunday/
At 14.00 in the vicinity of
Świętojańska Street /Old Town/.

The O. Alternative of Warsaw

Translated by Weronika Szczawinska.

OPERATING MANUAL
FOR LESZEK MAJ

ORANGE ALTERNATIVE

Leszek Maj – Instrukcja Obsługi,
a flyer distributed by the
Pomarańczowa Alternatywa (Orange
Alternative) in Warsaw, ca.**1988**.

OPERATING MANUAL

Product:
LESZEK MAJ, commander of the ZOMO [Motorized Reserves
of the Citizens' Militia] sub-units, ranked captain.

Application:
Suppression and pacification of illegal assemblies. Proven during 1982,
a difficult year for the socialist homeland. Used successfully over the
following years in the area of Paris Commune Square (Plac Komuny)
and the Old Town.

In situations of direct combat contact with the happeners, Captain Maj
assumes the pose of a good uncle, of a Smurf or Gargamel etc. He is
a sensitive and unhappy person who has been sent by his evil superiors
to control the fun. Uncle Maj is certainly well-disposed towards us, but
sometimes circumstances force him to make decisions against his own
conscience in order to 'ensure the permeability of the pedestrian and
transport precincts'. A great friend of young people, he can be witty,
smart, eloquent, sometimes he will reprimand you in a fatherly manner,
sometimes he will wag his finger...

HAPPENERS!

Remember that any man who speaks to you from a militia car is a cop
experienced in pacification, who is trying to deprive us of those brief
moments when we are really free.

Remember the words of 'Major' [Waldemar Fydrych, founder of the
Orange Alternative], in his *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*: 'Even a single
militiaman is a work of art'. This is how we should treat our assigned
ZOMO-man – as a work of art, not as a partner in the discussion.

THE ORGANISATIONMENT

Translated by Weronika Szczawinska.

RETROABSTRACTION;
ART IS NOT ENOUGH;
ELECTRONIC CIVIL DISOBEDIANCE;
THE ARTICULATION OF PROTEST;
THE FUTURE IS SELF-ORGANISED

1989

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Net. In Cuba, artists withdraw from producing or exhibiting artwork in protest against state restrictions; community art turns to artists' involvement in community activism; new forms of practice emerge at the intersection of art, technology and political activism; self-institution becomes a primary strategy; the manifold discourse of the anti-globalisation movement offers a context which encompasses diverse oppositional practices.

GEOMETRIC RETROABSTRACTION

DESIDERIO NAVARRO

From 23 December 1988 to 28 January [89] the exhibition of current Cuban abstract art 'It Is Just What You See' opened to the public in several galleries in Havana. The exhibition featured recent works from over 50 artists, among whom were familiar names like José Adriano Buergo, Ana Albertina Delgado, Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas, Tania Bruguera, Arturo Cuenca, Aldito Menéndez, Tonel, Tomás Esson, Abdel Hernández, Glexis Novoa, Segundo Planes, Ponjuan, Ciro Quintana, Lázaro Saavedra, Sandra Ceballos, Félix Suazo, Ermy Taño, Rubén Torres Llorca, Pedro Vizcaíno and Carlos García. Why this sudden shift of a great part of Cuban art to geometric abstraction?

Geometric retro-abstraction:
an art without problems:
it is just what you see*

Eyes that don't see,
heart that doesn't feel
   Popular

Why look afar?!
Stay put
And wait for the communication.
– You and I,
says he,
don't need to think,
if
the leaders do –
   Vladimir Maiakovski

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* *La Gaceta de Cuba*, Havana, June 1989, pp.22–23. Reprinted in Margarita González, Tania Parson and José Veigas (eds.), *Déjame que te cuente: Antología de la crítica en los 80*, Havana: Artecubano Ediciones, 2002, pp.215–21; Magaly Espinosa and Kevin Power (eds.), *El Nuevo arte cubano: Antología de textos críticos*, Santa Monica: Perceval Press, 2006, pp.33–39; Desiderio Navarro, *Las causas de las cosas*, Havana: Letras Cubanas, 2007, pp.54–64.
1 On those works, by these authors, at that time, Gerardo Mosquera wrote the following: 'You feel a great urgency to "go beyond art" in order to directly

address with it social problems without making the least artistic concession. ... Socialism has external and internal enemies. On their own initiative, without waiting for instructions or filling in forms, young people born within the Revolution – who have only known socialism – are actively participating, as artists, in the contemporary crusade against internal enemies. ... Through the development of art's possibilities, their works put forward the concerns and perspectives of the people that we can hear in the streets every day. ... In Cuba, plastic art descended the last step from its ivory tower, and then got straight onto a bus. There it sweats, pushes, swears, laughs, advances, carrying with it a very serious critical questioning of problems from our reality that, though they are sometimes addressed in the corridors, have rarely escaped this informal formulation and been discussed publicly in depth. Backed by Fidel's statement proclaiming the elevation of creative freedom both in content and form as one of socialism's fundamental principles, it is resulting in an unprecedented creative critique. However strong this sounds, it is a process of questioning 'within socialism and by socialism' (in 'Crítica y consignas', *La Gaceta de Cuba*, Havana: November 1988, p.26).

[2] 'Another question that is outside of these notes' scope is the problem of the connections and conflicts between the (non-)understanding of reality and the (non-)understanding of texts. Such conflicts can emerge specially as the result of concrete social ills, or textual ills conditioned by the former. One of these textual ills is ... to consistently call black white and vice versa. Another is for different texts to characterise similar phenomena in opposing ways, or to identify phenomena which are clearly different. ... A possible result of the joint influence of reality and these troubled texts on the individual is "perplexity" (because of the contradiction between reality and the texts or between the texts themselves). Another possible result is the phenomenon of "apparent understanding", linked to the assumption that texts from a certain source (for example, the texts published by a given newspaper) have a particular insight or authority; the reader thinks he understands a text that is meaningless or has internal contradictions, or he doesn't see the contradictions between the text and reality or between the texts (and believes, on each occasion, what he perceives at a given moment).' (Iuri I. Levin, 'Tezisy k probleme neponimaniia teksta', *Semeiotiké*, no.12, Tartu: 1981, pp.95–96).

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3 See Pedro Albear, 'Contribuciones a la teoría del arte disciplinado y al estudio de la disciplina como categoría estética ['Contributions to the Theory of Disciplined Art and the Study of Discipline as an Aesthetic Category'], *Teoría y Praxis*, no.4, Havana: 1988, pp.1–16; Ramón Bermejo, 'Arte anárquico o arte obediente: ésa es la cuestión' ['Anarchic Art or Obedient Art: That is the Question'], *Puntos de vista*, no.5, Havana: 1988, pp.17–26; Alberto Machado, 'Los hipercríticos: la excesiva atención a los fenómenos negativos y su condena por iniciativa propia' ['The Hypercritical: Excessive Attention to Negative Phenomena and its Condemnation on its Own initiative'], *Plástica de hoy*, no.5, Havana: 1988, pp.27–35.
4 This alternative was already clearly formulated in harsh remarks like the following: 'If in order to be social painters they need to be critical and pose problems, if they can't make work focused on celebrating all that is good, then it is preferable that those brats start painting landscapes, still lifes or even abstracts. And even better that they don't paint at all!' (the words of Perfecto Estable, aged 60, retired, interviewed on 27 October 1988 in Galería Habana).

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5 In this sense, several comments gathered from those attending the opening of the Exhibition of Young Artists at the Museo de Villa Clara on 2 December 1988 are enlightening: 'And what does this alleged artist mean with this plaster head of Martí without a body? That the Revolutionary Government chopped Martí's head off?' (Clara Lince, 25, science student). 'I knew there had to be something to that canvas with safety glasses and the words 'USA LOS CONTRA LA DESINFORMACIÓN' [Use Them for Disinformation]. It is so clear it says 'USA LOS CONTRA LA DESINFORMACIÓN' [USA Against Disinformation], or 'USA LOS CONTRA LA DESINFORMACIÓN' [Use the Contras, Disinformation], or...' (Bárbaro Águila, 45, judo instructor). In front of another work, in a cartoon that represented a stereotypical European explorer wearing a hat above which an aboriginal hatchet hung, menacingly, a visitor saw a Cuban microbrigadist whose helmet was going to be crushed by the symbolic hammer of communism.

6 This is the basis of Dalí's famous 'critical paranoia', a method of pictorial production that uses delirious interpretation in the reading of pre-existing images (including pictorial works made by others). Dalí's paranoid style of reading was explained by the French surrealist critic José Pierre this way: 'In a snow cloud produced by some skiers, he discovered a family of small white dogs; a photograph of an African hut and several kneeling Black men, when turned upside down, became a thin face'. (*Le Surréalisme*, Paris: 1966, p.60)

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7 Anagrammatic reading has a famous precursor in Ferdinand de Saussure. He maintained that Latin poets hid anagrams of proper names in their verses (letters dispersed along the text, in the right order or with an alternate one, isolated or in couples, groups of three, etc.). For example, in the Latin verse '*Taurasia Cisauna Samnio Cepit*' he saw 'an anagrammatic line that contains Scipio's full name (in the syllables *ci* + *pi* + *io*, besides the S from *Samnio cepit*, which is the first letter in a group in which the word *Scipio* appears almost in full...)'. Despite the fact that the Swiss linguist believed the only convincing cases of intentional anagrams implied a repetition of words that appeared already explicitly in the text, his search for hidden anagrams has been referred to as 'Saussure's madness'. There is even more reason to talk about a true paranoid style of anagrammatic reading when the subject of the reading just tries to extract combinations of letters that compose words that are hostile or offensive to him, independently of their actual absence from the text.

8 'We see that the investigative process is based on public opinion, but this must be confirmed by two witnesses. ... and in order to prove the bad nature of the accused, it is enough to say to anyone that he is heretic, this statement being valid even when the two witnesses haven't heard any bad-sounding words from the mouth of the accused.

   If the witnesses declare that the accused has a reputation as heretic, and are asked what this reputation consists of ... it is not necessary for them to give a detailed explanation, it is enough for them to say that people believe so.' (*Manual de inquisidores*, trans. from French to Spanish by Don J. Marchen, Madrid: Imprenta de D. J. del Collado, 1822, pp.5–6).

   '...often the inquisitors themselves create the heretics. And not only in the sense that they imagine them where they are not, but also because they repress with such vehemence heretic corruption that, by doing so, they incite many to get involved with it, because of hatred towards those who whip it.' (Adso de Melk, as quoted by Abate Vallet, *Le manuscript de Dom Adson de Melk, traduit en français d'après l'edition de Dom J. Mabillon*, Paris: Presses de l'Abbaye de la Source, 1842, p.32).

9 See Desiderio Navarro, 'Alternativa apologética + delirio de interpretación: el asemantismo plástico como reacción postartística, sociológica y ética' ['Apologetic Alternative + Interpretative Delirium: Plastic Asemantism as a Post-Artistic, Sociological and Ethical Reaction'], *La Gaceta de Cuba*, Havana, January 1989, pp.11–12. See also Gerardo Mosquera, 'La retroabstracción: una solución o la reducción al absurdo como alarma?' ['Retroabstraction: A solution, or the Reduction to the Absurd as an Alarm?'], *El Caimán Barbudo*, Havana, January 1989, pp.6–7, and José Luis Rodríguez, 'Pintura abstracta y suspicacia concreta' [Abstract Painting and Concrete Suspicion'], *Vanguardia*, Santa Clara, 20 January 1989.

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¹⁰ In the debate that took place at UNEAC on 10 April 1988, the author proposed this idea. Sadly, for reasons of space, the national press could only reflect some of the ideas that were presented there; others were ignored, including our argument in favour of a broad collective discussion precisely on the necessary collectivisation and qualification of the subject, the criteria and mechanisms of the social control of production, distribution and reception of art works.

¹¹ 'In front of an object, sometimes one can assume a semantic attitude by mistake. This way, for example, one can assume a mistakenly semantic attitude in front of a late Cubist painting, and make an effort to find a likeness between the shapes and colour spots in the painting, a-semantic by conception, and real or fictitious objects.' (Mieczysław Wallis, *Sztuki iznaki*, Varsovia: PIW, 1982, p.108).

[12] The abstract artwork's a-semantic impotence in the face of an extreme semanticising approach, paranoid or not, has been identified by Michael Kirby in *The Art of Time. Essays on the Avant-Garde* (New York, 1969): 'The artwork may not have any external reference. Of course this doesn't eliminate the possibility of the reception of a message. Everything can be perceived as a symbol. Each line, colour, form, even the untouched canvas: everything, in a certain level of interpretation, may acquire a philosophical meaning. Rorschach's blots, used in psychological research, don't have intentional references, they are just blots; however, through them "are perceived" many diverse "messages". Because of that, the "message" quality of experience can be seen, at least to a certain extent, as functionally dependent on the receptor's disposition to perceive a message. He will perceive a message wherever he looks for one.

Each work, in a certain way, is an open metaphor: the work, in some level of reception, always *reminds of* something, something we want to compare it with. An abstract painting might for example be associated to a particular event, to emotions experienced in a certain moment, to the structure of the world or, simply, to life: with everything that memory and imagination refer to.'

[13] See the anonymous text 'Nuevas insinuaciones irreverentes, ahora geometría mediante' (New irreverent insinuations, now with mediating geometry), tomorrow, or the day after, in one of the national papers.

Translated by Pablo Lafuente.

The Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizio
Border Sutures, 1990
Courtesy Davidson Library CEMA,
University of California; © Centro Cultural de la Raza

THE BORDER ART WORKSHOP/ TALLER DE ARTE FRONTERIZO

GUILLERMO GOMEZ-PENA AND EMILY HICKS INTERVIEWED BY COCO FUSCO

GUILLERMO GOMEZ-PENA In 1986 BAW/TAF[1] did a very big project at the place where the border fence ends. There is a strip of sand, about ten metres long, where there is absolutely no fence: it is literally the northernmost point of Latin America and the most southwesterly point of the US. The beginning or end of the US/Mexico border, depending on perspective. But it is a place that is extremely charged with political, legal and cultural meaning.

BAW/TAF called together the artistic communities in Tijuana and San Diego to do a large performance ritual, on El Dia de la Raza, the [annual event marking the] day that Columbus was supposed to have discovered us. First we notified the press that the continent had been turned upside down and that Columbus, instead of arriving at the Caribbean, was going to arrive at the beaches of Tijuana.

We called the art communities of the two cities to go and wait for Columbus. So we all arrived at the beach. We had a huge table in the form of a freeway, which was bisected by the border where it ended. The Mexican artists were on the Mexican side wearing a stereotypical border costume. And the North American and Chicano artists were sitting on the North American side.

The first action was to take the table and turn it 360 degrees so that the Mexicans would enter illegally into the US and the North Americans into Mexico. The second action was to exchange food illegally across the border. At one point there were three huge [model] silhouettes of sailing ships that were positioned on the ocean. One was in the middle on the border, one was in Mexico and one was in the US They were set on fire. We then invited all the border communities to join us in a meal and we started feeding everybody and giving our costumes to the kids. It turned into a fiesta.

The North American media didn't pick it up. I don't think that they had the codes to understand it. But the Mexican media recognised the gesture and understood that there was a group of artists claiming the border as a worthwhile place for creation.

[1] The Border Art Workshop/*Taller de Arte Fronterizo*, San Diego/Tijuana (1985–1990)

COCO FUSCO Let's go to some examples of contemporary work. And then from there we can talk about the differences between working on the border and taking that work to other places.

GGP I will describe our recent event with Superbarrio. Superbarrio is a political activist who emerged in 1986 out of the ruins of the Mexico City earthquake. When people saw the inability of the government to resolve the housing crisis they formed *la Asamblea de Barrios.* The *Asamblea* very intelligently developed a performance leader, a political activist, who utilises the tradition of Mexican wrestling, which is the national sport of Mexico – attended by the whole family. It's extremely cheap, it's very working class, and wrestlers are pop heroes, urban folk heroes that appear in comic books, in films, in literature and art. The *Asamblea de Barrios* chose to mask the leader, and Superbarrio has since become an extremely popular national leader of the Mexican counterculture. He temporarily united with Cardenas, and ran for office of the presidency of Mexico. Superbarrio has been able to lead demonstrations of 30,000 people, and negotiated with secretaries and politicos for expanded housing programs, etc. Superbarrio had a three-week tour recently throughout California where he met with farm workers and Chicano leaders, and he ended up in San Diego where we hosted him. One day we took him in a low-rider car to several elementary schools to speak with the Mexican children. He also appeared in radio shows and at universities in the *barrio.* At the end of his presentations, there was a huge performance and political event at the Centre Cultural de la Raza, in which the members of the Border Art Workshop, in costume, acted as *parientes* (relatives) of Superbarrio, impersonating Supermojado, the migrant worker, and Superviviente, *una mujer prenada pero con pesticidas, afectada par los pesticidas* (a pregnant woman, affected by pesticides). Santa Frida, *que es un personaje de Rocio Weiss inspirada de Frida Kahlo* (a character of Rocio Weiss's based on Frida Kahlo), the Wrestling Bride and Chicanosaurio delivered a number of reports on the situation of Mexican-Americans in the border territories.

At the end of these reports, the Border Patrol – *los Migrasferatu,* Supermigra – jumped on stage and began apprehending us, and, at that moment, the real Superbarrio came from the audience and saved us from the Border Patrol. We left the ring to him and he began a discussion with political leaders of the two cities that lasted for four hours.

BAW/TAF has tried to make performance art operate as a provider of context for political debate. One thing that came out of that event is that Superbarrio forced the Mexican Consul to sign a petition for more engagement of the Mexican government in the crisis of the Mexican-Americans. These are instances of political emergency which the Border Art Workshop realises are more important than intra-artistic concerns.

This raises a really interesting issue at the core of the BAW/TAF – the criticism that experimental, outrageous, innovative creative work doesn't meet community concerns, or that the community is going to be perplexed. In fact, what we find over and over again, is that the tolerance for otherness, for eccentricity and extreme behavior in the Mexican and Chicano communities is incredibly vast.

CF What happens to the group away from San Diego/Tijuana/California, or what happens to individual members of the group who go to work off-site? Do you have to re-conceptualise your work in order to put it in another kind of space? What happens when you use a gallery as a context to reflect on another space?

GGP I think that border culture is the territory of cultural misunderstanding. We are operating *en territorio minado* (in a mine field). When we are close to the border, we have more control over the possibilities of cultural misunderstanding than when we are away from it. When we take the work into the inner country of the US, the work is seen as exotic; at worst it is seen as political art hanging in galleries.

CF What about your performances?

GGP I think that the problem I have with my performances is their exoticisation. Border Brujo is frequently exoticised. Border Brujo is a performance character I started working on a year ago. He has been the companion of many of my colleagues' performance characters at political events, on the streets, at community centres, etc. But Border Brujo is also a frequent visitor to the art world. He does solo performances in which he appears in alternative spaces, museums and theatres. He is a kind of psychological border crosser, a psychological guide for border crossers. He appeared for the first time as a homeless inhabitant of Balboa Park. Border Brujo is a confrontational character who, through an experience of the crisis and rupture of language, bilinguality and tongues, tries to convey a sense of the border experience.

I think that because the BAW/TAF has realised the risks of the decontextualisation of border art, of an art that is site specific, it is now in the process of developing new models. Instead of working out of context, we are looking for ways to engage in a new site for a certain period of time, and to collaborate with artists of that new site to create a shared product. A few steps have been made in that direction, and they have been very effective.

What the Border Art Workshop wants when it arrives at a new site is to bring a whole operation – an integrated multi-layered and multi-dimensional practice, with radio shows and town meetings, dialogues with artists, fiestas, *tertulias*, community actions.

CF Can we return to the concept of bilingualism? You were talking about Border Brujo and how this character is working in different languages. Does it make sense to link the choice to work in a variety of languages, the choice to work in a variety of disciplines, and the choice to work as artists in different media?

GGP The multi-faceted nature of the US/Mexico border demands a multi-dimensional perspective.

EMILY HICKS And the political struggle is constantly shifting. At one moment it's on English – as an official language – that we have to take a stand. At another moment it might be that racism in the school system is the most pressing political issue. Our work becomes part of a struggle against the dropping enrolments, or the drop-out rate in high schools. We must constantly shift the media we use to respond to the emergency situations that we have, because part of the work is a reaction to the state of emergency.

GGP Every member of the workshop has a concrete direction. I am a performance artist and a writer and that is my function within the workshop. Sometimes a billboard might be more effective than a performance piece. We have done very effective work recontextualising imagery and texts. So a text that appears on a wall one day may be printed in a Chicano newspaper the next day. And two days later it's going to be part of a Mexican magazine. And a month later it is part of a performance piece, or a film.

EH We are perfecting a language that can be flexible enough to deal with a constantly changing political situation. So there is a sense of craft in all of this. It has to do with the ability to recycle material, to respond quickly, to have a database ready, so that we can come up with something for the moment that is appropriate for that situation.
We're dealing right now with pesticides and women, with sterility and birth defects due to exposure to some pesticides. It takes a long time to develop an appropriate art language to discuss that. Berta Jottar did a piece in New York that was the first approximation. Then Robert Sanchez took Berta's ideas and did another piece in San Jose that was, perhaps, more successful in integrating the visual information – he added more texts.

CF Would you characterise the work as predominantly reactive, or reflective, or both?

GGP It is important to distinguish two parallel processes. The process of the individual is a long process, and it involves reflexivity. Each of us is working on her or his language in a very careful and intensive way. What created the need for a group was the dissatisfaction with only operating within the art world. And I think that the need to have an extra-artistic voice, to have a public voice outside of the art world, has brought us to create this other kind of work, work in a context of immediacy. Sometimes the more reflective work becomes part of that as well. Border Brujo can be presented as a finished piece in a theatre festival or a museum, and can also be part of the Border Art Workshop at a rally. And Santa Frida and the Wrestling Bride can suddenly be part of *una manifestación estudiantil en el centre de Tijuana* (a student protest in the middle of Tijuana).
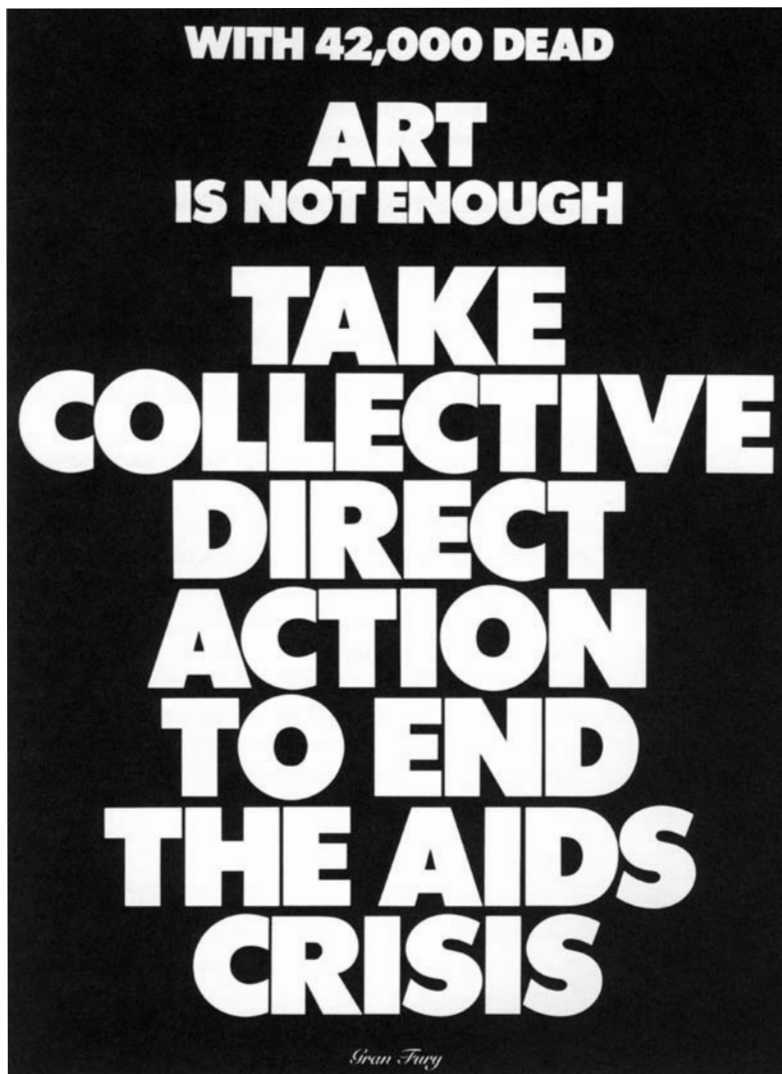
Gran Fury *With 42,000 Dead Art is Not Enough*, 1988
Poster
Image above and text opposite courtesy Gran Fury
Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division,
The New York Public Library, Astor, Lennox
and Tilden Foundations

A PRESENTATION

GRAN FURY
(TOM KALIN, MICHAEL NESLINE AND JOHN LINDELL)

A quick explanation of Gran Fury: we're a collective of AIDS activists opposing governments and social institutions that make those living with AIDS invisible. Through visual projects we hope to inform a broad audience and provoke direct action to end the AIDS crisis. We named ourselves after the automobile normally used by undercover police agents in New York, and we have produced a number of projects, posters, stickers, t-shirts, flyers, printed ads, billboards, subway and bus signs and videos. Gran Fury recognises that direct action and cultural activism are expressions of different communities' differing needs.

Gran Fury emerged out of a group called ACT UP in New York that was formed in 1987, and prior to that a collective called the Silence = Death collective. The poster they became best known for is the *Silence = Death* poster, which actually preceded the formation of ACT UP New York. It was an attempt on their part to view the AIDS crisis as a political scandal on the scale of Watergate. Why is Reagan silent about AIDS? What is really going on at the Center for Disease Control? In a lot of ways this poster became a location for people who had a lot of rage or a sense of despair about the AIDS crisis, and this in turn led to the formation of ACT UP.

Gran Fury was formed in January 1988 out of ACT UP, in some sense at the instigation of Bill Olander. Bill had come to ACT UP New York to offer the window at the New Museum for a project that became 'Let the Record Show' – a large photomural of the Nuremburg trials, and in the foreground a series of American individuals each with his or her quotation about AIDS cast in concrete. Bill Olander wrote an essay at the time, and I'll read a quote from it:

> The point is a simple one – not all works of art are as "disinterested" as others, and some of the greatest have been created in the midst of, or as a result of, a crisis. Many of us believe we're in the midst of a crisis today. Let the record show that there are many in the community of art and artists who chose not to be silent in the 1980s.

Bill died of AIDS in 88 and we're very thankful and think very strongly of him in terms of his early efforts around AIDS activism.

One of the important strategies of ACT UP was humour and play. There was a national campaign in the early part of 88 to articulate clearly on a national scale the problems of the AIDS crisis. Posters were made, each one to advertise a different day. One action – this day was targeted to deal with the issue of AIDS and homophobia – was a massive kiss-in. A huge number of people marched into the West Village and the marchers, much to the confusion of the police, all began to kiss instead of holding signs up or lying down in the street. It was an attempt to make sex-positive images available to people who might not see them otherwise, and also to have a kind of public celebration, a claiming of public space.

Our images and the information circulate in a variety of forms. We recycle and cannibalise our own work in an effort to push its accessibility beyond those who might just see it on the street.

This is a quote from Vito Russo which explains or contextualises [some of what we do], from a speech given at Albany in 1988. Vito was a very articulate member of ACT UP.

> *If I'm dying from anything, it's from homophobia. If I'm dying from anything, it's from racism. If I'm dying from anything, it's from indifference and red tape. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from Jessie Helms and Ronald Reagan. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from the sensationalism of newspapers, magazines and television shows which are interested in me as a human interest story only as long as I'm willing to be a helpless victim, not if I'm fighting for my life. If I'm dying from anything, it's the fact that not enough rich white heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anyone to give a shit.*

In the early days of Gran Fury we had decided that we wanted to do billboards, and we had negotiated with a billboard company without telling them what we were planning to do. When we got to the final stage and sent the copy they sent back the next day a certified letter saying they absolutely could not rent the space to us because it would make them lose Coca-Cola advertisements. It was a real object lesson in what was approved and who controlled public space and began to raise questions for us about how to employ strategies to rent space, as well as taking space over.

The text on [one] piece reads 'When a government turns its back on its people, is it civil war? The US government considers the 47,254 dead from AIDS expendable. Aren't the "right" people dying? Is this medical apartheid?' It's important to note that in America at this point over 110,000 people have died from AIDS.

There was a massive demonstration at the Food and Drug Administration and we created a very simple, small, poster. In NYC there was a new estimate of the numbers infected with HIV and who had died of AIDS, right before the

city budget. We wanted to articulate the reason for the reduction of the numbers as economic and political. We took [the] symbol of the red hand, which has been used by many other political struggles [the accompanying text reads: the government has blood on it's hands. One AIDS death every half hour], and put it pretty much everywhere possible and created a t-shirt out of it. It was a beginning of our recognition of the ways in which activism could use the media to put our agenda forward, if we presented a demonstration that was legible in a compact fashion. A quote from James Baldwin:

> The victim who is able to articulate the situation of the victim has ceased to be a victim – he or she has become a threat.

There's an annual demonstration that happens at Wall Street each year. [Slide shown of fake money that was created for a demonstration in Wall Street, against the collusion of big business in the perpetuation of the AIDS crisis. The bills were scattered in the air, thrown out of windows.] In 1987 there was a demonstration that was shortly followed by the release of AZT in the US. The second demonstration reiterated demands around the release of drug trials. The year after, we took the format of the *New York Times* and mimicked it completely, printing the outer leaf of the newspaper, calling it the *New York Crimes*, and constructing our own version of the AIDS news. The morning before the demonstration, these sheets were slipped over the covers of thousands of copies of the *New York Times* in all the boxes where people buy newspapers, so businessmen on the way to work in the morning bought their newspaper, which looked just like the *New York Times*, and began to read it, began to get a very different version of the news.

We invited the audience to consider a subject other than what they had perhaps intended to. This is a strategy we frequently try to employ, in trying to intervene into public space, advertising space to disrupt the normal flow of a person's thoughts and inject our own agenda.

[We wrote] a letter to Barbara Goldner at Art Matters from Bob Jones at the Bob Jones University which is a conservative Christian university: 'Dear Miss Goldner, If sexual perverts in the art community want to kill themselves off by reason of their disregard for the moral laws God has built into the universe, they have that privilege, but they are not to be pitied. They are reaping the wages of sin. Innocent people are also dying from AIDS, and the perverts are responsible for the deaths of others along with their own. Very truly yours, Bob Jones, President.'

Robert Indiana's painting *Love* was reacted to by General Idea in their AIDS painting. We took that one step further, feeling that the AIDS painting really didn't address the anger and hostility needed to confront the AIDS crisis, with a painting called *Riot*. This was first shown in Berlin; it was subsequently turned into a sticker used at Gay Pride Day in 1989, trying

to draw a connection with Stonewall and asking why we weren't being more hostile in 1989.

A note about the painting – it's the first and only time that Gran Fury has done something inside a gallery. This does not come out of a sense of moral purity but rather out of expediency, trying to reach an audience that may not go into museums. In this piece we decided to take the grand scale of a painting to speak about the complexity of what it meant to be making slick paintings dealing with a crisis. The paradox of that. Beneath the painting is a counter, which went up once every 15 minutes, which at that time reflected the amount of people who were dying of AIDS in the States.

In the States there has been a position articulated for Gran Fury as a kind of watchdog of the art world. That we somehow have a kind of ntagonistic relationship. But in fact we are part of an institution, we do function institutionally, and we use art to speak about these issues, whatever art is. [A] poster was produced as an advertisement for The Kitchen, a performance art space. It reads: 'With 42,000 dead, art is not enough. Take collective direct action to end the AIDS crisis.' We meant this as a provocation, and we meant it to be paradoxical – we were using art to say this, and therefore implicating ourselves in this problem.

We wanted to point out that the idea of the isolated cultural producer, the lonely artist in the studio, was one that at a time of crisis for us did not quite work, did not reflect the necessities or the possibilities of what collective action could do.

[We did] a special project for *Artforum*. The text reads 'One million people with AIDS isn't a market that's exciting, I'm sure it's growing but it's not asthma', a statement made by Mr. Patrick Gage of the Hoffman La Roche pharmaceutical company. This was part of a larger project centred around the idea of control. Asking, who is in control of the AIDS crisis? Trying to engage the reader in the question of how does one take control back from forces like the pharmaceutical companies? We often wallow in despair thinking that the heads of corporations never see our work, or never feel implicated. But when this piece appeared in *Artforum*, the company Hofmann La Roche who produces AZT called the American Foundation for AIDS Research in a panic asking 'Who is Gran Fury and what do they want?'

This is [a slide of] Barbara Bush, the first lady. The text reads: 'This is one of the thousands of HIV positive babies living in America. These babies have been photographed in the arms of princesses and presidents wives, are the object of media attention and public sympathy and have access to healthcare and drug trials often denied their parents. These "most innocent victims of AIDS" are symbolically useful as repositories of sentiment to reflect the values of those in control.'

Around this time the *New York Times* ran an editorial, and what they were arguing in this particular editorial was that the disease would eventually burn out and those people would die and the numbers would level off and

we don't really have anything to worry about at all. This was continuing the federal administration's policy towards us, which was 'let them die and kill themselves off without any intervention'.

[A] sticker – 'Men use condoms or beat it' – was distributed in large numbers. The particular form it took wasn't arbitrary – the black and yellow matches what the Taxi and Limousine Commission use for their stickers inside cabs.

The Women in AIDS day was, in my mind, one of the best demonstrations done by ACT UP. The Women in AIDS caucus within ACT UP wanted to reach the bastion of heterosexuality, to go and confront the beast on its own turf. So they decided to go to a Shea Stadium baseball game, and rent blocks of seats. If you rent a block of seats it gives you time on the Spectacolor game board, the big board that is lit up at half-time. And banners were created, just like at a high school football game, that were unrolled at half-time, saying things like 'no glove, no love'. The Brooklyn Women's Martial Arts Corps provided security. The intervention not only reached those in attendance but was televised on the sports news, reaching millions of homes.

The piece was later taken into another form for the Venice Biennale, paired with a piece using the [reference of the] Pope, which attracted quite a lot of flak there. The text of that piece read: 'The Catholic Church has long taught men and women to loath their bodies and fear their sexual natures. This particular vision of good and evil continues to bring suffering and even death by holding medicine hostage to Catholic morality and withholding information that allows people to protect themselves and one another. The Church seeks to punish all who do not share in its peculiar vision of human experience, and makes it clear its preference for living saints and dead sinners. It is immoral to practice bad medicine. It is bad medicine to deny people information which could help end the AIDS crisis. Condoms and clean needles save lives as surely as the earth revolves around the sun. AIDS is caused by a virus and a virus has no morals.'

A project that appeared through 'Art Against AIDS', and also Creative Time in New York, was an appropriation of the Benetton advertisements, the 'united colours of Benetton', which at the time involved 'provocative' advertisements, including an image of a Black woman nursing a white baby. The irony of this piece [*Kissing Doesn't Kill, Greed and Indifference Do*] is that it won us a very prestigious award in New York at the same time as it was being painted over in Chicago.

I want to read a couple of quotes to articulate the fact that, as much as we create these pieces, there's not the usual sense of ownership around them. We welcome their reproduction and use, we borrow freely and we expect for them to be borrowed freely. To read briefly from a book by Douglas Crimp and Adam Rawlston, *AIDS Demographics* [Bay Press 1990]:

We don't claim invention of the style or the techniques, we have no patent on the politics or the designs. There are AIDS activist graphics wherever there are AIDS activists. But ours are the ones we know and can show to others, presented in a context we can understand. We want others to keep using our graphics and making their own.

And this from Lucy Lippard:

Yet racism, sexism and classism are not invisible in this society. The question of why they should be generally invisible in visual art is still a potato too hot to pick up. Because it is so embedded in context, activist art often eludes art critics, who are neither the intended audience nor as knowledgeable about the issues and places as the artists themselves have become. The multiple drawn-out forms can also be confusing, because innovation in the international art market is understood as brand-name, stylistic and short-term, geared to the market's short attention-span. Conventionally artists are not supposed to go so far beneath the surface as to provoke changed attitudes. They are merely supposed to embellish, observe and reflect the sights and systems of the status quo.

The most recent public project is [an] illuminated bus shelter that appeared in Los Angeles and New York, articulating a very specific issue concerning women and AIDS. The definitions that describe HIV and AIDS are very arbitrary in the US, and it's extremely important because one must qualify through the definition of AIDS to have access to drug trials and treatment. The text reads: '65% of HIV positive women get sick and die from chronic infections that don't fit the Center for Disease Control's definition of AIDS. Without that recognition women are denied access to what little healthcare exists. The CDC must expand the definition of AIDS.'

This piece appeared in concert with a series of demonstrations about the issue of women and AIDS.

We attempted in an advertising space also to articulate and extend notions of body-image in a patriarchal culture, what it means in terms of a vision of a perfect female body and how much of a controlled vision that is.

This debate continues as we sit here, and it's a debate the implications of which extend beyond the borders of the US, because the international medical community uses the Center for Disease Control's guidelines for their definition of AIDS, so this has implications for women around the world. We see our work as direct action, as one of the many forms of AIDS activism that are going on, that include education, service provision, peer counselling and so on.

The last slide we will show is a banner that appeared at the Henry Street Settlement in New York. I think it speaks for itself.

'All People With AIDS Are Innocent.'

———

REBELLION ON LEVEL P

CHRISTOPH SCHÄFER AND CATHY SKENE
WITH THE HAFENRANDVEREIN

*Acting from a subordinate position, residents organised through the Hafenrandverein
(Harbour Edge Association) prevented the development of the [bank] along the Elbe
River in St. Pauli, which was to consume millions; they caused the local development
plan to be chopped and succeeded in having a self-organised park with a view to the Elbe
realised instead. With Park Fiction, a radically participatory planning procedure could
be carried through, the first part of which – the phase of collective production of desires –
has been financed since 1997 by funds from the municipal culture department's
programme for art in public space. This urban practice is discussed here within an
expanded urban-theoretical frame. This text is part of the social, political and artistic
Park Fiction process, opening up perspectives for further activities in the urban field.*

The point of reference for parks is paradise; garden art creates places
of earthly joy. Parks reflect the ideals of an epoch, like the English landscape
garden, which mirrored enlightened humanism in the time of bourgeois
revolutions. Whether it's Alhambra, Berkeley People's Park or Bomarzo,
Lunapark or the Experimental Community Of Tomorrow in Disneyworld:
parks promise a happy life free of work and removed from everyday routines.
To take up such a promise in St. Pauli, the city district with the poorest
population in the western part of Germany, means making a subversive
demand, since the ruling class attempts to teach precisely these people to
come to terms with living a life in destitution, to reduce their requirements
and tighten their belts. This poor-but-honest propaganda is meant
to ideologically overarch the gigantic processes of redistribution.
The demand for a park is a right step to counteract these policies.

Whom Does the City Belong to?
Park Fiction is art in public space understood as a practical critique – from
the perspective of the users – of urban planning which is a manifestation
and a means of state power and economic interests.
It was clear to the *Hafenrandverein* and the participating artists from the
very beginning that artists can claim the privilege to design public space just
as little as it can be accepted that the authorities and architects naturally

arrogated this privilege to themselves. Especially in St. Pauli, a district that can look back on a tradition of persistent and uncompromising action against the state's claim to control urban space – not only due to the intelligent battle over squatted houses on Hafenstrasse. In the following, we relate these urban practices to Henri Lefèbvre's thesis of urbanisation.

Critical Zone

In his book *The Urban Revolution* (*La revolution urbaine*, 1972), Henri Lefèbvre describes a situation of crisis which characterises the phase of transition from an industrialised society to an urbanised society. Lefèbvre reveals lines of flight pointing a way out of this crisis towards a new form of urbanity, as within the project of the urbanisation of society the next quantum leap is imminent.

0 – 100% Urbanisation

As a first step, this concept of the urbanised society is distinguished as a correct description of the development trend from other, insufficient concepts such as leisure society or information society (because such concepts reduce reality to isolated aspects that happen to be conspicuous at the moment). The concept of the urbanised society is the adequate description of the current development trend because the concept of 'city' also contains society, social relations, density, business and trade, production, communication, technology, history, and the materialisation of all these concepts.

The fundamental features of urban life consist in the diversity of lifestyles, the diversity of types of urbanisation and of cultural models and values associated with the conditions and fluctuations of everyday life.

The decisive point for us is that the city is appropriated space, that the process of urbanisation describes a process of appropriation.

Distinguish Between Top and Bottom

Lefèbvre divides the city into three levels (which are not geographical), and thus describes a hierarchy: the top level (global level G) is the most abstract; it is the level of institutional power, of the state. In regard to the way they define what the city is, these institutions are either historical and outdated, like the church and the Papal State or the Greek model of the 'political city', or they are adverse to urban life. For these institutions, city is not the goal, but constitutes the means and the locale of interests which are not identical with the city in the sense defined above. Industrialisation, in particular, has produced cities that are entirely subjugated to the instrumental rationality of the economy. In these cases the city is organised like a factory – for instance the cities in the Ruhr Region or Manchester the way Engels described it. The city falls prey to industrialisation which is given free rein by the state (level G).

This process continues today, but it has become more refined. The development of cities follows the development of capital, which consists in opening up new markets beyond actual industrial production and thus subjecting increasingly large areas of life and of the city to the logic of profit maximisation. Plain examples of this include the obstruction of urban space through cars as commodities, the systematic depopulation of inner cities in the 60s and 70s, and the transformation of once public spaces to semi-public zones controlled by private enterprises.

Rebellion on Level p

The second level M (streets, squares, public buildings such as parish churches, schools, etc.) lies between level G (cathedrals, museums, motorways, barracks, airports, monuments…) and the lowest third level p (as in private), the level of dwelling space. This third level is wrongly regarded as minor. But it is precisely this level from which the changes and revolution of the cities originate.

Lefèbvre points out in detail those who cannot succeed in changing, in overcoming the critical zone – those who are not even in a position to forecast the direction it will take, and who are by no means able to develop an adequate practice: sociologists, architects and urban planners, because 'the urbanist illusion is a cloud on the mountain blocking the path'.

Instead, the revolution of the cities will start from dwelling space.

The City Becomes a Subject

Hoffmann-Axthelm's book is based on this thought, which was formulated by Lefèbvre in the 70s, and on the concept of the 'Third city'. The central idea is that the city must turn from an object into a subject. It should no longer be the object of change effected by powers adverse to it (like the global level mentioned above, like the military in Hausmann's Paris, or the functionalist city in the wake of Bauhaus), but the subject of change – meaning that it should develop the direction out of itself and become the actor. How can this be conceived?

The Revolution Begins at Home

Lefèbvre gives an interpretation of Hölderlin's assertion that the 'human being' can only live as a poet. The relationship of the 'human being' to the world, to 'nature', to his desires and corporeality is situated in dwelling space; this is where it realises itself and becomes readable. It is impossible for him to build or to have a home in which he lives, without possessing something that is different from everyday life, that points beyond itself, namely his relationship to potentiality and the imaginary. This desire is encapsulated in even the most destitute hut, the most dreary high-rise apartment in (eg. kitsch) objects. In objects possessing exactly those qualities that modernism wanted to do away with.

From Home to the Streets

It is from these encapsulated desires that the vectors originate, pointing in the direction of what the phrase 'the city turns into a subject' means: revolution begins at home, and that's where its direction is derived from. But – isn't that merely optimistic speculation, a pious hope? Where are the signs of such a change taking place, of an imminent quantum leap?

The Subjective Factor

While, in 1970, Lefèbvre quoted Nietzsche in his search for a revolutionary subject, he simply overlooked the fact that at the same time feminists put the private sphere on the agenda as being political, in theory and in practice. It was not about filling public, male-dominated, global and standardised space with female bodies in terms of equal rights for women, but about changing this space.

Quantum Leaps

Then at the end of the 70s, a movement suddenly and unexpectedly arose and spread across most large European cities, expressing the desire for revolutionary change, literally taking as its point of departure dwelling space: the squatters' movement.

At that time, high vacancy rates existed due to real estate speculation – again an example of the obstruction of urban life by an adverse power. Buildings were empty, the city was an object of speculation, subjected to profit-making interests. At that moment, dwelling space asserted its claims with force: driven by the desire to live in a different way, more than 200 buildings were squatted in Berlin alone, appropriation processes were initiated, large house-sharing groups were established, day-care centres were founded, buildings were painted and reconstructed to meet altered needs, new music, haircuts, clothes and painting styles were developed, life was to be started anew in a different way. At the height of the battles surrounding Hafenstrasse, barricades were erected all the way into the red-light district, Radio Hafenstrasse broadcast around the clock, the city feared civil-war-like conditions were the tattooed buildings to be cleared. And all of this was not a result of industrial action, as in the social movements corresponding to industrialisation, but instead driven by the desire for self-determined life and dwelling.

Recuperation

Hoffmann-Axthelm also sees this as a vision of the third city, but believes that there is no chance for this movement to continue due to the altered circumstances. The social demand for the priority of dwelling space over global powers was forced back, appropriated and marketed as a lifestyle. However, the lines of conflict were revealed, and the disputes continue in a different form.

Grossness Reveals Possibilities

It is precisely St. Pauli where the grossness of the facade and shop designs in the pleasure district reveals a perverted pre-view of an architecture created by the people themselves; where the possibility of a city based on desires originating in dwelling space becomes visible. Nowhere else in this country is there a district in which a class that is usually excluded from any kind of public design expresses itself to such an extent. Until now, the design of the amusement arcades, discos, striptease joints and bars, as well as numerous fairground rides at the DOM is still in the hands of small-scale businessmen, semi-criminals and *parvenus*. Still – because starting from the state-approved large-scale project at Millerntor, in combination with real estate speculators operating on a small scale and franchise restaurateurs, the situation is threatening to change and jeopardise the conditions for this room for manoeuvre in terms of design. Only broad resistance prevented the Harbour Hospital and the Astra Brewery from being closed down. This would have made one third of south St. Pauli available to the real estate market.

Even though the conformations and designs in St. Pauli can be criticised for being an expression of pure commodity in appearance and the fact that people, especially women, are quite obviously exploited and degraded to goods – something that is otherwise not to be seen in the uptight Hanseatic city – it is clear all the same that St. Pauli is a place where desires are expressed that in other parts of the city are banned behind one's own four walls.

And this has to do with one of Lefèbvre's thoughts: that dwelling space is the unconscious of the existing city.

The Public Sphere

Still, this says no more than that in St. Pauli there are aesthetic articulations of desires that just barely escape the homogenising grasp of state planning and bourgeois taste. But the only ones represented here are those who own or rent a pub or shop, and the motivation of these aesthetic manifestations is usually a commercial one.

What people living here lack, however, is public space unoccupied by commerce. This fact has led to the rejection of the current local development plan at Pinnasberg and the demand for a park on this site.

A brief discussion on the concept of the public sphere is appropriate here: the 'Hafenrandverein for Self-determined Life and Dwelling in St. Pauli' demands a park designed by the residents themselves. This points in a direction connected with what has been reflected above:

an appropriated area stands in contrast
1. to 'neutral', public, ie. anonymously designed urban space, as well as
2. to privatised space that pretends to be public space, but in fact functions via exclusions resulting from private property, via the racist and economically motivated expulsion of people, restrictions of activities and

the motivation of certain other activities, such as buying, sitting
and not lying, eating, not begging, not skating…
(The increasing private-public partnerships in the wake of privatisations
unite the ugliest features of both worlds)

A Park Area or the Largest Living Room in the World?
The battles described above between the global level G and level p are
especially noticeable on the mid level, the level on which art in public space
occurs, on squares, streets, in smaller institutions, in parks. Art in public
space must therefore decide which of these two demands it wants to be
the agent of.

An opportunity, a potential of resistance is given insofar as art is
conceded a residual autonomy *vis-à-vis* homogenisation tendencies. It is
questionable whether this resistance can be readily claimed in the name of
an outdated concept of art based on notions of a privileged artist subjectivity.
To put it differently: such a concept fixes existing exclusions, and precisely
those works stemming from such an artist conception were in the 80s
again put at the service of state, economic and national interests as
representational art.

Something Better
The planning process is preceded by a collective production of desires
in the district. The various attitudes, professions, and fields of activity that
encounter each other in the process of putting through and planning the
park mutually cross and infect each other. The (autonomous artist) subject
is completely absorbed in a collective production of desires and a public
planning process. Across common interests and concrete goals, alliances
have been established between people with different backgrounds and from
the most various contexts: politicised residents, social trend restaurateurs,
deregulated layout men, priests, squatters, a militant female cook,
hedonistic social workers, kiosk operators, geography students, and
musicians from the Pudel (club) scene. People, then, from a hedonistically
oriented field with a clear proximity to level p, who situate their activities in
a political/social context, a context from which they partially stem. The
artists as well as the landscape architects participate in an ongoing process
in which decisive demands have already been formulated. They do not
work under the guidelines given or the room to move granted by state art
institutions, but as members of a residents' initiative which has empowered
itself to confront state planning.

Accessible Park, Accessible Planning Process
Knowledge gained in the field of art, which can connect to the problems
raised here, can create a different, additional perspective and radicalise
the process. The main issue is to develop strategies for shaping a planning

process in such a way that it becomes accessible for people who, due to cultural and social preconditions as well as their experience in life, are usually excluded from actively designing the public sphere. It is therefore worthwhile to take a look at those places in which private, art-like activities occur, in order to open up a space for these activities, which are then not framed in a discriminating way as a hobby.

P.S.

   Art Business!

The *Hafenrandverein* has been active for years. Protests against the development were already voiced in the early 80s by the St. Pauli parish; demands for a park were first made at the beginning of the 90s; and the demand for a park planned by those who use, need, and want it, was formulated by the *Hafenrandverein* quite a while ago. This must be emphasised again, as it cannot be tolerated that artists behave as inciters of communication (initiators) and then have the concept filled by others. This ugly paradigm shift is an avant-gardist trick with which artists, in a pseudo-modest way, withdraw from the creative field, but at the same time and in reality take on a superior position in a cultural hierarchy. These participatory artworks seem to have the purpose of absorbing the general inactivity and passivity and reproducing it as empty action.

Translated by Karl Hoffmann.

POPOTLA

RevArte

Statement on RevArte's collaboration with the fishing community of Popotla to protest the construction of the 'maquiladora' studio in which Twentieth Century Fox Studios' **1997** film *Titanic* was shot.

RevArte (RevolutionArte) is a collective of artists from San Diego and Tijuana. We believe that the process of creating art in public spaces can engage the community while maintaining the integrity of the artists involved. Traditionally art is created by the artist in solitude with their thoughts and experiences. Then the art is shared with the viewer and explained by the artist (or curator/gallery) and the viewer makes an independent judgment about the quality of the art. RevArte believes that the synergy of involving the viewer in the creative process, especially in public spaces, builds the potential of the work and enables a greater long-term relationship to it. This synergy is especially vital when working under the umbrella of a common cause. BUT, and this point is crucial, the artist maintains the authority over the final work both conceptually and in its making. The artist is the definer of the arts character and quality. The people engaged in the process consent to that condition and gain an increased awareness of the quality and character of the art and a context from which to exchange ideas. It is this dialogue that provokes both the expansion of the artist's vision as well as the viewer's experience.

A second principle of the work of RevArte is that the medium is as broad as is imaginable. Medium can range from crayons to the raising of public consciousness through collective action such as organising a community to change public capital expenditures to create a community park. The action of organising, the methods and the outcomes are a medium for creating imaginative spaces. Facilitating a dialogue is as artistic as making a painting with a thousand brush strokes. The Popotla project is a case in point.

The Popotla project grew from our observation that the construction of Twentieth Century Fox studios' set of the film *Titanic* had taken land from a small fishing village immediately adjacent to the studio. As we discussed this with the fisherman's collective we explained that we as artists sympathised with their situation and could help. They pointed to the wall surrounding

the set. Their complaint was that the land had been taken from them without consultation and that the chlorine from the tank that held the Titanic was being flushed onto their fishing ground and was killing vital sea life, particularly the 'underwater gardens' of giant kelp that provided homes to millions of creatures.

Our work was focused on protesting these incursions.

We began by assembling the children of the village and asking them to make drawings of their life in Popotla. We outlined the drawings along the wall. We next joined with the fisherman and the children to collect as many discarded objects lying about the village as possible. Over the course of a year we sorted those found objects, including car seats, bumpers, fenders, old doors, windows, empty beer cans, bottles, walls of abandoned houses, etc. We even assembled plexiglas from a theatre in San Diego that was being destroyed. These found objects became the medium for three-dimensional sculptures based on the children's drawings that were glued and bolted to the wall. The work was done in collaboration with the children. The trash materials represented the opposite of the high-tech industry thriving inside the walls. We threw trash at technology to protest incursion on the environment. The studio responded by positioning armed guards above the wall.

We used the images of the children to state that the wall and the outflow from the Titanic were negatively impacting their lives.

We then worked with the fishing community to file a protest with the environmental agencies of the Mexican government. We invited international publications to view the work and highlighted the incursions. We held large events at the wall and invited candidates running for office to attend. We travelled to Europe and obtained street signs from old films and brought them back and pasted them on the wall in a tin-pan alley motif. We made a video and showed it in the village as well as Tijuana and across the us. The studio stopped dumping waste water into the fishing field. We crowded the children onto our trucks and went to see the movie. The project was funded by the us/Mexcio Fund for Culture and inSite 97 with a total budget of $24,000.

Our final work of art was to beg for free paint and distribute it among the fishermen for buildings in Popotla.

The children have grown up, had babies, gone to sea but smile when they visit to tour the wall now tumbling back into trash, into its organic form.

Documentation of the Popotla project by RevArte
and the Popotla community, 1997
Photographs © James Blienser, Luz Camacho
and Jim Hammond of RevArte

STATEMENT BY THE FEMINIST ARTIST COLLECTIVE IP GIM

The 'Abanggung Occupation Project at Jongmyo' – one of the winning projects in The Year of New Arts 2000 – was to have been held between 29 September and 1 October in Jongmyo Park. It was interrupted, however, and finally halted by interference from both Jun-joo Lee's Clansmen Assembly and the Assembly of Sung-Kyun-Kwan Confucianists.

Here, we report on the unfolding of this affair, and give our side of it, since some of the media have put the focus on the Clansmen and Confucians' point of view. Feminists and artists have been concerned that this one-sided press would set back the feminist movement, and particularly feminist activism, in South Korea. We hope that this manifesto will help the public get a more objective view of the issue, and be more supportive of our activities in the future.

On the Scattering of the Abanggung Occupation Project at Jongmyo

We are an artists' collective, Ip Gim; we have been attacked by Jun-joo Lee's Clansmen Assembly and the Assembly of Sung-Kyun-Kwan Confucianists. We are deeply disappointed and angry at the way that that these (male) groups impeded our artistic activity and at the damage they caused to our art works. This was a physical and coercive attack without any reasonable communication or negotiation, and outside of any democratic process.

Jongmyo Park is a public area belonging to the city; everyone can use it within the regulations of the city. Today, many artists work in public space; this is not a new phenomenon but rather one of the methods of contemporary art. However, the Confucianists constantly insist art should take place only in dedicated places such as museums, institutions, and galleries, not in public space. Moreover, the Confucianists claim rights over Jongmyo, as if this public park is their territory only.

But let us put aside the issue of their misapprehension of the rights of citizens and their ignorance of contemporary art practice. Still, we surely have to ask them whether their attitudes toward us correspond fairly to the tradition of Confucianism, which has been used to justify the action against us. No matter how much the Confucianists insist otherwise, the Abanggung project was initiated to rethink our social and cultural tradition, not to defy or mutilate it.

The Confucianists' attitude has been demonstrated by their behavior in Jongmyo: screaming obscenities, besieging and threatening the women artists, taking and damaging artworks, and even sending abusive text messages to Ip Gim members. We respect the tradition, but only if it shows itself worthy of respect.

In spite of the situation, we were endeavoring to realise our project, and to keep our public commitment. However, we finally stopped and cancelled unwillingly, because the Confucianists threatened that they would continue to intervene with force throughout the project should we continue.

It is our absolute regret that this legitimate project, developed by eight women artists, was blocked by the force of a particular group. We have worked hard on this project, putting in a great deal of effort, time and resources. Now, the project has been broken off, the installations destroyed, and we have been left devastated by this unfortunate situation. We intend to take legal action to repair the damages we have incurred. We also plan to find another venue to present an updated version of the project in a new context, showing how the original project was disrupted and presenting documentation of the ruined scene.

This trouble at Jongmyo might stand as a scandal in the history of women's art; however we hope that it could be a turning point and become a cornerstone of our future tradition, and we will endeavour to make it so.

Report on the Progress of the Affair

27 September: Jun-joo Lee's Clansmen Assembly saw a news report, titled 'Jongmyo Occupation' in the press, and sent us a warning message: 'Change the venue, otherwise we will block this event with any possible way including violence.'

28 September: The Abanggung project was planned six months in advance, and the venue was appointed from the beginning. The majority of the organisation and installation was completed on this date. After we called the police and asked for protection because of our anxieties about our safety, we continued with the project.

29 September: We began to install the work at 7 a.m. At 9 a.m., the Clansmen Assembly came and tried to intimidate us into cancelling the whole event. Some of the installation was torn down at this point.

We were drawing lines on the ground with removable paint; some of the Confucianists interrupted this work, kicking our paint cans and showering us with abuse. Then they cut the strings of balloons, and took other elements of the work, including hand-made cushions.

From then on, we were fleeing from them, moving around the park to shelter ourselves and the works. Nevertheless, they pursued us, hindering us again and again, telling bystanders that Ip Gim were insulting a venerable place, making Jongmyo like the 'filthy womb'. During the struggles, some of our flags (made from skirts) were also stolen and torn.

Ip Gim Documentation of the 'Abanggung
Occupation Project at Jongmyo', 2000

We regrouped in a small area of the park to consider a counter plan. But there had been too much damage done already and the situation was too unfavourable to open the project; the Clansmen Assembly were making their own statements through megaphones all around the park. Around three o'clock in the afternoon, we finally decided to withdraw.

—

A march from Jongymo to Insadong in Seoul, held on 29 October in protest against the destruction of the Abanggung project, drew thousands of supporters.

Translated by Hyunjin Kim.

HOW TO?

TIQQUN

Don't know what I want,
but I know how to get it.
    Sex Pistols, 'Anarchy in the UK'

I
TWENTY YEARS. Twenty years of *counter-revolution*.
Of *preventive* counter-revolution.
In Italy.
And elsewhere.
Twenty years of sleep behind security gates, haunted with
security guards.
A sleep of *the bodies*, imposed by curfew.
Twenty years. The past does not pass. Because war
continues. Ramifies.
Extends.
In a global networking of local devices. In an original
calibration of the
subjectivities. In a new superficial peace.
An *armed* peace
well made to cover the course of an imperceptible civil war.

Twenty years ago, there was
punk, the 77 movement, Autonomy,
the metropolitan Indians and diffuse guerrillas.
All at once appeared,
as if born of some underground region of civilization,
a whole counter-world of subjectivities
that no longer wanted to consume, that no longer
wanted to produce,
that no longer even wanted to be subjectivities.
The revolution was molecular, the counter-revolution
too.
A whole complex machine to neutralise all that carries
intensity
was offensively,

then durably
disposed.
A machine to defuse all that could explode.
All the dangerous individuals,
all the indocile bodies,
all the autonomous human hordes.
Then came twenty years of foolishness, vulgarity,
isolation and desolation.
How to?

Standing up again. Raising *the head*. By choice or
by necessity. Whatever, really, now. Looking each
other in the eyes and saying 'let's start again'. May
everybody know it, as soon as possible.
We are starting again.
Done with passive resistance, inner exile, conflict by
shirking, survival. We are starting again. In twenty
years, we have had enough time to see. We have
understood. Democracy for all, 'anti-terrorist'
struggle, state massacres, capitalist restructuring
and its Great Work of social purge,
by selection,
by casualisation,
by normalisation,
by 'modernisation'.
We have seen, we have understood. The means and the
ends. The future that is reserved for us. The one we
are denied. The state of exception. The laws that put
the police, the administration, the judicial
authorities above the laws. The judiciarisation, the
psychiatrisation, the medicalisation of everything
that sets out of the frame. Of everything that *flees*.
We have seen, we have understood. The means and the ends.

When power establishes in real time its own
legitimacy,
when its violence becomes preventive
and that its right is a 'right to interfere',
then it is useless to be right. To be right *against it*.
One has to be stronger, or slyer. That is also why
we are starting again.

To start again is never to start *something* again. Nor
to pick up things where they had been left off. What

you start again is always *something else*. Is always
unheard of. Because it is not the past that drives us
to it, but precisely what in [the past] has happened.
And because it is also *ourselves*, then, who are
starting again.
To start again means: to get out of suspension. To restore
the contact between
our becomings.
Moving,
again,
from where we are,
now.

For instance there are tricks
that will not be put on us anymore.
The trick of 'society'. To be transformed. To be
destroyed. To be bettered.
The trick of the social pact. That some would break
while the others can pretend to 'restore' it.
These tricks will not be put on us anymore.
One must be a militant element of the planetary
middle-class,
a *citizen* really,
not to see that it no longer exists,
society.
That it has imploded. That it is only a case for the
terror of those who claim to re/present it.
This society that withdrew.

All that is social has become foreign to us.
We consider ourselves as absolutely free of any
obligation, of any prerogative, of any affiliation
that is *social*.
'Society'
is the name that the Irreparable has often received
among those who also wanted to turn it into
the Unassumable.
Who refuses this delusion will have to take
a step to the side
to make
a slight displacement
from the common logic
of Empire and its protest
the logic of *mobilisation*,

from their common temporality,
the one of *emergency*.

To start again means: to inhabit this displacement.
To assume capitalist
schizophrenia in the sense of a growing capacity
of *desubjectivisation*.
To desert while *keeping the weapons*.
To flee, imperceptibly.
To start again means: to rally social secession,
opacity, to join
demobilisation,
draining today from this or that imperial
production-consumption network the means to live
and fight
in order to, at the right time,
scuttle it.

What we are talking about is a new war,
a new *partisan* war. Without front nor uniform, without
army nor decisive battle.
A guerrilla whose *fuocos* unfold away from the
commercial flows although plugged on them.
We're talking about a war full of latency. That *has time*.
A war of *position*.
Which is waged where we are.
In the name of no one.
In the name of our own existence,
which has no name.

Making this slight displacement.
No longer fearing our time.
'Not to fear one's time is a matter of space'.
In a squat. In an orgy. In a riot. In an occupied
train or village. In search, among strangers, of a
free party that is nowhere to be found. I make the
experience of this slight displacement. The experience
Of my own desubjectivisation. I *become*
a whatever singularity. My presence starts overflowing
the whole apparatus of qualities that are usually
associated to me.
In the eyes of someone who would like to consider me
for what I am, I savour the disappointment, his or her
disappointment to see me becoming so common, so

perfectly *accessible*. In the gestures of someone else,
it is an unexpected complicity.
Everything that isolates me as a *subject*, as a body
provided with a public configuration of attributes,
I feel it melting. The bodies fray at their limit. At
their limit, become indistinct.
Block by block, the whatever ruins the equivalence.
And I reach a new nudity,
an *improper* nudity, as if dressed with love.
Does one ever escape alone from the prison of the Self?

In a squat. In an orgy. In a riot. In an occupied
train or village. We get together again.
We get together again
as whatever singularities. That is to say
not on the basis of a common affiliation,
but of a *common presence*.
This is our
need for communism. The need for nocturnal spaces,
where we can get together
beyond
our predicates.
Beyond the *tyranny* of recognition. Which imposes the
recognition as a *final* distance between the bodies. As
an ineluctable separation.
Everything I am being granted – by my boyfriend, my family,
my environment, my company, the state, the opinion – is just
what I am being held through.
By constantly reminding me of what I am, of my
qualities, they want to extract me from each
situation. They want to extort from me, in every
circumstance, a fidelity to myself which is but a fidelity *to my*
predicates.
I am expected to behave as a man, as an employee, as
unemployed, as a mother, as a militant, as a philosopher.
They would like to contain within the bounds of an identity
the unpredictable course of my becomings.
They want to convert me to the religion of a coherence that
was chosen for me.
The more I am *recognised*, the more my gestures are hindered,
internally hindered. Here I am, caught in the super-tight
meshwork of the new power. In the impalpable net of the
new police:
THE IMPERIAL POLICE OF QUALITIES.

There is a whole network of devices in which I slip to 'get integrated', and that incorporates these qualities in me.
A whole petty system of mutual filing, identification and surveillance.
A whole diffuse prescription of absence.
A whole machinery of comporte/mental control, which aims at panoptism, at transparential privatisation, at atomisation.
And in which I struggle.

I need to become anonymous. In order to be present.
The more anonymous I am, the more present I am.
I need zones of indistinction to reach the Common.
To no longer *recognise* myself in my name. To no longer hear in my name
anything but the voice that calls it. To give substance to the how of the beings, not what they are but *how* they are what they are. Their life-form.
I need zones of opacity where the attributes,
even criminals, even geniuses,
no longer separate the bodies.

Becoming whatever. Becoming a whatever *singularity*, is not given.
Always possible, but never given.
There is a *politic* of the whatever singularity.
Which consists in snatching from Empire
the conditions and the means,
even interstitial,
to experience yourself as such.
This is political, because it implies a capacity of confrontation, and that a new human horde corresponds to it.
Politics of the whatever singularity: opening these spaces where no act is assignable to any given body. Where the bodies recover their ability to *gesture* which the clever distribution of metropolitan devices – computers, cars, schools, cameras, mobile-phones, gyms, hospitals, televisions, cinemas, etc. – had stolen from them.
By recognising them.
By immobilising them.
By making them turn in a void.
By making the head exist separately from the body.
Politics of the whatever singularity.
Becoming whatever is more revolutionary than any whatever-being.

Freeing spaces frees us a hundred times more than any
'freed space'.
More than putting any power into action, I enjoy the
circulation of my potentialities. The politics of the whatever
singularity lies in the offensive. In the circumstances, the
moments and the places where we seize
the circumstances, the moments and the places
of such an anonymity,
of a momentary halt in a state of simplicity,
the opportunity to extract from all our forms the *pure
adequacy of the presence*,
the opportunity, at last,
to be here.

II
HOW TO DO? Not *What to do? How* to? The question of
the means.
Not of the goals, of the *objectives*,
of what is *to be done*, strategically, in the absolute.
The question of what we can do, tactically, in situation,
and of the *acquisition* of this ability.
How to? How to desert? How does it work? How to
combine my wounds and communism? How to stay at war
without losing tenderness?
The question is technical. Not a problem. Problems are
profitable.
They feed experts.
A question.
Technical. Which reduplicates itself in the question of the
techniques of
transmission of those techniques.
How to? The result always contradicts the goal.
Because setting a goal down still is a means,
another means.

What is to be done? Babeuf, Tchernychevski, Lenin.
Classical virility needs an analgesic,
a mirage, something. A *means* to ignore yourself a bit more.
As a presence.
As a life-form. As a *situated* being, endowed with
inclinations.
Determined inclinations.
What to do? Voluntarism as the ultimate nihilism. As the
nihilism peculiar *to classical virility*.

What to do? The answer is simple: submit once again to the logic of mobilisation, to the temporality of emergency. On the pretext of rebellion. Set down ends, words. Tend towards their accomplishment. Towards the accomplishment *of words*. In the meantime, postpone existence. Put yourself into brackets. Live in the exception of yourself. Well away from time. That passes. That does not pass. That stops.
Until... Until the next. Goal.

What to do? In other words: no need to live. Everything you have not lived, History will give it back to you.
What to do? It is the ignorance of oneself cast onto the world.
As ignorance of the world.

How to? The question of *how*. Not of what *it* is to be, a gesture, a thing *is*,
but of *how* it is what it is. The question of how its predicates relate to it.
And it to them.
Let be. Let be the gap between the subject and its predicates.
The *abyss* of the presence.
A man is not 'a man'. 'White horse' is not 'horse'.
The question of *how*. *The attention* to *how*. The attention to the way a woman is, and is not a woman – it takes many devices to turn a female being
into 'a woman',
or a black-skinned man into 'a Black'.
The attention to the *ethical difference*. To the ethical *element*.
To the irreducibilities that run through it.
What goes on between the bodies in an occupation is more interesting than the occupation itself.
How to? means that the military confrontation with Empire has to be subordinated to the intensification of the relationships inside our Party. It means that politics are just a certain degree of intensity *within* the ethical element.
That revolutionary war must not be confused with its representation: the raw fact of the fight.

The question of *how*? To pay attention to the happening of things, of beings. To their event. To the tenacious and silent saliency of their own temporality under the planetary crushing of all temporalities
by the one of emergency.

The *What to do?* as the programmatic denial of this. As
the inaugural formula of a busy lack of love.

The *What to do?* is coming back. It has been coming back
for a few years. Since the mid 90s more than since Seattle.
A revival of the *critique* pretends to challenge Empire.
With the slogans, the tricks of the 60s. Except that this time,
it is faked.
Innocence, indignation, good conscience and the need for
society are faked. The whole range of old social-democratic
affects are put back into circulation. Of *Christian* affects.
And again, here come the demonstrations.
The desire-killing demonstrations. Where nothing happens.
And which no longer demonstrate anything more
than a collective absence.
Now and forever.

For those who feel nostalgic about Woodstock, ganja,
May 68 and militancy,
there are the counter-summits.
The setting has been set again, *minus the possible.*
Here is what the *What to do?* orders today: to travel to the
other side of the
world in order to contest
global commodity,
And then come back, after a big bath of unanimity
and mediatised separation,
to submit yourself to local commodity.
Back home, you've got your picture in the newspaper...
All alone together!... Once upon a time...
Good old youth!
Too bad for the few living bodies lost there, looking in vain
for some room
for their desires.
They will return a bit more bored. A bit more tired.
Weakened.
From counter-summit to counter-summit, they will
eventually understand. Or not.

You do not contest Empire on its management. You do not
critique Empire.
You *oppose* its forces.
From where you are.
To give your opinion about such or such alternative, to go

where you are called, makes no sense. There is no global alternative project to the global project of Empire. Because there is no global project of Empire.
There is an *imperial management*. Any management is bad. Those who demand another society should better start to realise that there is none left. And maybe they would then stop being trainee-managers.
Citizens. *Indignant* citizens.

The global order cannot be taken for an enemy. Directly. Because the global order does not take place. On the contrary. It is rather the order of the non-places. Its perfection is not to be global, but to be *globally local*. The global order is the conjuration of any event because it is the utmost, authoritarian occupation of the local. The global order can only be opposed *locally*. Through the extension of opaque zones over Empire's maps. Through their growing contiguity.
Underground.

The coming politics. Politics of local insurrection against global management.
Of presence regained over the absence of oneself. Over the imperial estranged citizen.
Regained through theft, fraud, crime, friendship, enmity, conspiracy.
Through *the elaboration of ways of living that are also ways of fighting*.
Politics of the event.
Empire is *everywhere nothing is happening*. It administrates absence by waving
the palpable threat of police intervention in any place.
Who regards Empire as an opponent to confront will find preventive
annihilation.
To be perceived, now, means to be defeated.
Learning how to become imperceptible. To merge. To regain the taste for anonymity
for promiscuity.
To renounce distinction,
To elude the clampdown:
setting the most favourable conditions for confrontation.
Becoming sly. Becoming merciless.
And for that purpose becoming whatever.

How to? is the question of the lost children. Those who were not told. Those with the clumsy gestures. To whom nothing was *given*. Whose creaturality, whose wandering always betrays itself.

The coming revolt is the revolt of the lost children.

The thread of historical transmission has been broken.

Even the revolutionary tradition leaves us as orphans.

Especially the workers movement. The workers' movement that's turned into a tool for higher integration to the Process.

To the new, cybernetic Process of social valorisation.

In 1978, it was in the name of the workers' movement that the Italian Communist Party, the so-called 'party with clean hands' launched its witch-hunt against Autonomy.

In the name of its classist conception of the proletariat, of its mystique of society, of respect for work, utility and decency.

In the name of 'democracy' and legality.

The workers' movement, which will have outlived through 'operaismo' the only existing critique of capitalism from *the point of view of Total Mobilisation.*

Scathing and paradoxical doctrine,

that will have saved Marxist objectivism by only talking about subjectivity.

That will have brought the denial of the *how* to an unprecedented sophistication.

That achieved the ultimate reduction of the gesture to its result.

The urticaria of the *future anterior.*

Of what each thing *will have been.*

Critique has become vain. Critique has become vain because it amounts to an absence. As for the ruling order, everyone knows where it stands. We no longer need *critical* theory. We no longer need teachers. Henceforth, critique runs for domination. *Even the critique of domination.*

It reproduces absence. It speaks to us from where we are not. It propels us elsewhere. It consumes us. It is craven. And stays cautiously sheltered when it sends us to the slaughter.

Secretly in love with its object, it continually lies to us.

Hence the short romances between proletarians and engaged intellectuals.

Those *rational* marriages in which one does not have the same idea, neither of pleasure nor of freedom.

Rather than new critiques, it is new cartographies that we need.

Not cartographies of Empire, but of the lines of flight out
of it.
How to? We need maps. Not maps of what is off the map.
But navigating maps.
Maritime maps. *Orientation* tools. That do not try to explain
or represent what lies inside of the different archipelagos
of desertion, but indicate how to join them.
Portolans.

III
THIS IS Tuesday 17 September 1996, just before dawn. The
ROS [*Raggruppamento Operativo Special*] (Special Operational
Group) coordinates, throughout the whole peninsula, the
arrest of
some 70 Italian anarchists.
The goal is to put an end to 15 years of fruitless
investigations into anarchist insurrections.
The technique is well-known: fabricate a 'turncoat', make
him denounce the existence of a wide subversive hierarchical
organisation.
Then accuse on the basis of this chimerical creation all
those to be neutralised of being part of it.
Once again, 'drain the sea to catch the fish'.
Even though it is only a tiny pond.
And a few roaches.

An 'informative service note' leaked out from the ROS
on this case.
Explains its strategy.
Based on the principles of General Dalla Chiesa, the ROS is
the classic example of imperial counter-insurrection service.
It works on the population.
Where an intensity has occurred, where something
happened, it is the *French doctor* of the situation.
The one that sets,
under cover of prophylaxis,
the quarantine lines aimed at isolating the contagion.
What it fears, it tells. In this document, it is written. What
it fears is '*the swamp of political anonymity*'.
Empire is afraid.
Empire is afraid that we might become whatever.
A delimited circle, an armed organisation. It does not fear
them. But an expansionary constellation of squats, self-
managed farms, collective homes, *fine a se stesso* meetings,

radios, skills and ideas. The whole linked by an intense
circulation of bodies, and of the affects between bodies.
That is quite another matter.

The *conspiracy of bodies*. Not of the critical minds, but of the
critical corporeities.
This is what Empire fears. This is what is slowly rising,
with the increase of the flows
of social defection.
There is an opacity inherent to the *contact* of bodies. That is
not compatible with the imperial reign of a light that shines
on things only *to disintegrate them*.
Offensive Opacity Zones are not
to be created.
They are already there, in all the relations in which happens
a true communication between bodies.
All we have to do is to *assume* that we are part of this opacity.
And provide
ourselves with the means to
extend it,
to defend it.
Wherever we manage to thwart the imperial devices, to ruin
the whole daily work of the Biopower and the Spectacle to
extricate from the population a fraction of citizens. To isolate
new *untorelli*. In this recovered indistinction an autonomous
ethical fabric will form spontaneously a plan of secessionist
consistency.
Bodies aggregate. Breathe again. Conspire. That such zones
be doomed to military crushing really does not matter. What
matters is, each time, to preserve
a sure escape route.
And then re-aggregate
Elsewhere.
Later.
What was underlying the problem of *What to do?* was the
myth of the general
strike.
What answers the question *How to?* is the *practice* of the
HUMAN STRIKE.
The general strike meant that exploitation was limited in
time and space,
that alienation was partial, due to a recognisable enemy,
and thus beatable.
Human strike replies to an age in which the limits between

work and life are fading away.
In which consuming and surviving, producing 'subversive texts' and dealing with the most toxic effects of industrial civilization, doing sport, making love, being a parent or under Prozac.
Everything is work.
Because Empire manages and digests, absorbs and reintegrates all that lives.
Even 'what I am', the subjectivisation that I do not deny *hic et nunc*,
everything is productive.
Empire has put everything down to work.
Ideally, my professional profile will coincide with my own face.
Even if it does not smile.
The grimaces of the rebel sell well, after all.

Empire is when the means of production have become means of control at the very same time as when the opposite turned out to be true.
Empire means that in all things the political moment *dominates*
the economic one.
And against this, general strike is helpless.
What must be opposed to Empire is human strike.
That never attacks relations of production without attacking at the same time the affective knots that sustain them.
That undermines its shameful libidinal economy,
That restore the ethical element – the *how* – repressed in every contact between neutralised bodies.
Human strike is the strike that, where one would expect such or such a predictable reaction,
such or such a contrite or indignant tone,
PREFERS NOT TO.
That slips away from the device. That saturates it or blows it up.
Pulls itself together, preferring
something else.
Something else that does not belong to the authorised possibilities of the device.
At the counter of such and such social services office, at the check out of such and such supermarket, in a polite conversation, during a
cop raid,
according to the balance of power, human strike gives

consistency to the space between the bodies,
pulverises the *double bind* in which they are caught,
force them into presence.
There is a whole Luddism to be invented, a Luddism of
the human machinery
that feeds Capital.

In Italy, radical feminism was an embryonic form of human
strike.
'*No more mothers, women and girls, let's destroy the families!*' was an
invitation to the gesture of breaking the predictable chains
of events,
to release the compressed potentialities.
It was a blow to the fucked up love affairs, to ordinary
prostitution.
It was a call at overcoming the couple as elementary unit
in the management of alienation.
A call for complicity, then.
Such a practice required circulation, contagion.
Women's strikes implicitly called for men's and children's
strikes, summoned them to run from factories, schools,
offices and prisons,
to reinvent for each situation another way to be, another *how.*
Italy in the 70s was a gigantic zone of human strike.
'Self-reductions', hold-ups, squatted neighbourhoods,
armed demonstrations,
pirate radios, countless cases of 'Stockholm syndrome',
even the famous letters from Moro detained, in the end,
were practices of human strike.
The Stalinists, back then, used to talk of 'diffuse
irrationality', you can imagine.

There are writers too
That are doing nothing else but
human strike.
Kafka, Walser, Miller
or Michaux,
for instance.

To *collectively* acquire this ability to shake
familiarities.
This art of dealing, within oneself,
with the most disturbing of all guests.

In the present war,
where the emergency reformism of Capital has to dress up
as a revolutionary to be heard, where the most democratic
fights, those of the counter-summits,
practice direct action,
a role is prepared for us.
The role of martyrs of the democratic order,
that preventively hits every body that could hit.
I should let myself be immobilised in front of a computer
while nuclear plants explode, while one plays with my
hormones or poisons me.
I should start singing the victim's rhetoric. As is well-known,
everyone is a victim, even the oppressors.
And savour that a discreet circulation of masochism
re-enchants the situation.

Human strike, today, means
refusing to play the role of the victim.
Attacking it.
Taking back violence.
Imposing impunity.
Making the paralysed citizens understand
that if they do not join the war they are at it anyway.
That when we are told it is this or dying, it is always
in reality
this *and* dying.

Thus,
human strike
after human strike, to reach
the insurrection,
where there is nothing but,
where we all are
whatever
singularities.

POLITICISING SADNESS

COLECTIVO SITUACIONES

More than five years after the insurrection of that Argentine December of 2001 we bear witness to the changing interpretations and moods around that event. For many of us sadness was the feeling that accompanied a phase of this winding becoming. This text rescues a moment in the elaboration of 'that sadness' in order to go beyond the notions of 'victory and defeat' that belong to that earlier cycle of politicisation which centred on taking state power, and, at the same time, in order to share a procedure that has allowed us to 'make public' an intimate feeling of people and groups.

Sadness arrived after the event: the political fiesta – of languages, images, and movements – was followed by a reactive, dispersive dynamic. And, along with it, there arrived what was later experienced as a reduction of the capacities of openness and innovation that the event brought into play. The experience of social invention (which always also implies the invention of time) was followed by a moment of normalisation and the declaration of the 'end of the fiesta'. According to Spinoza, sadness consists in being separated from our powers (*potencias*). Among us political sadness often took the form of impotence and melancholy in the face of the growing distance between that social experiment and the political imagination capable of carrying it out.

Politicising sadness sums up our intention to resist, to re-elaborate what came to light in that collective experiment under a new dynamic of publicness, because far from shrinking or having stopped, the process which opened then is still an underlying dilemma within present-day Argentina. In this context and with that intention, a diverse group of collectives that shared the lived experience of political transversality in Argentina in recent years – Grupo de Arte Callejero (GAC), the educational community Creciendo Juntos, the Movement of Unemployed Workers (MTD) of the neighbourhoods of Solano and Guernica, the communication collective Lavaca, and Colectivo Situaciones – met for several weeks at the end of 2005. Inevitably, we write this text from our own perspective on what was then discussed, which implies – also inevitably – to write in tune with a dynamic that is still under way.

ɪ — Political Sadness

1. The Logic of Specialists.
'If you do arts, then don't do politics, because in the arts there are those of us who handle the visual language, aesthetics, and can say what is and what is not art.' The same kind of border is imposed from the social sciences and philosophy: a distinction drawn between those who are fit to invent concepts and to make legitimate use of social research and those devoted to 'political propaganda'. Thus, after a period of 'disorder' the categories of the specialists arrive to restore and resurrect classifications that – they assert – never completely dissolve. The analysis done in this way lacks the political operations that made a work, a principle for action, or a movement possible. There are also the experts in politics, who organise disorder in the opposite sense: 'If you do not have a clear power strategy, "what you are doing" is not politics, but "social activism", philanthropy, counter-culture, etc.' Thus, the hybridity implicit in every creation of new political figures is intentionally confused with a costume party after which the old classificatory powers come back to distribute uniforms, ignoring the fact that those processes always have a dimension of irreversibility.

2. Repetition Without Difference.
The key to the productivity (both expressive and organisational) reached at a moment of creative turmoil is that it makes personal and group 'fusions' possible, along with a mixture of languages in which what matters is not the authorship of what is being created so much as the extent to which energies come together. Those efficacies do not resist their repetition outside the situations in which their meaning is rooted without becoming formulaic. Sadness appears with the certainty of extirpation, but is refined as politics when pure repetition crystallises and becomes established as a formula ready to be applied. The automation of the formula freezes our own capacity to temporalise the process. While the creation of time consists in opening possibilities, political sadness prevents the elaboration of lived experience as a present and future possibility. The crystallisation of the living past interrupts its elaboration as political memory.

3. Duration as a Criterion of Validity.
These were pervasive questions in the years 2001–2003: How do groups and movements relate to each other? Which joint efforts are the outcome of fusion and which ones do not allow such flexibility of connection? In each group or collective (artistic, political, social, etc.) a question came up about the practices taking place beyond the group, in a common outside. A key idea to make possible those encounters was the 'third group': groupings around tasks that undifferentiated the groups at the same time that made them partners in true laboratories of images, words, and organisation.

Sadness, in its eagerness to simplify, concludes that the temporal finitude of experimentation is enough to undermine its value, making invisible both the 'common outside' and the procedures destined to shape it, thus dissipating the most profound sense of the process.

4. Contempt for the Socialization of Production.
'Anybody can produce images or concepts, forms of struggle, means of communication or forms of expression.' These statements made sense while a sort of impersonal collective production managed to disseminate procedures and socialise creative experiments. A logic of 'contagion' permeated forms of struggle, images, and research, questioning the control of businesses and their brands over the field of signs. The normalising reaction arrived later to govern this viral expansion, recoding the significations in circulation and seizing command of them.

At this level several procedures helped normalisation:

a) The emptying of collective slogans through literalisation (violently severing them from their virtualities). For example, the 'all of them must go' of December 2001;

b) the attribution of a hidden meaning, the product of 'manipulation', as the usual reading of phenomena of collective creation ('behind each autonomous and horizontal tendency there is nothing but a ruse of power...' or, every 'apparently spontaneous' demonstration finds its 'hidden truth' in the powers that 'orchestrate' it from the shadows);

c) the most typical prejudices of 'reactionary economicism', expressed in phrases such as 'the *piqueteros* only want to earn money without working', 'the middle class only takes to the street if something touches them in the pocket', and all the ways of reducing the subjective interplay to the economic crisis;

d) the mechanical identification of the 'micro' level with 'small', an *a priori* judgement according to which the concrete forms of the revolt are identified with a prior, local, and exceptional moment, cut out from a 'macro' reality, which must be run according to the guidelines that spring up from capitalist hegemony and its systems of overcoding.

5. Machines of Capture.
The classical dilemma about institutions – to participate or to subtract oneself? – was in a certain way overcome at the moment of greatest social energy. The resources that the collectives and movements wrenched from the institutions dictated the 'sense' of neither their use nor their operation. On the contrary, they became cogs of a different machine, which imbued the way of relating to these institutions with a different meaning, without naivety, verifying in practice how that dynamic depended on a relation of forces. The rise of all these extra-institutional procedures, simultaneous to the moment of greater presence and voice in the public stage, aspired to a radical

democratisation of the relation between creative dynamic and institution, meaning and resources. The institutions that sought to register the meaning of these novelties in general did not go beyond a partial renewal: not so much because they negated procedures brought into play by the movements and collectives, as because they forgot the implications of the reorganisation of the institutional dynamic that such instances pursued; not so much for trying to give an opposite meaning to the aspirations of the movements, as for the underestimation of the plane of the movements itself as the locus in which the problems regarding the production of meaning were posed.

6. Autonomy as Restriction.

Up to a certain moment autonomy was almost equivalent to transversality among the collectives, movements, and people. That positive resonance functioned as a surface for the development of an instituent dialogue outside the consensus of both capital and the alternative 'masters' of the party apparatuses. But, once turned into a doctrine, autonomy becomes desensitised about the transversality from which it nurtures itself and to which it owes its true power (*potencia*). When autonomy turns into a morality and/or a restricted party-line, it drowns in a narrow particularity and loses its capacity for opening and innovation. To the autonomous groups and movements, sadness appears also as a threat of cooptation or giving up the quest. It appears also as guilt for what they did not do, for that which they 'were not capable of', or, precisely for that paradoxical becoming of normalisation, which brings about as a consequence a certain form of resentment.

7. Sudden Appearance in the Limelight.

The performance of the masses that during the explosion of counterpower in Argentina at the end of 2001 was accompanied by a violent change in the map regarding who were the relevant actors, but also of the parameters for understanding and dealing with this new social protagonism. The (perhaps inevitable) spectacularisation spectacularises: it institutes stars and establishes recognised voices. The consumerist relation with the 'hot' spots of conflict led to a colossal change of climate, in which the collectives and movements went from being observed, applauded and accompanied to being suddenly ignored and even scorned, which is usually experienced with a mix of extreme loneliness, deception and guilt.

11 — Politicising Sadness

A politics 'in' and 'against' sadness cannot be a sad politics.
The reappropriation and reinterpretation of the event presupposes:

1. Elaborating the Event in the Light of Memory as Power (*Potencia*).
The process does not end in defeats and victories, but we can indeed be
frozen and removed from its dynamic. To learn to dismantle forms and
formulae, successful in days gone by, cannot turn into a kind of repentance
or simulation. Leaving behind formulae can only mean to recover all of
them as possibilities; to equip ourselves with a true political memory.

2. No Victimisations.
Sadness only points to our momentary disconnection in a dynamic process,
which need not be thought about as a long phase (of stabilisation) periodically
interrupted (by crises of domination), but rather as a process that political
struggle goes through. Not only is sadness a politics of power, but also – and
above all – the circumstance in which the politics of power become powerful.

3. Power (*Potencia*) of Abstention.
If the power to do is verified in the democratic sovereignty we manage to
actualise in it, the politicisation of sadness can perhaps be understood as
a form of wisdom in which apparent passivity radically preserves its active,
subjective content. A readiness 'despite everything' that prevents us from
being swept along with the current or simply conquered.

4. New Public Spaces.
Public existence is instituted in our mode of appearing, and a way of
appearing that interrogates is radically political. The institution of new
public spaces in which we appear with our true questions, ready to listen
the content of the situations, does not need exceptional conditions, but it
does need a non-state institution of that which is collective. This is what
Mujeres Creando call 'concrete politics'.

5. The Re-elaboration of the Collective.
The collective as premise and not as meaning or point of arrival: like that
'remainder' that emerges from a renewed effort to listen. The collective as a
level of political production and as accompanying one another's experiences.
We are not talking about group formulae (of incitement or self-help, its
opposite): the collective-communitarian is always a challenge of opening
with respect to the world. It is not merely looking 'outside', in terms of a
classical topology that would distinguish a 'communitarian inside' and
an 'external outside', but rather the collective as complicity in the adventure
of becoming a situational interface in the world.

We would like to end with a hypothesis: the ongoing dynamic in Argentina gives rise to what we could call a 'new governability' (new mechanisms of legitimacy of the elites; innovations in the conception of the relation between government and movements, between international and 'internal' politics; regional integration and global multilateralism). To prolong sadness leads to isolation in this new phase of the process.

As a 'translation' of the event, the 'new governability' distributes recognition among the instituent dynamics and opens spaces that were unimaginable in the previous phase of bare-knuckle neoliberalism. However, all this is simultaneous to an effort to control and redirect those dynamics. There is no room for a feeling of 'success' for the former or 'defeat' for the latter. With the drift from political sadness to the politicisation of sadness we intend to take up the dilemmas opened by the ever present risk of getting lost in fixed, and therefore illusory, binarisms, which confront us as victory-defeat. Paolo Virno summarised what is opening in front of us this way: beyond the vitiated oscillation between cooptation and marginalisation, what is at stake is the possibility of a 'new maturity'.

Translated by Nate Holdren and Sebastian Touza.

MAYAN TECHNOLOGIES AND THE THEORY OF ELECTRONIC CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

RICARDO DOMINGUEZ INTERVIEWED BY BENJAMIN SHEPARD AND STEPHEN DUNCOMBE

RICARDO DOMINGUEZ I was born in Las Vegas, Nevada, 2 May, 1959. Las Vegas was like living in three different worlds. One was the Happy Days world of the Mormons, where everyone was pure and nice and noone smoked, nobody drank, and nobody even had coffee. The other was the world of the Godfather, one of cool mobsters and lawyers occasionally being blown up, and everything was legal: prostitution, gambling, everything else. And then the third was the X-Files world: 98 percent of Nevada is owned by the government; some of the most secretive installations in the world are in Nevada. And right across the mountain, on the other side of Las Vegas, is the nuclear test site. So I grew up hearing the sirens go off every Saturday at 12 o'clock in the afternoon, and we would get up, go run to the top of the Mint Hotel, and wait for the bombs to set off, and the entire earth would turn into these waves. In a certain sense my political consciousness came not so much from an exterior politicised context but more from a popular culture context. That is, at the same that these nuclear bombs were going off, I was watching Saturday afternoon matinèes about people with nuclear radiation turning into giant bugs or growing third eyes. So I had an idea as a young boy that something was wrong, between the nuclear arms going off and what could happen to us, so Saturday afternoon monster flicks on TV were, in a certain sense, the genesis of my political evolution.

The other element of critique that emerged for me was that the only place that you could see Blaxploitation films was in North Las Vegas, where most of the Black community was. Since neither the Mormons nor the Mafia were particularly fond of the Black community, and the only way I could go see any Blaxploitation movies was to make a trek into another zone, I certainly began to comprehend that things were really divided into specific zones. And also, Blaxploitation films – they were highly political; that is, they were attacking the white man, who was usually in power. For instance, I remember that one of the important films for me was a film called *Three the Hard Way* [1974] with Jim Kelly, James Brown, and Fred Williamson,

where they discover that there are Nazi fascists in Florida who are developing a virus that will kill only Black people. So I certainly began to comprehend that there were spaces of division that were very real – a divide existed within my community based on race, and these Blaxploitation flicks spoke a certain truth about it. There were also science fiction films like *Soylent Green* [1973], where they discover that governments will eat people, and THX1138 [1971], where the only value a human being has is the price of that individual and if you overrun that price then you are no longer of value. My political understanding of the world was both 'screenal' and on the streets.

[…] I was an explorer; I was very much a boy scout, a cub scout, an eagle scout. I met – because my mother by that time was a pathologist at Southern Memorial Hospital – what later became an 'atomic soldier'. That's the name that I finally got for them. And these were men who during the late 1950s and early 1960s were asked to march to Ground Zero and, of course, were told that nothing could happen to them. They were asked to make foxholes five miles from Ground Zero and just cover their eyes. So, as a young boy of maybe 14 or 15, I certainly started seeing how the nuclear activists who were going out to the test site were participating in a kind of critique of this culture. And I certainly knew how all the Mormons, for all their purity, were accountants for the Mafia; that the Mafia was making all this money. So there was a sense of understanding.

And one of the things that occurred during this period was that I began to hear of the work of the Living Theatre. I began to see Bread and Puppet Theatre during the nuclear activist actions. So I began to comprehend that in film and in performance there was a way that one could critique this kind of condition – that one could actually do something – and I decided to become an actor; I decided to become a classical actor. So I spent most of my time from 16 to about 20 just travelling doing Shakespeare around the country. All the while in the back of my head was floating the Judith Malina and Julian Beck treatise on the Living Theatre. This was 1975 to 1981. At the same time, I had been involved with the nuclear activist activities and getting information. Also you have to remember the Pentagon Papers had come out when I was 12 or so, so I knew governments were certainly capable of doing horrible things and not really being concerned about it.

So then, in 1981, I decided that perhaps what I really needed to do was somehow educate myself deeper in a critical theory, a discourse – of course I didn't have that language at the time. So I decided that I would go to school and get my MA in dramaturgy. And I ended up going to Tallahassee, Florida – the now famous Tallahassee, Florida, more famous than perhaps it deserves to be. And it was there that I started getting a deeper understanding of history and theory and so on. What I discovered was that in the academic bunker there wasn't a lot of interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary process. You were a dramaturge and you studied the classics of performance theory. You didn't go to sociology and read C. Wright Mills. You didn't go to

philosophy and read Wittgenstein. It was just not done. And in a certain sense, I began to see the fault lines of the academy. And eventually, I was asked kindly to leave the academy since I wasn't doing what I was supposed to do.

And what was lucky for me was that I said fine. I walked across the street and I got a job at Rubyfruit Books, a lesbian bookstore, the only lesbian bookstore in Tallahassee, Florida. And they were kind enough to make me their token male, if you will, and allowed me to order books; and it was through this that I started finding alternative presses and some of the first Semiotext(e) books: Virilio, Baudrillard. I was reading a lot of the radical lesbian feminists that were coming out at that time. Certainly queer theory was beginning to emerge as the high edge of a new form of embodying theory… The theory would become not just a discourse but really play itself out. And I thought that was very important.

At the same time, there was a small community. And at that time in the 1980s there was a lot of cocaine in Florida. There was so much that they would just give it to you. So you would end up going to a lot of cocaine parties. At these cocaine parties I started hearing people say, 'Hey you should talk to so and so, cause they are talking in the same kind of yack that you are speaking', and you know, blah, blah, blah. And eventually through one of these cocaine parties, I ran into some of the people who would later become Critical Art Ensemble. One of them was a filmmaker who hated film, a poet who hated poetry, a photographer who hated photography, the first person I ever met who actually worked with a computer who hated technology, a bookmaker who hated books; I was an actor who hated acting. And we all had a fetish for cocaine and we also had a fetish for theory. We developed this ritual where we would gather at Hope Kurtz's big glass table and she would put out lines and we would read Adorno – we would read all these great books and say 'this is a great bit of critical theory', write that line down, and then do another line of cocaine. Basically we would take all the theory we could read that week… because that's all you had to do in Tallahassee.

But what happened was that we had a sense that something else could be created; that we could create a focus in this space, which we then defined as the cultural frontier. And that in the cultural frontier one could create a theoretical discourse, a practice which could be coequal to the nexus, to New York, Chicago, LA; which could be just as vital and specific. But, of course, it was very loose and not very lucid as yet. And unfortunately, like many of these things, what did bring it into focus, what did bring it into practice, was a crisis. And the crisis that hit us was AIDS.

A Crisis

By 1986 and 1987, many of our good friends did indeed begin to get sick. And, of course, like many at first we didn't know exactly what to do or how to play it out. But we began to hear that there were very good groups,

especially Gran Fury up in New York, who had begun to initiate directed aesthetic activist discourse. And we decided to do a show called *Cultural Vaccines*. We invited Donald Moffet from what would become ACT UP, but it was Gran Fury at the time and also Doug Ashford from Group Material [...] because those were two groups that we thought were doing very important work that we wanted to learn from. Gran Fury created *Silence = Death*, and the whole look of early ACT UP; they were designers, painters, artists. They had their show at the New Museum, I think, around 1987. It was there, really, that ACT UP started unifying itself not only as a practice but as a look, as a design. Gran Fury created a kernel of what would become ACT UP, which of course was Larry [Kramer] and so many others.

One of the things that developed from Critical Art Ensemble's *Cultural Vaccines* show was something that we didn't really expect. We rented a huge warehouse and on one side we invited the local community, all the way from kindergartners to the local skinheads to come put up their reading on AIDS; on the other side, we had Gran Fury and Group Material, which placed the audience in between the dialogue. What happened at the *Cultural Vaccines* show was that an ACT UP/Tallahassee emerged as a real collective that not only gathered and focused on spreading information to counter the hysteria but also looked at how HMOs worked with AIDS, and so on. We started working with ACT UP/Miami and ACT UP/Atlanta, doing coordinated actions with each other. Some of the first actions we did were what we called butt-ins. Tallahassee is the capital and of course the governor's mansion was there – everybody was there – so we'd jump over the fence and pull down our pants. We'd have [inscribed] 'HIV' or whatever comments we wanted. We'd slam our asses up against the window. But, of course, these butt-ins became media gestures. And we created T-shirts, which was one of the things that really established Critical Art Ensemble, in that it finally gained a name. I was an actor and a director, so I created the way actions would work.

BENJAMIN SHEPARD Theatre is a good training for activism.

RD It's very good. It was a way that I could take all this kind of alternative, performative discourse – of the living theatre, of *Teatro Campesino* – and really bring it into focus. Like some of the T-shirts that we would do, like 'AIDS: a kinder gender genocide'. We would have Hitler shaking Bush's hand. And we would create clothing for babies with the words 'Healthcare not Warfare', and that sort of thing.

One of the things that occurred out of these massive actions was that ACT UP really brought to the foreground [something] that I think is really important and would later evolve in the 1990s with Zapatismo – that is, the politics of the question versus the politics of the answer. ACT UP was really calling for a single question to be answered: 'Is there a cure?' It wasn't that we were saying that we were going to overthrow the state, that we were going

to take over the world, or that we had answers. But we were asking the single question that was very difficult, one for the therapeutic state to answer, another for pharmaceuticals to answer, and, of course, one for the regulatory bureaucracy to answer. Why wasn't there a cure? What was going on? What was the hold-up? So this very basic question started creating spaces – where now, of course, people living with AIDS are on the boards of many pharmaceuticals, on the boards of the National Health Institute, pushing drug trials forward. A lot of the community research initiatives that were started in ACT UP/Miami and ACT UPSan Francisco, a lot of those templates, are now basic procedures that people are holistically approaching [when] living with AIDS – something that wasn't part of the AZT [drug therapy] regime that was killing people. So, it really brought into focus this kind of politics of the question being pushed as active street leveraging.

And one of the elements that began to occur during these street actions is that we would do things like 'fax jams'. We would fax jam the National Institute of Health. You know, [asking] 'What is AZT? How many people has AZT cured?' So to me it predates what electronic civil disobedience could be. Electronic civil disobedience was doing these fax jams. Probably one of the most important elements [at] the foreground was what we called phone zapping. There was a large food conglomerate in the south called Publix, which is found everywhere all over the south. Probably around 1990, they decided that the best way to deal with the AIDS hysteria was to stop selling condoms. How this worked in their minds, we didn't know, but we certainly knew it was wrong. So what we did – again, with this triumvirate of ACT UP/Atlanta, ACT UP/Tallahassee, and ACT UP/Florida – was a phone tree of 24-hour action, 7 days a week, where everybody (I was supposed to call 10:59, 11:59, 1:59) would say 'look, I shop in your store, I am happy to shop in your store, but I no longer want to shop in your store if I can't buy my condoms in your store'. And I really would. It wasn't a kind of aggressive 'we're going to take you down'. It was look, we're shoppers, we live in the community, blah blah blah. After two weeks of this they called us in, and said 'yes we are going to start selling condoms in the stores'. We said, 'Great, now we want the condoms up front because we don't want to go all the way to the back'. And you know there was a kind of simple leverage of a very simple tool, bringing this strong conglomerate into a more enlightened position as far as we were concerned.

And one of the things we also began to notice by 1990 was that, even though our actions were more highly organised, more specific, more directed, and much clearer in terms of all the information we had, they weren't getting the same kind of media attention that the early actions, say 1989 or 1988, were getting. And this was a turning point, at least for Critical Art Ensemble. We began to ask, what is it that we are doing wrong, what is it that we need to do, and can it be a simple thing? Is there something we can do?

Changing Trajectories

And, of course, we took to heart the William Gibson metaphor of cyberspace being a mass hallucination. And that power had now shifted into cyberspace. You have to remember that that came out in 1984. And for most of the 1980s nobody really had any access, except for maybe the science department and they weren't going to let you in to play with those machines. So we began to reread specifically *Neuromancer* (1984). And in chapter 3 of *Neuromancer*, there is a section where Case, the hacker, and Molly Millions, the cyborg-woman, need to break into this bunker of information but they can't. They need the help of a third group, which is mentioned, I think, only three times, the Panther Moderns. And what the Panther Moderns are is a highly self-conscious terrorist group that work in developing other types of mass hallucinations. So, if you imagine that cyberspace is already a master central hallucination, they were creating other hallucinations on top of that. And what happens is that these screenal hallucinations in effect blind power to what is actually occurring. And this allows Case and Molly Millions to enter the information bunker and get whatever it is that they were looking for. So, we began to think that perhaps what needs to happen is for the Panther Moderns to emerge, an activist electronic community.

And one of the things that Critical Art Ensemble had always proposed was that plagiarism should be the predominant mode. Hypertext should be our mode of textual production. If you look at any of our books and if you want to spend any scholarship hours, you could look at every line and see where we stole it from – from Adorno or some other place. And all we would do was instead of saying 'negative dialectic', we would say 'electronic civil disobedience'. And one of the things that we read at that time was [H.D. Thoreau's] 'Civil Disobedience' (1849). And all we did in the hypertext method was put 'electronic' in front of it. And that engendered in us the sense that this phrase 'electronic civil disobedience' might be a very useful tool and focus for this kind of Panther Modern gathering and processing and putting it into practice. We began to write and elucidate what later would be published in 1994 and 1995 as *The Electronic Disturbance* and later on, *Electronic Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas.* We were lucky enough to do it through Autonomedia, who again had been very important to us in the 1980s by giving us access to this counter-discourse.

And one of the things you have to remember is that ACT UP and Gran Fury were, for me, the direct embodiment of queer theory. So we built what would become electronic civil disobedience on this kind of questioning, on this kind of processing. But, as in all things, by 1991 there was a sense of a divide in Critical Art Ensemble between theory and practice. I thought that there was a need for theory to hit the ground; in a certain sense to hit the street. It had to be put into practice or there wouldn't be anything else to really reflect on completely. It would just become another theoretical vein. But I didn't know how to do this, of course, not having had any training in

code or computers. I had worked for a decade in a lesbian bookstore with books, which is a good training for some things but not very good training for what I was expecting to do.

So I began to hear that in New York City some artists had begun to build infrastructures. And these infrastructures were being built in terms of a certain level of access. And one of them was The Thing, which started in 1991. That was started by Wolfgang Stälhe, a painter and Conceptual artist. Another was called Blast, started by Jordan Crandall. Both were among the first people who started investigating new space as an area of artistic development.

So, basically what I did was sell all the millions of books I had gathered during my ten years [in Tallahassee]. I bought a little yellow Ford Fiesta for $200; it was guaranteed to get me to New York City before breaking down. I took the 50 books that I thought would be most important in developing the practice of electronic civil disobedience. It reminded me of H.G. Wells's *Time Machine* (1895). The hero, at the end, before he goes back to the future, goes to his bookshelf and takes five books. So, I had taken my 50 books. And I drove as quickly as I could from Tallahassee, Florida. I went to where the BBS Thing.net was. I introduced myself to Wolfgang Stälhe. I was only there for maybe about 20 minutes. I came back out. They had broken into my car. They had taken all my clothes; they had taken all my books. So in a certain sense, I felt that New York was telling me how I needed to survive. And that is, I had to become a thief. Having been enamoured of Genet, I felt that being a book thief was what I knew – that was the way I would live. And I started stealing very expensive Verso books and Lyotard's wallbook on Duchamp, price $350, and I would sell them at Mercer Street Books. They were always very interested in theory since they were near NYU.

So in the mornings, I would study code at The Thing. The pedagogical method at The Thing is: there is a computer, there are books, good luck. Nobody was going to help me. It was all very do-it-yourself, which I think is a very strong tradition and is something I think all activists and artists should focus on. And it was there that I really began to understand how these networks were created. First thing: email. Just to train myself to think. And I would always introduce the concept of electronic civil disobedience. People would just shake their heads, 'Well, that's interesting Ricardo. We don't know what that is.'

Another Crisis

In 1994, one minute after midnight, the Zapatistas emerged out of the jungle. They took over the state of Chiapas, calling for autonomy for the indigenous communities there. I had come stumbling home from the Tunnel. I think I was tripping on E or something. I couldn't sleep. I checked my email. I was living right by ABC No Rio, in basically a closet. One of the first things I got was the 'Declaration of the Lacandona'. To me it really

began the practice and formalising of electronic civil disobedience. And the next day as I was stumbling out – I always went to the Odessa to get something to eat – I saw a little post-it note at ABC No Rio saying that if anybody had heard anything about the Zapatistas let's meet tonight. I think it was a Sunday night. And that night we met in the basement of ABC No Rio. It was a cold, dank winter basement, full of big rats in those days. It wasn't nice like it is now. And basically the New York Committee for Democracy in Mexico was born. We instantly started doing civil disobedience, like hunger strikes, over at the Mexican Consulate, on 41st Street, I think.

We had predicted in Critical Art Ensemble's *Electronic Civil Disobedience* that: (1) hackers would never be politicised, and (2) activists would never be technologised, in terms of thinking of electronic culture as a useful form of leverage. [Yet] one of the few areas that didn't just disregard me was the net-art community. They seemed to be very open. They said, 'Well, we don't know what it is but if you can do it, go ahead.' So one of the things that occurred was that there were two blocks that I met during 1994 and a kind of open space. But I still didn't know enough code to even conceive of how that would work.

At the same time in 1994, Cecilia Rodriguez in El Paso had been chosen as the legal representative of the Zapatistas. So we kept trying to call her. We couldn't get hold of her because she herself wasn't prepared. She woke up one morning and found she was the legal representative. I think she didn't have a phone at the time because she was too poor. So it took her about a year even to establish some connection. At the end of that year, in December, we had the first gathering of Zapatistas in New York at the CHARAS space to fundraise and Cecilia came.

I did a performance there called *The Run for the Border, the Taco Bell War* where I kind of emphasised what was then called 'cyber war', or 'net war' by the military and the dot.coms. But it was still very difficult to elucidate. You have to remember this was 1994.

But [we] saw during 1994 a rising up of the ACT UP tradition of the politics of the question. What the Zapatistas soon learned from net war was to begin to ask a question: 'What does democracy mean for indigenous communities in Mexico? What is it? Is there a democracy for Mexico?' This began to break open all sorts of barriers and questions, constitutional questions, NAFTA questions.

And we also started to see the gleaming of this kind of decentralised network, which would later be called the International Network of Struggle and Resistance or the Intergalactic Network of Struggle and Resistance. [We] started seeing the blooming of hundreds of Zapatista sites all over the world. Harry Cleaver at the University of Texas, Austin, had started, by 1995, the Zapatista listserv. So you started seeing a blooming around the Zapatismo, which hadn't occurred as strongly during the anti-NAFTA and the Peacenet movement in terms of this kind of practice or leveraging.

And, unfortunately, again it was always through a series of crises that the electronic media started bringing themselves to the foreground. Probably the most important of these early gestures was the Chase Manhattan memo in early February 1996.

Remember that the Zapatistas had only had basically 12 days of fighting. In a certain sense the Internet radicalised them. Suddenly, they discovered they no longer had to be a modernist guerrilla movement that followed 'death in arms'. Instead they created an information guerrilla movement.

What occurred was that the Chase Manhattan memo was somehow leaked to the Zapatista community. It was an internal investment memo to be sent out only to the Chase Manhattan investment community. It stated that even though the Zapatistas had no direct influence on the value of the peso, it did create a certain psychological depression within the investor community. Therefore they called for the elimination of the Zapatista communities with extreme prejudice. A few days later, the first major offensive that had taken place since 1994 by Zedillo's Mexican military was initiated. You could see a direct connection between this memo and the offensive action.

Because we had this memo, we started making posters of it. We did actions at Chase Manhattan. We sent the memo to the *New York Times.* We just spammed the entire world – and did street actions. I remember walking around with the memo with bloody handprints inside Chase Manhattan. And what occurred was that within three days the offensive stopped. I remember Comandante Ramona saying that an electronic force field had been created. And this electronic force field had not only created a protective device but had actually leveraged the possibility of bringing the worldwide community to Chiapas, which by 1996 forced the Mexican government to meet the Zapatistas face to face to create the San Andreas accords. If you look at the history of the Mexican guerrilla movements, it has been long term and very violent. So here the long-term violence hadn't happened. We had leveraged electronically a situation where power had to actually face this community.

STEPHEN DUNCOMBE You had expanded the community from the jungle.

RD Yeah, basically what the Zapatistas had shown was that you [not only] had the politics of the question, but [also] that you can upload the singularity of the community and decentralise it. Chiapas globalised; it pushed itself around the world. It did end-runs around the dominant media, the major media filters. We didn't need the *New York Times.* We didn't need these other spaces to allow the Zapatistas to speak to the world. And that they did it without electricity; they did it without computers, they did it without all the things that we have now. To become the dominant information force was truly amazing. If you look at the Rand Corporation book on social net war

and the Zapatistas, they are still digging, digging to discover how they accomplished this and all the NGOs – all these things gathered together. It was bare bones. Somebody writes a note. They hand it to somebody who rides a horse. The guy on the horse gives it somebody on a truck on a dirt road that takes it to San Cristobal, who then probably goes to the church or someplace, then uploads it to *La Jornada.* I mean it's a long arduous process; nobody's uploading on their wireless Palm 7.

What occurred was that electronic leveraging began to occur. To me, these were direct signs of electronic civil disobedience. And I felt that something more could be accomplished in terms of direct action. Of course what happened was that the Mexican government never fulfilled any of the San Andreas accords whatsoever – the usual politics of the PRI government.

At the end of 1996, I was invited by MIT to do a performance, using early Real Video – very beta – and Real Audio. And this was called the *Zapatista Port Action.* And basically it lasted for four months into 1997. And what I did was communicate with all the Zapatista networks around the world, the Italian networks, Cecilia Rodriguez. And for two or three hours a week, I'd interview them and it would all be projected in a MIT laboratory onto huge screens. And this was the groundwork of what would become electronic civil disobedience and the creation of Electronic Disturbance Theatre. My software assistant and technology assistant at MIT was a woman named Carmin Karassic, who would later become a member of Electronic Disturbance. One of the people I interviewed, because I had read his MA on the drug war/information war in Mexico, was Stephan Wray. And what I had begun to do through The Thing was a pedagogical spamming of the networks that I was in contact with. I spoke to them about Zapatismo, about what was going on in Chiapas. I used these kinds of platforms to aggregate knowledge about the Zapatistas. Through this kind of networking I felt I was fulfilling the call that had been made through the Zapatista *encuentro* to create an intercontinental network of struggle and resistance.

SD Can you explain what *encuentro* means?

RD That was one of the vital and magnificent strategies that the Zapatistas used. *Encuentro* means encounter. What they started doing, as early as 1995, was inviting the world to come to Chiapas. And when there was a gathering, they would create tables. There was a table of music, a table of propaganda, a network table, and you could join any of these tables and you would share information that you brought to that table. And there was usually one Zapatista at the table who was silent and took in the information and then relayed it back to the command and the autonomous communities. And then there would be some response. Out of the network, there was a response: build the networks; start gathering.

The other thing the Zapatistas did was a very open gesture in which anyone or anything could participate in the Zapatismo in any manner they could. It could be a poem; it could be direct action on the street. There wasn't a specific Zapatista mode – you have to do this or you are not a Zapatista. So, again, it was quite an open gesture. And you use whatever tools you have at hand to create that gesture. Obviously the networks were what I had at hand. Unknown to me, out of the *Zapatista Port Action* show I had really created the ground for what would be the direct nonviolent use of the Internet, pushing it away from the paradigm of just communication and documentation. And again it happened because of a crisis. That's probably one of the most important things of all activism. It always comes from something horrible. You always say, 'gosh, if we could only do better…'

On 22 December 1997, the Acteal massacre occurred, in which 45 women and children were killed by paramilitary troops trained and armed by the Mexican military using arms from the drug war; they went in and killed this Zapatista community. From what we understand, the police were only about 500 feet away. So a lot of rage and anger occurred in the Zapatista movement. I felt that something more needed to be done than send more emails and do more actions. I just wanted to shut them all down. Basically we were all so angry. I started spamming everybody: 'It's time for direct action, on the streets and online.' And, of course, there were hundreds of thousands of actions, throughout the world.

After I sent out this email, I received an email from one of the groups I had interviewed in Italy called the Anonymous Digital Coalition. They said, 'Ricardo, why don't we do this: why don't we go to a specific URL of the Mexican government and, by taking the refresh and reload button that exists on every public browser, just for an hour, in say Mexico City time, reload over and over and over.' That is, in theory, blocking the site, creating a disturbance. I thought: this is fantastico, Let's go do it. I spammed everybody I knew. A few seconds later I received an email from Carmin Karassic, who had been my technical assistant and software engineer up at MIT. She said, 'Ricardo, I have read some of your documents on electronic moments. What are the names of the Acteal dead? I would like to make an electronic monument.' I thought that was a beautiful idea. A few beeps later, I got an email from Brett Stalbaum, a net artist and teacher from San Jose, California – the Cadre Institute – who said, 'Ricardo, I think what I can do is a small Java script which will take into account how many people participate and reload for us so we don't have to hurt our little finger reloading.' I said, 'Fantastico, lets do that.' But, he said, 'Ricardo, I'm not a good designer. I don't want to do the skin.' And I said: 'Brett, let me introduce you to Carmen, Carmen, let me introduce you to Brett. Why don't you guys make an electronic monument to the Zapatistas that is active?' And I let them go.

At that same time, Stephan Wray had been accepted into the doctoral programme at NYU, in the media department under Neil Postman – who is

not very media-friendly. He had come to visit me because he was also very angry. We had met early in December; he wanted to do his dissertation on electronic civil disobedience theory and practice and move it beyond what Critical Art Ensemble had done and wanted to know if I would help him and participate in this development. I said, sure. At that same time, I was developing a listserv for The Thing called *Information Wars*. So I said, 'will you help me be, as it were, a co-moderator, and I'll help you', and he said sure. And, of course, this was without us knowing what was going to happen on December 22nd.

By the end of January, Stephan and I, Carmin and Brett, had begun to work together. The Zapatista FloodNet System emerged as a tool. And at that time we decided to become a theatre. I thought it was very important to continue the performative gesture. I didn't know how useful a tactic it would be. We decided that we would do a performance/action twice a month, throughout 1998. We would only do these actions in solidarity with the Zapatistas and we would only do them for a year. The main goal would be to spread information about the Zapatistas; the second to push the theory of electronic civil disobedience. We did our first action. Some 14,800 people participated around the world. Many people said President Zedillo's website responded, 'I can't really fulfill your request', which to us was victory. The next day we were in the *New York Times.* And this started a new media level of discussion.

Hype and the Information Wars
On 9 September, 1998, the morning of another performance, I received a phone call. I was getting a lot of [calls from] journalists, so I thought it was a journalist. They said, 'Is this Ricardo Dominguez?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Of the Electronic Disturbance Theatre?' I said, 'Yes.' Then in very clear Mexican Spanish, they said, 'We know who you are. We know where you are at. Do not go downstairs. We know where your family is. Do not do this performance. This is not a game. You understand.' And they hung up. I said, 'Wow, what a way to wake up.' But I'm an addict. I need my cup of coffee. I'm gonna go downstairs and do all that sort of stuff. And, of course, I went downstairs. I told the cops. I told the festival. More spam. And that's one of the things about information war: to outhype the hype, a very important strategy.

SD What do you mean by that?

RD To outhype the hype? To create a better look. If Prada is the look of whomever, then you create a better look, you create a better sense of style in a certain sense. That's what ACT UP did. It brought style into politics. All of a sudden the logo *was* 'Silence = Death'. Instead of being, 'Oh my god, the police have called' [with doom in his voice]: 'Excellent, the police have called!' [spoken with optimism]. 'Let's let everybody know.'

We counted victories if in the newspaper the first paragraph was about the Zapatistas. I would say about 81 percent of the time, in all the articles about the Electronic Disturbance Theatre, the very first paragraph or at least the second mentioned the Zapatistas and the conditions in Chiapas and what the Mexican government did.

SD That's part of your action.

RD Yes, because the main thing about the disturbance is not the shutting down of space but about disseminating information. And what you want people to get is that information. It's not even so much the gesture. The performance isn't about your performance but about getting that information out there. Even in agitprop drama, you want to get this sort of information out there. And I think it worked extremely well because we used that level of hype, and because the very system created the information.

And the other element that Electronic Disturbance Theatre hoped for was that by sending out the code, other cells, other groups, would begin to emerge, not necessarily following all the rules that we had set up. Certainly if you are an activist group in East Timor you can't be transparent, it would be suicidal, so certainly we understand the historical conditions. We certainly understand that every cell has to decide for itself its best tactics. This just happened to be our trajectory of what we thought was useful. And sure enough we began to see cells emerge, like the Electronic Hippies who started developing the major actions against the WTO, the slams against the WTO. We started connecting with other net activist groups like RTMark.

And because of the International Network of Struggle and Resistance the Zapatistas had started early on, you began to see in 1999 the networks not only coagulating but spilling out into the streets, which was, I think, of hyper importance. Again, electronic civil disobedience is only a tool. It's only one level. And if you can leverage the data bodies with the real bodies on the streets, you can have this kind of aggregated direct action like the WTO in Seattle, Washington, Melbourne. In fact, in Melbourne, there was a hactivist group, S11, that did a digital hijack of Nike.com and pointed it to the Reclaim the Streets/Melbourne action. And so, as we saw in 1999 with the rise of e-commerce, you also saw the rise of international hactivism and its coordination of on-the-street actions. I think those kind of networks are so strong.

The rest is history... The Zapatista Revolution continues...

THE ARTICULATION OF PROTEST

HITO STEYERL

Every articulation is a montage of various elements – voices, images, colours, passions or dogmas – within a certain period of time and with a certain expanse in space. The significance of the articulated moments depends on this. They only make sense within this articulation and depending on their position. So how is protest articulated? What does it articulate and what articulates it?

The articulation of protest has two levels: on the one hand, it indicates finding a language for protest, the vocalisation, the verbalisation or the visualisation of political protest. On the other, however, this combination of concepts also designates the structure or internal organisation of protest movements. In other words, there are two different kinds of concatenations of different elements: one is at the level of symbols, the other at the level of political forces. The dynamic of desiring and refusal, attraction and repulsion, the contradiction and the convergence of different elements unfold at both levels. In relation to protest, the question of articulation applies to the organisation of its expression – but also the expression of its organisation.

Naturally, protest movements are articulated at many levels: at the level of their programmes, demands, self-obligations, manifestos and actions. This also involves montage – in the form of inclusions and exclusions based on subject matter, priorities and blind spots. In addition, though, protest movements are also articulated as concatenations or conjunctions of different interest groups, NGOs, political parties, associations, individuals or groups. Alliances, coalitions, fractions, feuds or even indifference are articulated in this structure. At the political level as well, there is also a form of montage, combinations of interests, organised in a grammar of the political that reinvents itself again and again. At this level, articulation designates the form of the internal organisation of protest movements. According to which rules, though, is this montage organised? Who does it organise with whom, through whom, and in which way?

And what does this mean for globalisation-critical articulations – both at the level of the organisation of its expression and at the level of the expression of its organisation? How are global conjunctions represented? How are different protest movements mediated with one another? Are they

placed next to one another, in other words simply added together, or related to one another in some other way? What is the image of a protest movement? Is it the sum of the heads of speakers from the individual groups added together? Is it pictures of confrontations and marches? Is it new forms of depiction? Is it the reflection of forms of a protest movement? Or the invention of new relations between individual elements of political linkages? With these thoughts about articulation, I refer to a very specific field of theory, namely the theory of montage or film cuts. This is also because the thinking about art and politics together is usually treated in the field of political theory, and art often appears as its ornament. What happens, though, if we conversely relate a reflection about a form of artistic production, namely the theory of montage, to the field of politics? In other words, how is the political field edited, and which political significance could be derived from this form of articulation?

Chains of Production

I would like to discuss these issues on the basis of two film segments – and to address their implicit or explicit political thinking based on the form of their articulation. The films will be compared from a very specific perspective: both contain a sequence, in which the conditions of their own articulation are addressed. Both of these sequences present the chains of production and production procedures, through which these films were made. And on the basis of the self-reflexive discussion of their manner of producing political significance, the creation of chains and montages of aesthetic forms and political demands, I would like to explain the political implications of forms of montage.

The first segment is from the film *Showdown in Seattle*, produced in 1999 by the Independent Media Center Seattle, broadcast by Deep Dish Television. The second segment is from a film by Godard/Mieville from 1975 entitled *Ici et Ailleurs*. Both deal with transnational and international circumstances of political articulation: *Showdown in Seattle* documents the protests against the WTO [World Trade Organisation] negotiations in Seattle and the internal articulation of these protests as the heterogeneous combination of diverse interests. The theme of *Ici et Ailleurs*, on the other hand, are the meanderings of French solidarity with Palestine in the 70s in particular, and a radical critique of the poses, stagings and counterproductive linkages of emancipation in general. The two films are not really comparable as such – the first is a quickly produced utility document that functions in the register of counter-information. *Ici et Ailleurs*, on the other hand, mirrors a long and even embarrassing process of reflection. Information is not in the foreground there, but rather the analysis of its organisation and staging. The comparison of the two films is therefore not to be read as a statement on the films *per se*, but rather illuminates only one particular aspect, namely their self-reflection on their own specific forms of articulation.

Showdown in Seattle

The film *Showdown in Seattle* is an impassioned documentation of the protests revolving around the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999.[1] The days of protest and their events are edited in chronological form. At the same time, the developments on the street are grounded with background information about the work of the WTO. Numerous short statements are given by a multitude of speakers from the most diverse political groups, especially unions, but also indigenous groups and farmers' organisations. The film (which consists of five half-hour single parts) is extraordinarily stirring and kept in the style of conventional reportage. Along with this, there is a notion of filmic space-time, which could be described in Benjamin's terms as homogenous and empty, organised by chronological sequences and uniform spaces.

Toward the end of the two and a half-hour film series, there is a segment, in which the viewer is taken on a tour through the production site of the film, the studio set up in Seattle. What is seen there is impressive. The entire film was shot and edited during the period of the protests. A half-hour programme was broadcast every evening. This requires a considerable logistic effort, and the internal organisation of the Indymedia office accordingly does not look principally different from a commercial TV broadcaster. We see how pictures from countless video cameras come into the studio, how they are viewed, how useable sections are excerpted, how they are edited into another shot, and so forth. Various media are listed, in which and through which publicising is carried out, such as fax, telephone, www, satellite, etc. We see how the work of organising information, in other words pictures and sound, is conducted: there is a video desk, production plans, etc. What is presented is the portrayal of a chain of production of information, or more precisely in the definition of the producers: counter-information, which is negatively defined by its distance to the information from the corporate media criticised for their one-sidedness. What this involves, then, is a mirror-image replica of the conventional production of information and representation with all its hierarchies, a faithful reproduction of the corporate media's manner of production – only apparently for a different purpose.

This different purpose is described with many metaphors: get the word across, get the message across, getting the truth out, getting images out. What is to be disseminated is counter-information that is described as truth. The ultimate instance that is invoked here is the voice of the people, and this voice is to be heard. It is conceived as the unity of differences, different political groups, and it sounds within the resonator of a filmic space-time, the homogeneity of which is never called into question.

[1] Independent Media Center, *Showdown in Seattle: Five Days That Shook the WTO*, Deep Dish Television, USA, 1999, 150 min.

Yet we must not only ask ourselves how this voice of the people is articulated and organised, but also what this voice of the people is supposed to be at all. In *Showdown in Seattle*, this expression is used without any problematisation: as the addition of voices of individual speakers from protest groups, NGOs, unions, etc. Their demands and positions are articulated across broad segments of the film – in the form of 'talking heads'. Because the form of the shots is the same, the positions are standardised and thus made comparable. At the level of the standardised conventional language of form, the different statements are thus transformed into a chain of formal equivalencies, which adds the political demands together in the same way that pictures and sounds are strung together in the conventional chain of montage in the media chain of production. In this way, the form is completely analogous to the language of form used by the criticised corporate media, only the content is different, namely an additive compilation of voices resulting in the voice of the people when taken together. When all of these articulations are added together, what comes out as the sum is the voice of the people – regardless of the fact that the different political demands sometimes radically contradict one another, such as those from environmentalists and unions, different minorities, feminist groups, etc., and it is not at all clear how these demands can be mediated. What takes the place of this missing mediation is only a filmic and political addition – of shots, statements and positions – and an aesthetic form of concatenation, which takes over the organisational principles of its adversary unquestioningly.[2]

In the second film, on the other hand, this method of the mere addition of demands resulting together in the 'voice of the people' is severely criticised – along with the concept of the voice of the people itself.

Ici et Ailleurs

The directors, or rather the editors of the film *Ici et Ailleurs*,[3] Godard and Mieville, take a radically critical position with respect to the terms of the popular. Their film consists of a self-critique of a self-produced film fragment. The collective Dziga Vertov (Godard/Morin) shot a commissioned film on the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organisation] in 1970. The [original] heroising propaganda film blusters about the people's battle, was called *Until Victory* and was never finished. It consists of several parts with titles such as: 'the armed battle', 'political work', 'the will of the people', 'the extended war – until victory'. It shows battle training, scenes of exercise and shooting, and scenes of PLO agitation, formally in an almost senseless chain of equivalencies, in which every image, as is later proved, is forced into the anti-imperialistic fantasy. Four years later, Godard and Mieville inspect the

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2 This is not intended to imply that there is any film that could take over this work of mediation. However, a film could insist that this cannot be replaced by simple adjurations.

3 Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Mieville, *Ici et Ailleurs*, France, 1975, 52 min.

material more closely again. They note that parts of the statements of PLO adherents were never translated or were staged to begin with. They reflect on the stagings and the blatant lies of the material – but most of all on their own participation in this, in the way they organised the pictures and sound. They ask: How did the adjuring formula of the 'voice of the people' function here as populist noise to eliminate contradictions? What does it mean to edit the *Internationale* into any and every picture, rather like the way butter is smeared on bread? Which political and aesthetic notions are added together under the pretext of the 'voice of the people'? Why did this equation not work? In general, Godard/Mieville arrive at the conclusion: the additive 'and' of the montage, with which they edit one picture onto another, is not an innocent one and certainly not unproblematic.

Today the film is shockingly up to date, but not in the sense of offering a position on the Middle East conflict. On the contrary, it is the problematising of the concepts and patterns, in which conflicts and solidarity are abridged to binary oppositions of betrayal or loyalty and reduced to unproblematic additions and pseudo-causalities, that makes it so topical. For what if the model of addition is wrong? Or if the additive 'and' does not represent an addition, but rather grounds a subtraction, a division or no relation at all? Specifically, what if the 'and' in this 'here and elsewhere', in this France and Palestine does not represent an addition, but rather a subtraction?[4] What if two political movements not only do not join, but actually hinder, contradict, ignore or even mutually exclude one another? What if it should be 'or' rather than 'and', or 'because' or 'instead of?' And then what does an empty phrase like 'the will of the people' mean?

Transposed to a political level, the questions are thus: On which basis can we even draw a political comparison between different positions or establish equivalencies or even alliances? What is even made comparable at all? What is added together, edited together, and which differences and opposites are levelled for the sake of establishing a chain of equivalencies? What if this 'and' of political montage is functionalised, specifically for the sake of a populist mobilisation? And what does this question mean for the articulation of protest today, if nationalists, protectionists, anti-Semites, conspiracy theorists, Nazis, religious groups and reactionaries all line up in the chain of equivalencies with no problem at anti-globalisation demos? Is this a simple case of the principle of unproblematic addition, a blind 'and', that presumes that if sufficient numbers of different interests are added up, at some point the sum will be the people?

Godard and Mieville do not relate their critique solely to the level of political articulation, in other words the expression of internal organisation, but specifically also to the organisation of its expression. Both are very

4 And what does 'Here and Elsewhere' mean now, if synagogues are burning in France?

closely connected. An essential component of this problematic issue is found in how pictures and sounds are organised, edited and arranged. A Fordist articulation organised according to the principles of mass culture will blindly reproduce the templates of its masters, according to their thesis, so it has to be cut off and problematised. This is also the reason why Godard/Mieville are concerned with the chain of production of pictures and sound, but in comparison with Indymedia, they choose an entirely different scene – they show a crowd of people holding pictures, wandering past a camera as though on a conveyor belt and pushing each other aside at the same time. A row of people carrying pictures of the 'battle' is linked together by machine following the logic of the assembly line and camera mechanics. Here Godard/Mieville translate the temporal arrangement of the film images into a spatial arrangement. What becomes evident here are chains of pictures that do not run one after the other, but rather are shown at the same time. They place the pictures next to one another and shift their framing into the focus of attention. What is revealed is the principle of their concatenation. What appears in the montage as an often invisible addition is problematised in this way and set in relation to the logic of machine production. This reflection on the chain of production of pictures and sounds in this sequence makes it possible to think about the conditions of representation on film altogether. The montage results within an industrial system of pictures and sounds, whose concatenation is organised from the start – just as the principle of the production sequence from *Showdown in Seattle* is marked by its assumption of conventional schemata of production.

In contrast, Godard/Mieville ask: how do the pictures hang on the chain, how are they chained together, what organises their articulation, and which political significances are generated in this way? Here we see an experimental situation of concatenation, in which pictures are relationally organised. Pictures and sounds from Nazi Germany, Palestine, Latin America, Viet Nam and other places are mixed wildly together – added with a number of folk songs or songs that invoke the people from right-wing and left-wing contexts. First of all, this much is evident, this results in the impression that the pictures naturally attain their significance through their concatenation. But secondly, and this is much more important, we see that impossible concatenations occur: pictures from the concentration camp and Venceremos songs, Hitler's voice and a picture of My Lai, Hitler's voice and a picture of Golda Meir, My Lai and Lenin. It becomes clear that the basis of this voice of the people, which we hear in its diverse articulations and at the level of which the experiment takes place, is in fact not a basis for creating equivalencies, but instead brings up the radical political contradictions that it is striving to cover up. It generates sharp discrepancies within the silent coercion – as Adorno would say – of the identity relationship. It effects contraries instead of equations, and beyond the contraries even sheer dread – everything except an unproblematic addition of political desire. For what

this populist chain of equivalencies mainly displays at this point is the void that it is structured around, the empty inclusivist AND that just keeps blindly adding and adding outside the realm of all political criteria.

In summary we can say that the principle of the voice of the people assumes an entirely different role in the two films. Although it is the organising principle in Seattle, the principle that constitutes the gaze, it is never problematised itself. The voice of the people functions here like a blind spot, a lacuna, which constitutes the entire field of the visible, according to Lacan, but only becomes visible itself as a kind of cover. It organises the chain of equivalencies without allowing breaks and conceals that its political objective does not go beyond an unquestioned notion of inclusivity. The voice of the people is thus simultaneously the organising principle of both a concatenation and a suppression. Yet what does it suppress? In an extreme case we can say that the empty topos of the voice of the people only covers up a lacuna, specifically the lacuna of the question of the political measures and goals that are supposed to be legitimised by invoking the people.

So what are the prospects for the articulation of a protest movement based on the model of an 'and' – as though inclusion at any cost were its primary goal? In relation to what is the political concatenation organised? Why actually? Which goals and criteria have to be formulated – even if they might not be so popular? And does there not have to be a much more radical critique of the articulation of ideology using pictures and sounds? Does not a conventional form mean a mimetic clinging to the conditions that are to be critiqued, a populist form of blind faith in the power of the addition of arbitrary desires? Is it not therefore sometimes better to break the chains, than to network everyone with everyone else at all costs?

Addition or Exponentiation

So what turns a movement into an oppositional one? For there are many movements that call themselves protest movements, which should be called reactionary, if not outright fascist, or which at least include such elements easily. The movements this involves are those in which existing conditions are radicalised in breathless transgression, scattering fragmented identities like bone splinters along the way. The energy of the movement glides seamlessly from one element to the next – traversing the homogeneous empty time like a wave moving through the crowd. Images, sounds and positions are linked without reflection in the movement of blind inclusion. A tremendous dynamic unfolds in these figures – only to leave everything as it was.

Which movement of political montage then results in an oppositional articulation – instead of a mere addition of elements for the sake of reproducing the status quo? Or to phrase the question differently: Which montage between two images/elements could be imagined, that would result in something different between and outside these two, which would not represent a compromise, but would instead belong to a different order – roughly the way someone might tenaciously pound two dull stones together to create a spark in the darkness? Whether this spark, which one could also call the spark of the political, can be created at all is a question of this articulation.

A CONCISE LEXICON OF/FOR
THE DIGITAL COMMONS

RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

Access

The facility to log on and log in to a space or a network where people and meanings gather. To be present, to have the ability, the key, to decode a signal, to open doors, to be able to download/upload on to any system of signs and signals – be it the Internet, a book, an art work, or a dinner party. There can be no excess of access.

Bandwidth

Describes the dimensions that are necessary for messages, signals and communications to get through. The greater the bandwidth of a system, the higher the number of messages, and higher the quantity of information that it can accommodate at any given time. It follows from this that access is a function of bandwidth. More people can make themselves heard when there is room for them to speak and be spoken to. Bandwidth translates into content-rich information, streams of video, audio, and text flowing into each other. It also translates at the moment into cash. The hard cash and control that comes from selling pictures and sounds and numbers to more and more people.

Code

That which carries embedded within it a sign. A code is always a way of saying something to mean something other than that which is merely said. A code can be 'opened', in the sense that it can be accessed and entered, as opposed to 'broken'. An open-access culture of communication 'reveals the source' of its codes. A closed culture of communication blocks access to its codes. 'Free code' is code which welcomes entry, and is open to change. 'Free Code' needs to be shared for it to grow. Code connotes community, a community of 'encoders, decoders and code sharers'. Like eggs, code is sometimes best had scrambled.

Data

Information. Can mean anything from numbers to images, from white noise to noise to sound. A weather report, a portrait, a shadow in surveillance footage, a salary statement, birth and death statistics, a headcount in a gathering of friends, private e-mail, ultra high frequency signals, sale and purchase transactions and the patterns made by pedestrians as they walk in a city – all of this can be and is data. Data, like coal, uranium and other minerals vital to the running of the world economy is mined, processed, refined and sold at a high price. Battlefields, early twenty-first century inter-personal relationships and stock exchanges have been known to be hypersensitive to data traffic. Data mining is a major emerging industry in Delhi. The miners lead very quiet days, and spend long nights coding in low temperature zones called 'Data Outsourcing Centres'.

Contrarily, the word 'Data' (*dãtã*) in Hindi/Sanskrit is taken to mean 'giver', which suggests that one must always be generous with information, and make gifts of our code, images and ideas. To be stingy with data is to violate an instance of the secret and sacred compacts of homophonic words from different cultural/spatial orbits ('*dãtã*' in Hindi and 'data' in English) as they meet in the liminal zone between languages, in the thicket of the sound of quotidian slips of the tongue. Errors in transmission and understanding too carry gifts and data.

Ensemble

The conceit or delight in togetherness in an increasingly anomic, fragmented world. Playing or working together to create finished or unfinished works. Chamber musicians, criminals, code-hackers and documentarists form ensembles. Artists try to. Effective ensembles are high bandwidth assemblies that build into their own architecture portals for random access into themselves. They are, when they are at their best, open systems that place a premium on shared information within them. They can at times maintain high levels of secrecy while seemingly appearing to be transparent. Here, confidentiality is an index of practices in gestation. Mined data is, sometimes, restored to natural states of information entropy in data dissembling ensembles, which have been found to work best at night in media labs. The Raqs Media Collective is an ensemble and everything it does is an ensemble of existing or anticipated practices.

Fractal

The self-organising design of repeating, replicating structures, often found in snowflakes, tree branch growth patterns, molecular structures and free code. Every part of a fractal pattern carries within it the signature or the emboss of the whole. A single fractal iteration carries within it the kernels of all others of its kind. Every fractal is a rescension of every other fractal that has grown from within it. In the same way a fragment of free code, or free

cultural code, carries within it a myriad possibilities of its own reproduction and dispersal within a shared symbolic or information space. Fractals best describe the geometry of the matrices that are formed when data is shared instead of being just mined and shipped by a community of coders. Fractals are the fruit trees of the unconscious designing mind.

Gift

Something freely given, and taken, as in free code. Gift givers and gift takers are bound in networks of random or pre-meditated acts of symbolic exchange. The code begets the gift as the form of its own survival over time. In this way a gift is a quiet meme. Reciprocity begets reciprocity. The principle of the gift demands that the things being given be price-less, in other words so valuable as to be impossible to quantify in terms of the possibilities of abstract generalised exchange. The gift must at the same time, be easy to bear and keep, easy to use and there must be no guilt involved in its destruction or dispersal when its use value either changes or demands re-distribution in order to be effective. Gifts open doors to our own possibilities of generosity. In this way they facilitate access to the things we did not even know we had. And, there is such a thing as a free lunch, although it requires the pursuit of a special recipe.

Heterogeneous

That which begins in many places, like the story of a person's life. Diverse, dispersed, distributed, as in the authorship of culture, and in the trajectories of people who come to a site. Interpretations and ideas embrace greater freedom only when they encompass heterogeneity. In this, they are like most intimacies and some kinds of fruitcake. The richer they are, the more layers they have.

Iteration

An articulation, when seen as an event, is an iteration. Utterances, whispers, manifestos, graffiti, stories, rumours and fragments of poetry found in the streets – each of these are iterations. The organised rendition of a stretch of code is also an iteration. Iteration implies a willingness to say something, and access to the means of saying it, and a time in which it can be said. Every iteration resonates through orbiting memes that are set off on their vectors by the fact of an utterance. An iteration is the kernel of a rescension. It needs to be said, and then said again.

Journal

A record of the everyday. Annals of matters varied and quotidian. Data from day to day to day. On reams or scraps of any material that can carry the emboss of time. The material may vary from newsprint to video to sound to binary code, or a combination of the same, and the journal may transmogrify

from being a witness, to a participant in that which is being recorded. The extent and scale of 'participation' depends on the frequency of entries into the journal, and the number of correspondents it can muster. The higher the frequency of entries or number of correspondents, the greater is the intensity of the inscription of a time on a journal. A densely, thickly inscribed journal is one that is usually open access in terms of writing, reading and publishing. Why else would strangers want to write in? An open journal expects to be published anywhere at all. An open journal actively practices xenophilly. When a journal becomes more than a gazetteer of a moment it turns into a history. It then begins to make sense of itself as much as it does about a time that it spans. Conversely, every history begins life as a journal.

Kernel

The core of a work or an idea. The central rescension, of a narrative, a code, a set of signs or any other structure that invites modification, extrapolation and interpretation, by its very presence. Here, the term core must not be confused with 'origin' or with any other attributions of originality, which mean little within an open access system. It is almost impossible to determine the origins of a code, because the deeper we go into the constitutive elements of a code, the more it branches out to a series of nodes within and outside a given system of signs. It is more meaningful to talk of the 'custody', rather than the 'origin' of any system of signs. A kernel is often the custodian of a line of ideas that represents within itself a momentarily unique configuration. Kernels embody materials in states of intense concentration. This is because they have to encapsulate a lot of information, or nourishment, or structure building materials, within very limited dimensions. The density of information within a kernel is a key to its own extensibility. The more the thread that is rolled into a tight ball, the more it can be unwound. Kernels, by their limitedness and compactness, are portable, not cumbersome. As in the kernels of certain fruits, they may be hard to crack, but once they have been opened, they yield delicious and nourishing stuff. Kernels lend themselves to easy reproduction, but are fragile and often in need of protection. This protection may also come in the form of an outer layer of interpretation, which states the purposes and nature of the kernel, so that it is not prised open to answer every basic query about itself.

Liminal

Interstitial, vestibular and peripheral. Far from the centre, close to the border. A zone both between and without larger structures. Liminal spaces and moments are those into which large stable structures leak animated data about themselves and the world. Things happen in liminal zones. A city carries within it the contradiction of liminal zones located in its centre, because inner cities are the city's farthest borderlands. Liminal fringes are

often the most conducive environments for the culture of memes. This is because exiled images, ideas and meanings from several stable structures mingle in the corridors between them. Here, bereft of identities and other certainties, they are free to be promiscuous and reproduce. They infect each other with recombinant strands of thought and image. At the same time, the perspective of liminality brings intimacy to bear on an exclusion. Being liminal is to be close to, and yet stand outside the site of the border of any stable system of signs, where meaning is frayed from being nibbled at on the edges. Nothing can know the centre better than the sideways glance of peripheral vision. Liminality may be acquired from prolonged exposure to the still air of airport departure lounges, thick and over-boiled tea at the Inter State Bus Terminus on the ring road in Delhi, or the sub-liminal flicker of a cursor in an e-mail message.

Meme

The life form of ideas. A bad idea is a dead meme. The transience as well as the spread of ideas can be attributed to the fact that they replicate, reproduce and proliferate at high speed. Ideas, in their infectious state, are memes. Memes may be likened to those images, thoughts and ways of doing or understanding things that attach themselves, like viruses, to events, memories and experiences, often without their host or vehicle being fully aware of the fact that they are providing a location and transport to a meme. The ideas that can survive and be fertile on the harshest terrain tend to do so, because they are ready to allow for replicas of themselves, or permit frequent and far-reaching borrowing of their elements in combination with material taken from other memes. If sufficient new memes enter a system of signs, they can radically alter what is being signified. Cities are both breeding grounds and terminal wards for memes. To be a meme is a condition that every work with images and sounds could aspire towards, if it wanted to be infectious, and travel. Dispersal and infection are the key to the survival of any idea. A work with images, sounds and texts, needs to be portable and vulnerable, not static and immune, in order to be alive. It must be easy to take apart and assemble, it must be easy to translate, but difficult to paraphrase, and easy to gift. A dead meme is a bad idea.

Nodes

Any structure that is composed of concentrated masses of materials which act as junction points for the branching out of extensible parts of the overall system may be described as nodal. The concentrations or junctions being the nodes. A nodal structure is a rhizomic structure, it sets down roots (that branch out laterally) as it travels. Here, nodes may also be likened to the intersection points of fractal systems, the precise locations where new fractal iterations arises out of an existing pattern. A work that is internally composed of memes is inherently nodal. Each meme is a junction point or

a node for the lateral branching out of the vector of an idea. In a work that is made up of interconnected nodes, the final structure that emerges is that of a web, in which every vector eventually passes through each node, at least once on its orbit through the structure of the work. In such a structure it becomes impossible to suppress or kill an idea, once it is set in motion, because its vectors will make it travel quickly through the nodes to other locations within the system, setting off chains of echoes and resonances at each node that trace a path back to the kernel of the idea.

These echoes and resonances are rescensions, and each node is ultimately a direct rescension of at least one other node in the system and an indirect rescension of each junction within a whole cluster of other nodes. Nodes, when written, perhaps erroneously, as 'no-des' give rise to an intriguing hybrid English/Eastern-Hindi neologism, a companion to the old words - 'des', and 'par-des'. 'Des' (in some eastern dialects of Hindi, spoken by many migrants to Delhi) is simply homeland or native place; 'par-des' suggests exile, and an alien land. 'No-des' is that site or way of being, in 'des' or in 'par-des', where territory and anxieties about belonging, don't go hand in hand. Nodes in a digital domain are No-des.

Orbit

A path that describes the continuous movement of anything within a structure. Because the movement within it is continuous, it (an Orbit) is also impossible to define in terms of origin or destination. What is possible to determine at any given moment is the vector of an orbit. A meme, when orbiting within a structure of signs, is neither travelling away from its origin, nor is it travelling towards a destination. This is why, in an open access system, which is composed of memes, it is meaningless to talk in terms of authors and audiences, rather one can only speak of the node where one got on to an idea, and the junction where one got off, perhaps to enter the vector of another orbiting meme. Sometimes a work of interpretation, like certain comets and other stellar objects, can have an eccentric orbit. This means that there is always a likelihood of a cluster of signs and images from afar, brushing past objects on its path, entering the orbits of other constellations, when it is least expected to. The sky of meaning is full of shooting stars.

Portability

The feature of a system or work that best describes its ability to move quickly through different spaces and mediums. A sign or a meme that can travel well between image, sound and text media is portable. A work, which while it speaks of one site, is understood in another location, is portable. A work that describes many locations in the course of its interpretative orbit is also portable. A portable work is rich in memes, which act as engines for its movements, and is endowed with compact kernels that can travel well without danger of being cracked open. Briefcases, languages, post cards,

Swiss knives, computers, jests, stories and shoes are portable. Gifts, because they change hands, must always be portable. Monuments can never be. The life histories of some (itinerant) individuals and (nomadic) communities make them approximate the condition of portability.

Quotidian

Common but not commonplace. The memorable nature of the everyday. Memory walking down a street and turning a corner. Memory buzzing in a hard disk. Ubiquitous, the dirt in a site, the fog in a liminal zone, that which is thickened through repetition.

Milk, computers, onions, computers, pyjamas, computers, carpal tunnel syndrome, computers, accidents, computers, sex, computers, bread, computers, night, computers, class, computers, skin, computers, love, computers, money, computers, headaches, computers, police, computers, buses, computers, bicycle, computers, radio, computers, horoscopes, computers, matrimonials, computers, funerals, computers, biscuits, computers, conversations, computers, silences, computers.

The quotidian is that which makes a journal turn, over time, into a history, because it induces the search for patterns and meanings in an otherwise tangled mass of time, in memes iterated beyond reasonable limits. Routine, yet random, the quotidian nature of anything demands fleeting moments of lucid engagement with the real world, which now includes within it the world that is forged every time any fingers do a qwerty dance on a keyboard. The quotidian is a measure of all things, rare and commonplace.

Rescension

A re-telling, a word taken to signify the simultaneous existence of different versions of a narrative within oral, and from now onwards, digital cultures. Thus one can speak of a 'southern' or a 'northern' rescension of a myth, or of a 'female' or 'male' rescension of a story, or the possibility (to begin with) of Delhi/Berlin/Tehran 'rescensions' of a digital work. The concept of rescension is contraindicative of the notion of hierarchy. A rescension cannot be an improvement, nor can it connote a diminishing of value. A rescension is that version which does not act as a replacement for any other configuration of its constitutive materials. The existence of multiple rescensions is a guarantor of an idea or a work's ubiquity. This ensures that the constellation of narrative, signs and images that a work embodies is present, and waiting for iteration at more than one site at any given time. Rescensions are portable and are carried within orbiting kernels within a space. Rescensions, taken together constitute ensembles that may form an interconnected web of ideas, images and signs.

Site

Location, both as in the fact of being somewhere, and also, as in the answer
to the question of 'where', that 'somewhere' is. Hence, situation. In a system
of signs, site – understood in the sense of the kernel of a situation – is not
necessarily a place, although a place is always a site. A site can be a situation
between and through places. A website is an address on the Internet that
always implies a relation of desire between hosts and visitors. In other
words, it doesn't really mean anything for a place to exist (virtually) if it is
left un-visited. In this way, a site can be both located as well as liminal. Real
as well as potential. A system of signs (a work) that carries the markings
of a location on a map may be situated in the relation that a map has to the
world. It may be situated between the map and the world. This situation may
be a special characteristic of the work's portability, in that, although mobile
the work always refers to the relation between sites that fall on its orbit.
In this way, marking a site as an address calls for the drawing up of relations
between a location and the world.

A site is a place where the address is. A site is a place where the work
belongs. A situation between these two locations (where the work is and
where it belongs) is a site where the work orbits. A site is also a place where
people need to wear hard hats to protect them from random falling bodies,
travelling in eccentric orbits.

Tools

Things that help make things. Ideas, instruments, concepts, ways of doing
things, and ways of being or acting together that are conducive to creative
work. In the context of an online environment, a community or an ensemble
of people is as much an instrument as a software application. Conversely,
a tool emerges when a group of people discover a method that helps them
act together to create something. Again, a work that acts as a navigation aid,
a browser or interface in a web of memes, is also a tool with which to open
and search for other tools.

Ubiquity

Everywhere-ness. The capacity to be in more than one site. The simple fact
of heterogeneous situation, a feature of the way in which clusters of memes,
packets of data, orbit and remain extant in several nodal points within a
system. The propensity of a meme towards ubiquity increases with every
iteration, for once spoken, it always already exists again and elsewhere. It
begins to exist and be active (even if dormantly) in the person spoken to as
well as in the speaker. Stories, and the kernels of ideas travel in this way.
A rescension, when in orbit, crosses the paths of its variants. The zone where
two orbits intersect is usually the site of an active transaction and transfer
of meanings. Each rescension, carries into its own trajectory memes from its
companion. In this way, through the encounters between rescensions, ideas

spread, travel and tend towards ubiquity. That which is everywhere is difficult to censor, that which is everywhere has no lack of allies. To be ubiquitous is to be present and dispersed in 'no-des'. Sometimes, ubiquity is the only effective answer to censorship and isolation.

Vector
The direction in which an object moves, factored by the velocity of its movement. An idea spins and speeds at the same time. The intensity of its movement is an attribute of the propensity it has to connect and touch other ideas. This gives rise to its vector functions. The vector of a meme is always towards other memes, in other words, the tendency of vectors of data is to be as ubiquitous as possible. This means that an image, code or an idea must attract others to enter into relationships that ensure its portability and rapid transfer through different sites and zones. The vectors of different memes, when taken together, form a spinning web of code.

Web
An open fabric woven of strands and knotted at usually regular, but equally possibly irregular, intervals. Intricately structured, accessible and yet endowed with complex networks of coded messages. The world wide web is a zone in which a digital constellation of memes can find an orbit. A web of code is used to harvest meanings, just as a web of threads is used to harvest fish.

Xenophilly
Friendliness and hospitality towards others, a human quality that best describes the moral economy of an ideal digital domain. The search for connectedness, and the desire to travel along the vectors from elsewhere. The meaning of the hyphen that transforms 'no-des' into a positive value.

Yarn
Fabrics, and stories, are made from yarn. A yarn is a snatch of reality that travels by word of mouth. Or it is shipped along with lots of html cargo. It is said that each fragment of code contains rumours and gossip, or yarns about the makers of the code. Yarns collect in basement cyber cafés, in stairwells of cinemas, in call centres and behind the opaque surface of the walls of an apartment whose address is Error 404, which can be anywhere and everywhere at once. In these places, yarn collectors stitch different stretches of code-fabric to make long bolts of data, which are then taken apart by hackers, and distributed into many orbits. Yarns can adjust the amount of information they bear in relation to the width of bandwidth. That is why yarns are good kernels.

Zone

A site, within a location, or a work, that demands an attenuated awareness because of the porosity of the lines that demarcate its existence. A zone is differentiated from a grid that frames a site because its borders are fluid and accessible, or because they witness a lot of traffic. It is difficult to distinguish the centre from the liminal periphery of a zone. Alertness about where one stands is a prerequisite for entering any zone. A zone may also be described as the overlap between orbits in a work, where memes transfer material from one orbit to another, where logic likes to fuzz. The zone of a work extends to the outer circumference of the orbit of its ideas.

Zones are places where serendipity might be commonplace, and the commonplace serendipitous. They are best entered and exited at twilight on shunting cars along abandoned railroads that connect different data stations. The timing of twilight may vary, depending on one's longitude, but twilight lingers longer in the zone of the web.

THE REVENGE OF THE CONCEPT: ARTISTIC EXCHANGES, NETWORKED RESISTANCE

BRIAN HOLMES

1—Among the events of recent history, few have been as surprising, as full of enigmas, as the coordinated world demonstrations known as the Global Days of Action. Immediately upon their appearance, they overflowed the organisation that had called them into being: the People's Global Action (PGA), founded in Geneva in February of 1998.[1] This transnational network of resistance had adopted a new concept of solidarity advanced by the Zapatistas, who encouraged everyone to take direct action in their home countries, against the worldwide system of exploitation and oppression which they described as neoliberalism. As early as the month of May, 1998, the PGA helped spark demonstrations against the WTO whose effectiveness lay both in their simultaneity and in their extreme diversity: street parties in some 30 cities around the world, on 16 May; four days of protest and rioting in Geneva, beginning that same day; a 50,000-strong march that reached Brasilia on 20 May; protests all over India after a huge demonstration in Hyderabad against the WTO on 2 May. The following year, London Reclaim the Streets launched the idea of a 'carnival against capital' in financial centres across the world for the day of the G8 summit, 18 June: there were actions in over 40 cities, including a ten-thousand-strong 'carnival of the oppressed' by Niger Delta peoples against transnational oil companies. In the face of transnational capitalism, a networked resistance was born, local and global, tactical and strategic: a new kind of political dissidence, self-organised and anarchist, diffusely interconnected and operating only from below, yet able to strike at the greatest concentrations of power. What is the strength of such movements? The unlikely appeal to a 'do-it-yourself geopolitics': a chance for personal involvement in the transformation of the world.

These kinds of actions are about as far as one could imagine from a museum; yet when you approach them, you can feel something distinctly artistic. They bring together the multiplicity of individual expression and

[1] There is as yet no 'history' of these ongoing movements, but information and stories can be found at www.apg.org

the unity of a collective will. That is their enigma, which sets up a circulation between singularity and solidarity, cooperation and freedom. But this enigma stretches further, into the paradoxes of a networked resistance. Because since their surprising beginnings, we have seen the movements change, we have seen them globalise. Activists from the South and the North travel across the earth in jet planes, to demonstrate next to people without money, without work, without land or papers – but who may know the same writers, the same philosophers, the same critiques of contemporary capitalism. The intensive use of the Internet by the movement of movements means that dissenting messages take the pathways used by financial speculation. Sometime you wonder whether the two can even be distinguished. What are the sources of this networked resistance? And what exactly is being resisted? Is revolution really the only option – as one could read on a banner at the carnival against capital, on 18 June 1999, in the financial centre of London? Or do we not become what we resist? Are the 'multitudes' the very origin and driving force of capitalist globalisation, as some theorists believe?[2]

Two British critics, Anthony Davies and Simon Ford, posed exactly those questions, with direct reference to art. They pointed to the way that artistic practice was tending to integrate with London's financial economy, particularly through the vector of specially designed 'culture clubs' where artists sought new forms of sponsorship and distribution, while businessmen looked for clues on how to restructure their hierarchical organisations into cooperative teams of creative, autonomous individuals: 'We are witnessing the birth of an alliance culture that collapses the distinctions between companies, nation states, governments, private individuals – even the protest movement', the two critics claimed.[3] They drew a link between contemporary artistic experiments – those dealing with the use and appropriation of complex signs and tools, or with the catalysis of interactions between free individuals – and the politicised street parties of the late 1990s. But their analysis opposed these new movements, not to transnational capitalism, but to the outdated world of pyramid-shaped hierarchical organisations. Thus their image of the 18 June carnival: 'On the one hand you have a networked coalition of semi-autonomous groups and on the other, the hierarchical command and control structure of the City of London police force. Informal networks are also replacing older political groups based on formal rules and fixed organisational structures and chains of command. The emergence of a decentralised transnational network-based protest movement represents a significant threat to those sectors that are slow in shifting from local and centralised hierarchical bureaucracies to flat, networked organisations.'

[2] This is the thesis of Negri and Hardt's *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000; also see Yoshihiko Ichida, 'Questions d'Empire', *Multitudes* 7, December 2001, http://multitudes.samizdat.net/article.php3?id_article=54

[3] Anthony Davies and Simon Ford, 'Art Networks', www.societyofcontrol.com/research/davis_ford.htm

Further quotes are from this article and 'Culture Clubs', www.infopool.org.uk/cclubs.htm

Conceived at the outset of the year 2000, this alliance theory was mainly concerned with distinguishing a 'new economy' from the old one. It combined a network paradigm of organisation, as promoted by Manuel Castells,[4] with a description of the culturalisation of the economy, as in British cultural studies. But what it demonstrated was more like an 'economisation of culture'. Everything seemed to be swirling together: 'In a networked culture, the topographical metaphor of 'inside' and 'outside' has become increasingly untenable. As all sectors loosen their physical structures, flatten out, form alliances and dispense with tangible centres, the oppositionality that has characterised previous forms of protest and resistance is finished as a useful model.'

These kinds of remarks, which came from many quarters, were already confusing for the movements. But they took on an even more troubling light when the Al Qaeda network literally exploded into world consciousness. On the one hand, the unprecedented effectiveness of the S11 action seemed to prove the superiority of the networked paradigm over the command hierarchies associated with the Pentagon and the Twin Towers. But at the same time, if any position could be called 'oppositional', it was now that of the Islamic fundamentalists. Their successful attack appeared to validate both the theory of a decisive transformation in organisational structures, and Samuel Huntington's theory of the 'clash of civilizations'. Suddenly the protest movement could identify neither with the revolutionary form of the network, nor with the oppositional refusal of the capitalist system. Loud voices from the right immediately seized the opportunity to assimilate the movement to terrorism. And to make matters worse, the financial collapse that the movement had predicted effectively happened, from the summer of 2000 onwards, casting suspicion over everything associated with the dot-com bubble – including all the progress in democratic communication. At the same time, the secret services of the most powerful countries, and especially the US, declared themselves ready to meet the challenge of the networks, by giving themselves new capacities for autonomy, horizontality, interlinkage.[5] The difficulty of situating a networked resistance to capitalism within a broader spectrum of social forces thus became enormous – as it still is today.

Now, this difficulty has not stopped the mobilisations, particularly in Europe. What has come to a halt, or rather splintered into a state of extreme dispersal, are the theoretical attempts to explain them in a way that can contribute something both to their goals and to their capacities of self-organisation. What I want to do here is to make a fresh try at this kind of

4 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

5 The 'Terrorism Information Awareness System', formerly described at www.darpa.mil/iao/TIASystems.htm, has since been defunded by the US Congress. For comprehensive information on the pursuit of mass surveillance techniques, see the report of the International Campaign Against Mass Surveillance, at www.i-cams.org

explanation, from an anthropological viewpoint that can distinguish between the fictions of a 'self-regulated market' and the reciprocities and solidarities that make it possible to live together as human beings. So we'll begin with a social and economic study of the vital need for resistance to the crises of capitalism. We will then see this resistance develop within the contemporary technical environment, without accepting any form of technological determinism. And finally, returning to the question of alliance or opposition, we will try to grasp some of the contributions that artistic practice makes to this networked resistance, by rediscovering languages that seemed to have been consigned to the museum. I am thinking primarily of Conceptual art: a practice that doesn't produce works, but only virtualities, which can then be actualised, at each time and in each place, as unique performances.

II—Following the Zapatistas, people in the movement of movements tend to call the current economic structure 'neoliberal'. But this word evokes a political philosophy stretching back to the eighteenth century. One can speak instead of *flexible accumulation*, which describes the computer-linked, finance-driven, just-in-time model of the globalised economy.[6] By subordinating the other spheres of social life – education, science, culture, etc. – this organisation of production and consumption produces a veritable hegemony, a mode of regulation for society as a whole. To grasp the way this hegemony is experienced by individuals, I have proposed the notion of the *flexible personality*.[7] It is an ambiguous notion, because it designates both the managerial culture that legitimates the globalised economy, and renders it tolerable or even attractive for those who are its privileged subjects, as well as the 'flexible' nature of a workforce that is subject to increasingly individualised forms of exploitation. In other words, the flexible personality designates the lived experience of a *relation of domination*. It has become essential to define the limits of that relation.

One can begin to do so by pointing to the different kinds of social struggles that have intensified over the last ten years. Ecological struggles, against resource waste, polluting industry, invasive infrastructures. Workers' struggles, against falling wages, worsening labour conditions, insufficient health coverage or unemployment benefits. Struggles against the privatisation of medical and scientific knowledge, against the control of the university and of cultural production by business. And finally, struggles against the preponderance of the financial sphere in the taking of democratic decisions. This list of different fields of struggle refers us,

6 See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, pp.141–48.

7 See Brian Holmes, 'The Flexible Personality', *Hieroglyphs of the Future*,

Zagreb: Arkzin, 2003, online at www.u-tangente.org

in a more abstract way, to four 'fictitious commodities': land, labour, knowledge and money itself. That is, four major articulations of social life which capitalism claims to treat as things to be sold, confiding their destiny to the operations of a self-regulating market.[8] The problem being that the basic conditions under which these 'things' are produced do not all have a price tag, and so escape any monetary regulation. These four major articulations of society exist at least partially outside the market: they are 'externalities'.[9] And the maintenance of their fictive status as commodities implies a perpetually deferred cost, which in the long run can only manifest itself in a phenomenon outside any imaginable accounting. This is the phenomenon of systemic crisis. Its looming shadow has motivated the increasing levels of social struggle.

It was an anthropologist, Karl Polanyi, who provided the most striking description of a systemic crisis, in a book called *The Great Transformation*, published in 1944. The story begins with the enclosure of community pasture lands in England, known as *commons*, which were transformed with fences into private property. This privatisation of resources led to the appearance of rural poverty in the course of the eighteenth century. The threat of famine then made possible an unprecedented exploitation of labour power, which former peasants were compelled to sell for a bare minimum in the new factories of the Industrial Revolution. In this way, the owning class accumulated great fortunes, which split away from the nationally instituted money to develop the international currency of gold bullion. Polanyi pays special attention to the directive role that independent bankers played in the creation of the gold standard, which served as a universal, but legally private equivalent between all the different national currencies. He shows that a cycle of three privatisations – land, labour, and money – leads finally to the worldwide market of the nineteenth century.

For a hundred years, gold served as a coherent and relatively stable language of exchange for commercial transactions; and the profits were a powerful argument in favour of peace, or at least, against generalised warfare. It was the gradual abandonment of the international gold standard under the pressure of repeated financial breakdowns that led, in the 1930s, to the reconstitution of strictly national economies, closed in on themselves and subject to various forms of central planning (ranging from the relatively benign New Deal, to Nazism and Stalinism). But Polanyi, writing in 1944,

8 See Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*, Cambridge: Polity, 2002, pp.12–14. In specific relation to money (which is sold massively as a commodity on international currency markets, Jessop notes: 'Money's ability to perform its economic functions depends critically on extra-economic institutions, sanctions and personal and impersonal trust. Insofar as money circulates as national money, the state has a key role in securing a formally rational monetary system; conversely, its increasing circulation as stateless money poses serious problems regarding the re-regulation of monetary relations.' (p.14).

9 For example, a government 'Superfund' programme was deemed necessary in the US in 1980, to clean up toxic waste on land that companies had used as free dumping grounds. Since 1995 corporate taxation for this fund has been stopped, and since 2002 the Bush administration, hostile to the expense, is curtailing Federal funding. As though the ecological balance were at once priceless and impossible to pay for.

did not suggest anything as simplistic as restoring the gold standard. His strongest argument was that the violence of free-market exchanges, when 'disembedded' from their place within the larger social structure of reciprocities and solidarities, was finally what destroyed the *laissez-faire* system itself, provoking the fascist reaction. The fundamental problem therefore lay with the very notion of the self-regulating market. The last chapter of *The Great Transformation* predicts the opening of a new era in the history of humanity. It calls for the institution of a mixed economy, broadly regulated within a national framework and yet also highly respectful of individual rights, able to guarantee what the author describes as 'freedom in a complex society' – that is, in a society which has recognised the limits of the free market.

The model of the Keynesian welfare state that was installed in the industrially developed countries during the post-war period could appear as an answer to Polanyi's vision. It submitted industrial and financial activity to a social regulation, conceived within each national framework in a more or less democratic fashion. But the dynamics of capitalism – which are historically inseparable from those of imperialism – rapidly overflowed this national frame, as one can see in the evolution of the world monetary system. After the war, the Bretton Woods treaty tied signatory countries into a system of relatively stable exchange rates, whereby all the currencies were pegged to the dollar, which in turn was convertible into gold. But this system proved untenable, and after the United States suspended convertibility in 1971, the currencies began to 'float' against each other; since the outset of the 80s they have been subject to the fluctuations of a highly speculative exchange market, operating at the speed of computers and telecommunications. At the same time, controls on crossborder investments have gradually been lifted, and many state services and industries, considered as unfair competition with the private sector, have been suppressed. In a world which no longer erects any significant barriers to the directive capacity of money, capital flow into the stock markets now commands the majority of productive investments everywhere; and every material reality comes to be dependent on highly volatile financial information. In this way there arises what Rem Koolhaas has called 'the world of ¥€$': a world-economy built around the incessantly changing equivalence of the yen, the euro, and the dollar, representing the three major poles of world prosperity. One can see the convertibility of these three currencies as a new kind of economic language, serving primarily to convey the opportunistic speech of private investors, indeed, of a transnational capitalist class. ¥€$ is the monetary language of the flexible personality.

The last twenty years have seen the incredible inventiveness of this worldwide language, which has generated a myriad of private dialects: stocks, futures, options, swaptions, floaters, hedges and so on through the endless list of derivatives. Despite their appearance of total autonomy, of absolute disconnection from the solid earth, these forms of privately

managed credit money have directed the productive apparatus of the world's countries, ever more radically since 1989. In parallel to these developments in the private sphere, a new type of post-national state has slowly come into being, abandoning the former emphasis on social security and public welfare, and seeking instead to encourage the insertion of its most innovative citizens into the worldwide information economy.[10] And the language of ¥€$ has also taken on cultural, intellectual, organisational and imaginary forms, giving rise to artistic productions, managerial techniques, modes of behaviours, desires and dreams that have served to legitimate the regime of flexible accumulation, while continually feeding it with new innovations. But this very inventiveness, this speculative confidence, has also gnawed away at the ecological, social, political and financial foundations of the system. We went through the Asian crisis of 1997, which spread to Russia and Brazil, threatening even the American economy; then came the 'krach' of the NASDAQ in spring 2000, sparking a two-year plunge of the world's stock markets (which remain extremely volatile at the date of writing, January 2003). The possibility of a systemic crisis, which could be seen on the horizon throughout the 1990s, has rushed suddenly closer at the outset of the new millennium.

What are the effects of the crisis as it stands today? One can draw a few insights from recent developments in Argentina. In the late 1990s the Argentine state, under pressure from the IMF, desperately attempted to maintain the value of the peso with respect to the dollar and, more broadly, with respect to the standard of prosperity represented by the currencies of ¥€$. A series of structural adjustments were supposed to improve the economy's health, and insure the parity of the peso and the dollar; but their effect was to exclude increasing numbers of Argentines from access to employment, basic services, food, and finally even to their money, when bank withdrawals were frozen in late November 2001. Thus the state's maintenance of the peso's exchange value, ensuring the integration of the country's elite to the world economy, no longer permitted any use value on the local level. Resistance now became a question of sheer survival, and some Argentines spoke of a crisis in the very process of civilization: 'The new state project implies, in the short term, an abrupt cut-off … of the systems of social reproduction: the state gradually detaches itself from the populations and the territories; and finally, from social cohesion itself.'[11] But this detachment only gives the state the power of an empty affirmation, an entirely formal language of exchange, which is valid in theory but not in fact. And the void calls out either for a democratic invention, or for an authoritarian solution.

[10] See Jessop's treatment of the 'Schumpeterian postnational workfare state', in *The Future of the Capitalist State*, *op. cit.*

[11] Colectivo Situaciones, 19 y 20 *Apuntes sobre el nuevo protagonismo social*, Buenos Aires: De Mano en Mano, 2002.

This situation of suspended crisis appears likely to spread, leaving open, at least for a time, the possibility of very different responses. The illusions of the 1990s, however, are definitely over. The collapse of the stock markets, and the economic slowdown that has followed, brings a threat of deflation, unemployment and exclusion to bear on most of the world's populations. Under current political conditions, the only possible response seems to be a strengthening of the barriers that separate the privileged classes from all the others – and this, even within the richest countries. The new military posture of the United States, while directly motivated by the 11 September attacks, also represents an attempt to restructure society, and to institute a new form of discipline in the face of the void that has been left by the collapse of the speculative bubble. It is in this way that the ideological version of economic flexibility meets its own limits. This shift toward heightened military and police control takes away much of the legitimacy that flexible modes of management were able to confer on capitalist society. Still the opportunistic model of the flexible personality will probably continue to orient the behaviour of privileged individuals for years yet to come, even as it subjects them to strong contradictions. Under such conditions, the various forms of resistance to capitalism will clearly intensify, not least because they find a vital energy in the feeling of absolute necessity brought on by the crisis. Now I want to deal specifically with one such form of resistance: the resistance to the privatisation of knowledge, the fourth 'fictitious commodity' whose importance Polanyi had not yet measured. It is through the cooperative production of immaterial knowledge that we will rejoin the enigma of the networked protests.

Just one more thing. I do not want to accord any privilege, in what follows, to that supposedly more 'advanced' fraction of the world population which is so deeply involved with electronic networks. I think the opposition between the 'Net' and 'Self' – between a modernising process that enforces our abstraction from historical and cultural traditions, or failing that, determines a desperate and regressive retreat to the fixations of local identity – is simply false.[12] More interesting is the divide between the possessive individualism of the flexible personality, and a concern for human coexistence. As we saw above, the movement of movements found one of its beginnings in a concept of solidarity arising from the Zapatista struggles, which have fundamentally to do with questions of land. But the meaning of these survival struggles of the Mayan peoples could only reach the subjects of the developed world through the Internet, where the commodification of cultural and scientific knowledge is at stake. Here the essential struggle is to overtake and dissolve the language of ¥€$, not through a return to the

[12] The opposition structures Manuel Castells's three-volume work on the 'information age'; it is discussed in the prologue to the first volume, *The Rise of the Network Society*, *op. cit.*, pp.1–28, and returns throughout the second volume, *The Power of Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

closed, bureaucratic frameworks of the Keynesian state, but instead through the *political* development of new principles of exchange and reciprocity. Thus this fourth field of resistance, which touches closely on human language but also on technical development, seems destined to furnish elements of articulation for other struggles, in a shared search for alternatives to the systemic crisis.

III—It is well known that the Linux operating-system kernel, and free software generally, is made cooperatively without any money changing hands. This is something that quickly caught the attention of artists and culture critics, as in the discussions over what Richard Barbrook called the 'high-tech gift economy.'[13] The expression recalls another anthropologist, not Polanyi but Marcel Mauss, the author of the famous essay on 'The Gift'. His essential contribution was to underscore, at the very heart of modern economic exchange, the presence of motives irreducible to the calculation of the value of material objects, and also of the individual interest one might have in possessing them. As Barbrook points out, the heritage of Mauss was very much alive in alternative circles, his ideas having inspired the Situationists, who passed them on to the do-it-yourself media ethic of the Punk movement. But mostly what fuelled the discussion of the Internet gift economy was not theory, but the simple practice of adding information to the net. As Rishab Aiyer Ghosh explained,

> the economy of the Net begins to look like a vast tribal cooking-pot, surging with production to match consumption, simply because everyone understands – instinctively, perhaps – that trade need not occur in single transactions of barter, and that one product can be exchanged for millions at a time. The cooking-pot keeps boiling because people keep putting in things as they themselves, and others, take things out.[14]

By placing the accent on the overflowing abundance and free nature of the available content, Ghosh responded implicitly to one of the most contested themes in Mauss's essay, which cast each gift as the deliberate imposition of a debt on the receiver, instating hierarchies which were quite foreign to the practice of networked information exchange.

Today, with the popular explosion of Gnutella and other peer-to-peer file-sharing systems, these notions of the high-tech gift economy have begun to form part of common sense. It seems to admit at least a few new things: that the coded creations circulating on the Internet are never 'consumed' like a

[13] Richard Barbrook, 'The Hi-Tech Gift Economy', in *ReadMe, Filtered by Nettime*, New York: Autonomedia, 1999, online at www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue3_12/barbrook

[14] Rishab Aiyer Ghosh, 'Cooking Pot Economy', in *ReadMe, op. cit.*, online at www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue3_3/ghosh/index.html#SEC5

cigarette would be; that use by some people in no way limits their availability for others; and that certain kinds of exchanges therefore have nothing to do with rarity and are quite possible without money. What is less often remarked, because of a denial which is characteristic of free-market rhetoric, is the fact that non-monetary models of exchange have been operating on a very large scale for as long as one can remember, for instance in the realm of academic publishing, where the primary motive for sharing information is not its monetary value but the recognition it brings – a recognition which itself is at least partially dependent on the idea of contributing something to humanity or truth. In fact there exists quite a large movement in the domain of scientific publishing aiming for online release of all the articles carried by specialised journals, in order to make the results universally accessible despite the increasing cost of many essential print publications.[15] Recently, an author by the name of Yochai Benkler has taken the twin examples of free software and academic publishing as a foundation on which to build a general theory of what he calls 'commons-based peer production', by which he means non-proprietary informational or cultural production, based on materials which are extremely low cost or inherently free. This voluntary form of self-organised production depends, in his words, 'on very large aggregations of individuals independently scouring their information environment in search of opportunities to be creative in small or large increments. These individuals then self-identify for tasks and perform them for complex motivational reasons.'[16] Benkler's first aim, however, is not to explain peoples' motivation, but simply to describe the organisational and technological conditions that make this cooperative production possible.

Four attributes of the networked information economy appear as preconditions of commons-based peer production. First, information must be freely available as inexhaustible raw material for products which, in their turn, will become inexhaustible raw materials for further productions. Second, potential collaborators must be easily able to find the project that inspires them to creativity and labour. Third, the cost of production equipment must be low, as is now the case for things like computers and related media devices. Fourth, it must be possible to broadly distribute the results, for instance, over a telecommunications net. Under these conditions, quite complex tasks can be imagined, divided into small modules, and thrown out into the public realm where individuals will self-identify their competency to meet any given challenge. The only remaining requirement for large-scale production of cultural and informational goods is to be able to perform quality checks and integrate all the individual modules with relatively low effort into a completed whole – but these tasks,

[15] See, for example, the Budapest Open Access Initiative, www.soros.org/openaccess

[16] Yochai Benkler, 'Coase's Penguin, or Linux and the Nature of the Firm', www.benkler.org/CoasesPenguin.html

it turns out, can often be done on a distributed basis as well. The fact that all of this is possible, and actually happening today, allows Benkler to contradict Ronald Coase's classic theory, which identifies the firm, with its hierarchical command structure, and the market, functioning through the individual's quest for the lowest price, as the only two viable ways to organise human production. In other words, in the cultural and informational domain there is an alternative mode of production, functioning outside the norms of the state-capitalist economy as we know it, but without any rhetorical need to proclaim a clean break or an absolute division between them.

The notion of the commons refers back to the same pre-capitalist history that Polanyi had invoked; and it does so in the context of what some are calling the 'second enclosure movement', resulting in the extension of intellectual property rights, or the privatisation of information. Benkler stresses that the word 'commons' denotes 'the *absence of exclusion* as the organising feature of this new mode of production'. To be sure, the examples he uses to prove the existence of voluntarily organised large-scale cultural production are strictly electronic projects like the Wikipedia encyclopedia, the Slashdot technews site, the Kuro5hin site, and so on. These are essentially situations where publicly available text plus creativity produces more publicly available text. They are also politically neutral examples, appropriate for an argumentation that aims, among other things, to influence the American legislature on the subject of copyright laws. Yet one could apply exactly the same ideas to the growing phenomenon of networked political protests. It is clear that mass access to email and the possibility to create personal web pages – both of which have been quite necessary to the world expansion of liberal capitalism – almost immediately made possible, not only a greater awareness of globalisation and its effects, but also the self-organisation of dissenting movements on a world scale. And the scope of the projects that have been realised in this sense has been tremendous.

Just reflect for a moment on what each of the major 'counter-globalisation' actions has involved. Collaborative research on the political, social, cultural and ecological issues at stake. Various levels of coordination between a wide range of already constituted groups, concerning the preliminary forms of mobilisation. Worldwide dissemination, through every possible channel, of the research and preliminary positions. Travel of tens or hundreds of thousands of single persons and autonomous groups to a given place. Self-organisation of meeting and sleeping places. Intellectual and political cooperation on some form of counter-summit. The creation of artistic and cultural events in the spirit of the movements. A minimal agreement, worked out beforehand or in the heat of the moment, on the specific forms and places of the symbolic and direct actions to be undertaken. Legal and medical coordination in order to ensure the

demonstrators' security. The installation of communications systems allowing for the transmission of precise yet exceedingly diverse coverage of the events. A social, legal, and political follow-up of the aftermath. Finally, a subsequent analysis of the new situation that results from each confrontation: in other words, a new starting-point.

In this sense one could say that, just like the projects of commons-based peer production, these mobilisations begin and end with the fabrication of publicly available texts. For example, the People's Summit in Quebec City in April 2001 began long in advance, with many different studies of the consequences to be expected from the future agreement on the Free Trade Area of the Americas. These studies led to the drafting of a remarkable document, 'Alternatives for the Americas', which is a counter-treaty of great precision, composed through a process of knowledge exchange and political coordination on the scale of the American hemisphere.[17] It's also true that as a direct consequence of the massive demonstration that took place during the summit, the official working draft of the FTAA treaty was made public for the first time; until then it had not even been available to elected representatives of the American peoples, but only to executive negotiating teams (and scores of corporate 'advisers'). In this way the counter-globalisation movements constitute a public archive. And yet between the fundamental landmarks represented by these text publications, how many face-to-face debates took place, how many moments of singular or collective creation, how many acts of courage and solidarity? And how many emotions, images, memories and desires were created and shared during the days of action in Quebec City?

The spectacle of these great gatherings, overflowing with freely given creations, could appear like a new form of the potlatch ceremonies described by Marcel Mauss, a gift-giving ritual where the demonstrators try to outdo their adversaries through open displays of generosity. No doubt there is something of that, which explains why the words 'free' and 'priceless' have been so important in these demonstrations. But what seems more interesting in the reference to Mauss is his way of perceiving gift-giving rituals as 'total social facts', bringing all the different aspects of social life together in a system of complex and indivisible relations. Whoever saw the extraordinary symbolic transactions between pacifists, ecologists, unionists, anarchists, spirtualists, delinquents, reporters, by-passers, cops and politicians at the G8 summit in Genoa, in July of 2001, can find a real resonance in what Mauss says about the Melanesian gift-giving ceremonies, the American Indian potlatch rituals, and the 'market-festivals of the Indo-European world':

[17] 'Alternatives for the Americas'
www.web.net/comfront/
alts4americas/eng/eng.html

All these phenomena are at the same time juridical, economic, religious, and even aesthetic and morphological, etc. They are juridical because they concern private and public law, and a morality that is organised and diffused throughout society; they are strictly obligatory or merely an occasion for praise and blame; they are political and domestic at the same time, relating to social classes as well as clans and families. They are religious in the strict sense, including magic, animism, and a diffused religious mentality. They are economic. The idea of value, utility, self-interest, luxury, wealth, the acquisition and accumulation of goods – all these on the one hand – and on the other, that of consumption, even that of deliberate spending for its own sake, purely sumptuary: all these phenomena are present everywhere, although we understand them differently today. Moreover, these institutions have an important aesthetic aspect… the dances that are carried out in turn, the songs and processions of every kind, the dramatic performances… everything, food, objects, and services, even 'respect', as the Tlingit say, is a cause of aesthetic emotion.[18]

There is no nostalgia for a primitive life in the fact of quoting Mauss, nor any facile admiration for the 'revolutionary *fête*'. Things are much more complex. On the one hand, the contemporary quest for 'direct action', for 'direct democracy', finds an initial realisation in the collective, cooperative production of these public events, which bring together all the rigorously separated aspects of modern social life. Indeed, the very aim of such events is to criticise certain fundamental separations, like the one that amputates any basic concern for life from the laws of monetary accumulation. But that doesn't mean that the event, the ecstatic convergence, is a total solution: instead it is a departure point for a fresh questioning of the social tie, at times when its deadly aspects become visible, as they are today. The protestors' claim, not just to the occupation but to the *creation* of public space, with all the conflicts it brings in its wake, offers society an occasion to theatricalise the real, in order to replay the meaning of abstractions that are no longer adequate to the needs and possibilities of life. The 'total social fact' of the contemporary demonstration is, at its best, a chance to relearn and recreate a language for political debate, which isn't just about money, and doesn't only have '¥€$' in its vocabulary. And the networked protests we are speaking of, including those of the peace movement in 2003, have produced the first chances to do this at the scale of the globalised economy and of global governance.

Artistic practice has been one of the keys to the emergence of these 'global social facts' – not least because artistic practice has also been one of the ways to hold off group violence, to open up a theatrical space that doesn't immediately become a war zone. This is obviously something that contemporary society risks forgetting, and that particular risk is reason

[18] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London: Routledge, 1990/French trans. 1923–24), p.79.

enough in itself to go beyond the specialised, disciplinary definition of art, to try to relocate art within a much broader political economy. Before I do that, however, I want to draw one last group of ideas from Yochai Benkler. His paper closes with the problem of what he calls 'threats to motivation'. One of these comes from the failure to integrate the results of commons-based peer production into usable wholes, which can make a project successful. Translated into political terms, this would mean the failure of the networked movements to change any tangible aspect of social life. That is a real threat to motivation; and I think it's vitally important to keep offering practical ideas and proposals about possible changes on all the scales of governance and existence, from the neighbourhood to the world level, at every new demonstration. Benkler points to different strategies for putting together the results of common effort. These strategies range from self-organisation of the integration process, to the delegation of this tricky point to a hierarchical structure or a commercial enterprise. Again the translation into our terms is obvious, and has become increasingly visible at events such as the European Social Forum, held in Florence in November of 2002. Just when the networked struggles get big enough to succeed, there is an enormous temptation to hand them over, in the name of efficiency, to a traditional politburo supported by professional media people. The problem with such expedient strategies is that they risk giving participants the impression that the voluntary production of political culture with their peers is being confiscated by somebody in a directive position. A fantastic example of this is the 30-thousand member ATTAC association in France, which, to many members' discontent, is in fact a strictly controlled, hierarchical organisation at the national level. However, for ATTAC to have the social power it does, it has had to also produce a decentralised network of local committees, which operate very differently from the national bureau and regularly criticise or contradict its decisions. The tension you can see there in a very real situation, between collective process and effective decision, is at the heart of the democratic experiment today. You might even say that working though that kind of tension is the art of politics.

IV—So now we return to the language of art, and to an art whose very essence is language. Obviously I'm talking about Conceptual art. But today this most revolutionary of all art forms is considered a failure. The 'escape strategies' that Lucy Lippard talks about in her famous book on 'the dematerialisation of the art object' were intended to free artists from dependency on the gallery-magazine-museum circuit. It was thought that artists could motivate people to use their imagination in completely new ways, by giving them linguistic suggestions, virtual proposals that they could actualise outside the specialised institutions. But exclusive signatures rapidly took precedence over the infinite permutation of the works in the lives of the viewers/users. The necessary corollary was that the concept should refer

primarily to itself, as in a famous piece composed of a chair, a picture of a chair, and a dictionary definition of the word 'chair' (Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965). Such a work, completing itself in a tautology that required no transformative activity from the public, could easily be presented within the existing system. Thus the conceptual escape attempt only led from market-oriented New York to the museums of Europe, then finally back to the market. In 1973, Seth Siegelaub said in an interview:

> *Conceptual art, more than all previous types of art, questions the fundamental nature of art. Unhappily, the question is strictly limited to the exclusive domain of the fine arts. There is still the potential of it authorising an examination of all that surrounds art, but in reality, Conceptual artists are dedicated only to exploring avant-garde aesthetic problems. ... The economic pattern associated with Conceptual art is remarkably similar to that of other artistic movements: to purchase a work cheap and resell it at a high price. In short, speculation.*[19]

Lucy Lippard, for her part, wrote in 1973 that the 'ghetto mentality predominant in the narrow and incestuous art world ... with its reliance on a very small group of dealers, curators, editors and collectors who are all too frequently and often unknowingly bound by invisible apron strings to the "real world's" power structures ... make[s] it unlikely that Conceptual art will be any better equipped to affect the world any differently than, or even as much as, its less ephemeral counterparts.'[20]

These admissions of defeat are well known.[21] But in certain recent publications, another history of Conceptual art has been coming back to light. It is a history that unfolds in Latin America, and particularly in Argentina, in the cities of Buenos Aires and Rosario. It would seem that here, in the context of an authoritarian government and under the pressure of American cultural imperialism, Conceptual art could only be received – or invented – as an invitation to act antagonistically within the mass-media sphere. Certain Argentine Pop artists considered that the commercial news media could actually be appropriated as an artistic medium, like a canvas or a gallery space. To do this, Roberto Jacoby and Eduardo Costa created an artificial happening, one that never really happened, and they stimulated the media with information about it, so as to achieve specific fictional effects.[22] But this attempt was only a first step towards a fully political appropriation

[19] Michel Claura and Seth Siegelaub, 'L'art conceptuel', in A. Alberro and B. Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999, pp.289–90.
[20] Lucy Lippard, 'Postface', *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, New York: Praeger, 1973, p.264.

[21] See E. Costa, R. Escari, R. Jacoby, 'A Media Art (Manifesto)', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, *op. cit.*, pp.2–3.
[22] For the classic example, see Benjamin Buchloh's assertion that Conceptual art failed 'to liberate the world from mythical forms of perception and hierarchical modes of specialised experience', and was

'transformed into absolute farce'. 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969', *October*, Winter 1990, p.143.

of the communications media by artists. The most characteristic project was *Tucumán Arde*, or 'Tucumán is Burning', realised in 1968.[23] The military government was attempting to 'modernise' the sugar-cane industry in the province of Tucumán, with a shift of scale toward larger factories under the control of local oligarchs and foreign capital; at the same time, the official media painted an idyllic picture of a region which in reality was wracked by impoverishment and intense labour struggles. So a group of some 30 artists and socioliogists from Buenos Aires and Rosario began researching the social and economic conditions in the province, carrying out an analysis of all the mass-media coverage of the region, and going out themselves to gather first-hand information and to document the situation using photography and film. They then staged an exhibition that was explicitly designed to feed their work back into the national debate, so as to counter the media picture. Yet the project, although it did not shy away from advertising techniques, could not be reduced to counter-propaganda. As Andrea Giunta writes:

> In many of its characteristic traits – such as the exploration of the interaction between languages, the centrality of the activity required from the spectator, the unfinished character, the importance of the documentation, the dissolution of the idea of the author, and the questioning of the art system and the ideas that legitimate it – Tucumán Arde maintains a relation with the repertory of Conceptual art. But not with the tautological and self-referential form of Conceptualism, in which, from a certain viewpoint, one finds a reconfirmation of the modernist paradigm. Language does not refer back to language, to the specificity of the artistic fact; instead, the contextual relations are so strong that in this case that reality ceases being understood as a space of reflection and comes to be conceived as a possible field of action oriented toward the transformation of society.[24]

Tucumán Arde is extremely interesting to consider from the contemporary viewpoint of tactical media practice, which in many respects has been one long effort to research, expose, and go beyond the idyllic picture of globalisation being painted by the corporate media.[25] But to understand the major differences from today's situation, one must realise that *Tucumán Arde* was done with the support of the Argentine CGT, that is, a radical labour union, and the exhibition was shown in a union hall. In other words, to

[23] A description of *Tucumán Arde* (including the relation to Jacoby's work) can be found in Marí Carmen Ramírez, 'Thriving on Adversity: Conceptualism in Latin America, 1960–1980', in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin*, 1950s–1980s (exh. cat.), Queens Museum of Art, 1999, pp.66–67. Also see M.T. Gramuglio and N. Rosa, 'Tucumán Burns', in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology, op. cit.*, pp.76–79.

[24] Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política: arte argentino en los años sesenta*, Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001.

[25] See D. Garcia and G. Lovink, 'The ABC of Tactical Media', www.waag.org/tmn/abc.html. Also see the wide variety of projects that have been discussed in the 'Next 5 Minutes' festivals, www.n5m.org. Today, http://indymedia.org is considered (by some) as the broadest expression of tactical media.

obtain the funding and distribution of practices that would not be supported by the market, the Rosario group had to collaborate with a bureaucratic structure, which is defined by its relation to the capitalist firm. And that kind of cooperation is almost impossible today, at least in the overdeveloped countries. For reasons which have to do both with the anti-bureaucratic bias of the New Left, and with the heightened integration of labour unions to the state after the crisis of 1968, it has become very difficult for social movements, let alone artists, to collaborate with official structures such as parties, unions, etc. The motivation just isn't there. This is why the use of carefully conceived linguistic formulas, of oriented but open signifiers, would become a far more effective means of mobilisation in the late 1990s, when ideas could be distributed and constantly transformed through the proliferation of connections offered by the Internet. In this way one achieved a non-bureaucratic capacity for subversive political action on a large scale, outside any compulsory framework. A new kind of Conceptualism began to emerge, in which 'attitudes become forms', as the curator Harald Szeeman said in the 1960s. An idea or phrase could become a world-wide event, in which every individual performance was different. Just as in Lawrence Weiner's famous prescription, the action could be carried out by the originators of the ideas, or realised by others, or not done at all. In the late 1990s, this revolutionary promise was realised. Thirty years after experiments such as *Tucumán Arde*, the counter-globalisation movement burst onto the world scene as the revenge of the concept.

The examples of this could be as numerous as there are experiences. That is why I want to talk about an event in which I was personally involved: the carnivalesque performance and riot in the City of London on 18 June, 1999. Before it took place, this day was intensely dreamed by a multiplicity of actors, sometimes connected in constant dialogue and exchange, sometimes affected at a distance by signs that promised to break their isolation and unleash their agency. The inspiration first emerged, at least in certain versions of the story, during the summer of 1998 in conversations between members of London Reclaim the Streets and the anarchist group London Greenpeace (a local organisation, not the famous NGO).[26] It spread through the networks of Peoples' Global Action, drawing on the suggestive potency of two key ideas. One was the 'street party', as a form of direct democracy which refused the domination of the city by the automobile, but also by the traditional procedures of party politics. The other was the phrase 'Our resistance is as transnational as capital': a return of twentieth-century internationalism in red, black, and green, after a long trip through the jungles of Chiapas where the Zapatista uprising began on 1 January 1994 (the day NAFTA came into effect). A complex circulation through time

[26] See 'Friday June 18th 1999: Confronting Capital and Smashing the State!' in *Do or Die 8*, London, online at www.eco-action.org/dod/no8/j18.html

[27] See www.corporatewatch.org.uk/magazine/issue8/cw8glob6.html

and space, where solidarity means respect for local autonomy and differing motivations for struggle, was encapsulated in these two key ideas. A call to action, distributed widely through the Internet, put it like this:

> The proposal is to encourage as many movements and groups as possible to organise their own autonomous protests or actions, on the same day (June 18th), in the same geographical locations (financial/corporate/ banking/business districts) around the world. Events could take place at relevant sites, eg. multinational company offices, local banks, stock exchanges. Each event would be organised autonomously and coordinated in each city or financial district by a variety of movements and groups. It is hoped that a whole range of different groups will take part, including workers, peasants, indigenous peoples, women, students, the landless, environmentalists, unwaged/unemployed and others. … everyone who recognises that the global capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people and the planet for the profit of a few, is at the root of our social and ecological troubles.[27]

J18 in London was the most exquisitely planned and spontaneously realised artistic performance in which I have taken part, an awakening to new possibilities of political struggle that would be echoed throughout the world. Thousands converged in the morning at the Liverpool Street tube station in the City, receiving carnival masks in four different colours that encouraged the crowd to split into groups, outwitting the police by following different paths through the medieval street plan of Europe's largest financial district, then coming together again in front of the LIFFE building, the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, which was the symbolic and real target of this protest against the global domination of speculative exchange. The choice of site was essential. Long years of effort by far-flung organisers and intellectuals had been required to understand and describe the ways in which capital had escaped its former national bounds, in order to redeploy itself transnationally in new oppressive systems; yet until the late 1990s, that knowledge remained largely abstract, floating in a deterritorialised space like the financial sphere itself. Here it was translated into tangible forms of embodied expression: transgressive dancing, defiant music, a verbal and visual poetics of resistance. For once, individual pleasure did not appear as the negation, but rather as the accentuation of collective struggle, confronting financial abstractions which could be understood by the participants through the immediate experience of the stone-and-glass architecture, while the significance of each of their acts was multiplied by the knowledge that other, similar events were occurring all over the planet. Spontaneous invitations for passing traders to come join the party were combined with sudden attacks on private property, generating an unexpected, threatening, sympathetic and immensely confident image of revolt – a way to finally start answering the decades-old pleas for help from oppressed peoples in the South, while also responding to the unbearable

social divisions that transnational capitalism imposes on countries like Britain. Of course this carnivalesque outburst was just one moment in a longer process of struggle, prepared by untold numbers of people under far harsher conditions. But the language of protest that emerged here nonetheless marked a turning point. It was the immediate inspiration for the larger and more complex confrontation in Seattle, six months later, which finally forced the messages of the global resistance movements through the frosty screens of the traditional media, opening the political crisis of global capitalism's legitimacy. A crisis which has not ceased to morph and mutate into the increasingly violent forms that it is taking today.

From my point of view there can be no mistake. The revenge of the concept is the reappearance, in broad daylight, of the global class struggle: a political struggle over the right to share in the fruits of technological development, and to guard against its many poisons. But if this re-embodiment of class struggle can also be an artistic experience – and an experiment that reverses and transforms the concept of art – it is because the articulation of the old divides has radically changed. In the face of an all-dominating capitalist class which has imposed a global division of labour, and extended its ideological grip over core populations through the devices of popular stockholding, speculative pension funds, and the seductive traps of consumer credit, the focus of struggle is no longer so much the rate of the industrial wage, as the very existence and production of that which lies outside the cash nexus: land in the sense of a viable ecology; labour as the energy of life from its beginnings in travails of birth; knowledge not as fragmented commodities but as an overarching question about meaning; trade and exchange as an institution of human coexistence. Arising within these fields of struggle are new desires and political designs, irreducible to the organising schemes of capital and state. In the best of cases, opposition becomes a prelude to radical invention.

Still the tensions have increased dramatically in all these domains, under the advancing pressure of systemic crisis. As the techniques of mass-mediated control ratchet up toward overt fascism, in the wake both of September 11 and of the stock market failures, the improbable meeting of teamsters and turtles in Seattle and the naked life dancing in front of the LIFFE building in London might seem to recede into some distant past. It is certain that the power of surprise was soon lost, as every international summit became an overwhelming protest, and the ruling oligarchies found new courage to ignore the democratic expressions of the citizens. Broader and deeper revolts must now be invented. But these were among the early experiments in a rearticulation of struggles, whose destiny is to cross all the borders. For the artists of another world, wherever they live and however they understand themselves, let these moments be counted among the hieroglyphs of the future.

DRIFTING PRODUCERS

YONGSEOK JEON

1. This is Not an Electric Fan.
In the 70s, the supply of electric fans ran out.
People gathered in Hwanghak-dong, demanding electric fans.
Nothing was possible but to repair the old broken motors.
But they did not know the technique.
First, they wiped them and oiled them.
Sometimes the broken motors suddenly started to run
with just a couple of drops of oil.
So they studied where and how much
oil they needed.
Likewise, how to put the propeller on.
The frames and legs,
all were devised in an impromptu way.
Since then, in summer, the producers couldn't sleep.
They had to make fans.
Watching this, the police threatened:
'Without permission you can't make and sell the electric fans.'
The producers replied:
'This is not an electric fan.
It's just a machine for making wind.'

2. Production System
In 2003, Flyingcity worked on the issue of the redevelopment of the
Cheonggye rivulet. This is a small stream running through downtown Seoul.
It was once covered with asphalt and had an elevated highway above it. Now
the city government is demolishing the highway and taking away the asphalt
to expose the rivulet, which is mostly used for sewage. People debate
whether this project is merely discovering the natural water line or a sneaky
redevelopment for capitalist profit, which will expel already marginalised
social groups like street vendors and destroy the little workshops located
there. By researching the status of these endangered social groups, we
discovered a unique way of living in the mechanical age – an issue that
we tried to raise on various occasions.

The title *Drifting Producers* refers to the production system network in this area. There are strong relations between the workshops, and this network is very flexible. The diagram represents the kind of production line that we found. It is organised as a so-called front-rear production system. For example, *Uljigeumsok* (raw metal plate) – *Younggwangjumul* (iron casting) – *Bugwangbunchechil* (painting with heat treatment) – *Worldteuksujomyong* (final product, lighting parts in this case, which are also sold here). Such production lines make possible the competitiveness of that area. If one element is taken out of the local line, then costs cannot be kept as low.

Not only are there these kind of front-rear production lines, but also there are horizontal networks, dividing the workload. Most of these horizontal lines cross over, which explains why such elaborate metal work is possible. Each shop is run in such a way that it can adjust itself to a new network, created by an unexpected order of small quantity and new design, while sustaining existing networks at the same time. The term 'drifting droducers' comes from a book that describes the survival of family businesses and elaborate handicraft industry in an area of Italy after the breakdown of the previous mass production manufacturing. Here, it is used to define the kind of hybrid production system in Cheonggyecheon. The production lines cannot be determined in an *a-priori* way – hence the term 'drift'. A chaotic but strong interdependency allows them to survive in the era of mass production. And by drifting, they can adapt to a post-Fordist economy. It allows them to take unexpected turns of direction, and merge in a creative way.[1]

We first thought that this is a typical postmodern production system – small quantities, diverse items. But in fact it may be pre-modern, because it has always been functioning beneath the surface of the modern mass production system. In the public sphere in Korea, the dominant thinking is that the pre-modern is obsolete. Ignoring the pre-modern gave the city government and some liberally enlightened intellectuals a reason for redevelopment. The developers offer an absurd series of kitsch computer-generated simulations of neatly lined-up skylines and rivulets of clean water flowing in the middle of the street as mass propaganda. The city government advocates building an international financial centre on the former site of the metal workshops. Ironically, the people in Munjeondong, where the metal workshops are supposed to be relocated, are against this because they think the metal craft industry is obsolete.

We cooperated on protesting this redevelopment with some of the non-governmental organisations, because we wanted to argue against the capitalist politics of the spectacle. But there was a small difference between

the approach of Flyingcity and the NGOs. With the city government arguing that this business is 'restoring' Cheonggyecheon, most NGOs argued that the city government was not doing enough restoration. They valued the historical vestiges of the site, especially the remnants of late eighteenth-century civil engineering, much more than the present activities of the people of Cheonggyecheon. We tried to focus on how the people have lived since the beginning of the economic development in Korea, which formed both the look of that area and the present atmosphere – the psycho-geographic reality – from its subconscious level to its outermost skin.

3. Delayed Reaction

The inter-dependency and informal economy of the site is hard to grasp, and so tend to be mythologised. We heard rumours that illegal gun parts or bayonets for local gangs were produced there. It's hard to say if those stories are true. What's evident is that such invisible but strong networks in Cheonggyecheon are sources of exaggerated rumours. People even talked about the possibility of making armoured tanks! (Which is of course impossible because the making of that kind of final product takes a completely different production system.)

One government-sponsored institute has provided the theoretical basis for the redevelopment plans of Cheonggyecheon. It suggests different classifications so as to increase the competitiveness of Seoul as a city. As new industries, international finance, business service, information technology, and cultural industries should be invited in; the fashion and printing industry should be retained and reorganised; mechanics and metal works should be replaced. This division is of course also put forward as a guideline to reorganise resource allocation and improve the inter-industry network. We used to characterise the production network in Cheonggyecheon as typically post-Fordist, ie. a production system that facilitates small quantity and varied products. According to current organisational theory, it is comparable to multi-core organisation, or organic organisation. But if we follow the logic of the institute, such comparisons are nothing but utopian fantasy. Or are they?

One possible answer is that our analysis of the metal workshops network is a kind of 'delayed reaction'. Even if the production relationship in Cheonggyecheon is indeed pre-modern it can also be recognised as post-modern because we're looking at it within a post-Fordist framework. If, as cultural studies suggest, late-modern or post-modern phenomena repeat pre-modern ones, then this suggests another more simple answer: that the institute is dismissing handicraft labour.

If that is the case, we can demand opposite action on the basis of their own logic, which argues for evacuating the metal workshops. Why not connect the existing metal workshop networks and methods to other industries, thus improving them rather than just pushing them out?

Under such scrutiny, the city government appears to be advocating a 'cleaning theory' – a modernist theory that emphasises the role of the leading elite in imagining that a totally new world will be gained, such as is shown in the kitsch redevelopment fantasy images.

Our surprise was amplified after realising that the slogan 'Increase the city's competitiveness in the world economy of late modern capitalism' is directly comparable to the 70s slogan: 'Let's get prosperous!' The slogans are powerful in the same way. What is important is that Cheonggyecheon appears ugly to them – while it appears as a dream to us. Of course, our recognition of their preoccupation with the post-modern production network in the shadow of modern mass production is just a hypothesis, and our diagram is created through a certain artistic processing. We think however that the fragments from the past can only be understood from the point of view of the future (or the present for us). In other words, the dream is always constructed later. This delayed reaction, implying a certain time gap, can be said to be the key to an invisible empirical existentialism.

4. Return of the Past

People used to say that ten years in Korea is as long as thirty years in the Western world. When we look at the 1960s in the Cheonggye area, perhaps it will seem like one-hundred-and-twenty years ago for Western readers, or even like the beginning of the industrial age in the early nineteenth century. But in Korea, the 1960s was the time when modernisation began.

The poor traditionally occupied the Cheonggyecheon area. After the Korean War, economic development followed. The population increased rapidly as people from rural areas and the North came to the region. They settled down, working in the days before the economic boom. They usually dealt with second-hand goods at the final stages of circulation, as well as all sorts of dirty jobs such as undertaking, rag picking, day-labouring, and scavenging. So I would say certain groups around Cheonggyecheon serve as part of the social waste-disposal system, much like the Cheonggye rivulet itself. The sense of low-class culture has always existed here, but the sense of dislocation comes from the present.

Later, people who obtained technical know-how in an empirical way formed a certain social group. They gave identity to this region, as a source for everything you need. It was even said that one could get the testicles of a virgin here! This meant that one could fix or manufacture any electronic or mechanical object here. After the Sewoon electronic complex was built, stories appeared in the mass media about highly skilled technicians who educated themselves and rose up as masters of modern civilization. This myth proves that autonomous development on top of the machine civilization was an object of desire for Koreans.

The Cheonggeycheon peoples' unique sense of economic recycling, and of economic division on a social scale, in combination with the technical remnants from the Japanese occupation, formed the basis for providing products that could be made in a non mass-produced way: stuff like small parts to be put into an assembly line of mass-production manufacture, or complex mechanical parts, which require intensive labour. They are the sole descendants of modernisation in South Korea.

What we have called a sense of *faktura* is characteristic of Cheonggeycheon. A sort of secular literalism can be widely found in this region, from the people's way of producing, to their way of organising space, to their ordinary lives. It sometimes represents the struggle for survival; it sometimes appears as a sneaky way of evading the authorities, like saying, 'This is not an electric fan' in front of an electric fan that looks like a formless machine, or even like a mollusc. So we can describe the most important characteristic of Cheonggyecheon as the fact that nobody can know Cheonggyecheon completely. But the authorities never stopped to reorganise this space into a legible structure in the name of development, thus turning it into a manageable one.

There have been several 'redevelopments' of the area, and they always followed a pattern of forced evacuation, followed by building massive ugly structures, followed by the buildings' gradual occupation by migrants. The authorities wouldn't understand the self-cleaning function of the sewage. This literal meaning should be hidden by all means from the eye of the spectacle. It is a piece of ultimate reality, which the authorities struggle to forget. It's the dark side of their desire. Seen in the light of the history of the capitalist appropriation of this area, we think the Cheonggyecheon restoration plan is at its peak moment.

The presence which craftsmen once had there – and which they still have! – now seems like a dream, while the imminent presence of the city government appears as an ugly past. In fact, power is caught in a vicious circle. But if we want to go further, we have to ask what kind of dream can inspire us.

5. Drifting Public

Those who admire the western Alexandrian tradition – the magicians of Surrealism, the sorcerers of illegible language – have been constructing general images of the dream. But we need to redefine the notion of the dream in a completely different context, as a space where reality returns.

Generally the dream is thought about in relation to the future. Modern civilization is seriously dependent on visions; the dream is a powerful means to represent the not-yet-experienced future in recognisable images. Public knowledge has been mostly defined as visual, and the massive expansion of visual technology like TV networks is a clear evidence of it. But historic world experiences like 9/11 or the war in Iraq have caused a huge epistemological

shock. That such unbelievable visual facts were broadcast worldwide damaged our confidence in visual perception.

A sense of disbelief in visual fantasy was already present in the early twentieth century. In the tragic experiences of World War I and II people learned that splendid visual delirium equals the ultimate stage of instrumental rationality. The confused perception caused by flare bombs, explosions, and mechanical noises of gunfire left its various traces in the era of the so-called Cubist War. From then on, the impossibility of perception was a core concern of Modern Art, and has provided various alternative ways of perceiving. As a result, we now observe the end-phase of a process in which reality is simulated.

This situation, in which people cannot believe what they see, specifically erodes the notion of the exhibition, which is mainly focused on visual concentration. The power of art and exhibition engineering that depend upon a special methodology are weakened and the documentary has replaced visual art as a powerful means of representation. It has become not only trustworthy, but also something that creates the sublime through massive shock. TV documentaries and war reports appear as powerful instruments to debilitate the power of visual art – the power of dreaming. Thus, people are kept in the present only. And their perception of the past or the future is organised according to a pre-determined logic.

But, from another viewpoint, the documentary is the final stage of the avant-garde art that focused on indexical reality. In other words, if it were not for the pre-determined logic, the documentary would simply fall into meaningless fragments of reality. Minimalism sought to reverse the relationship between the pre-determined logic and visual perception. It used literalness to provoke a seeing without any preconception. Thus, it became very sensitive to the time gap in an empirical way. Taking Minimalism as an example, we could think about what that means: real time, real presence. I think it's very important to make people attentive to the very actual time differences that the simulacra transmitted through the network hide. The simple truth that the future is not yet determined is generally forgotten.

It's problematic that documentary-style representation still depends upon methods of ocular centrism for what it can say about the future. Though art only has meaning in the framework of specific institutional devices, it can paradoxically prepare people for the future by showing that such notions of the future are artificially constructed. It can call a halt to the endless projection by the media into tomorrow by reappropriating the literal.

The people of Cheonggyecheon may dream about big success and about mastering the machine. But their actual dreams are already carved into the production network and all the unidentifiable rumors – not into the myths of the media coverage regarding the success of some remarkable figures. The latter belong to the realm of consumption while the former themselves produce the future – which is the dream's function. And the ethnographic

evidence we found, proves that the dreams go on making unexpected divergences through radical questions rather than being tied down to the linear logic of the mass production system.

What we ultimately found in Cheonggyecheon is that the world is not transparent at all; literally speaking 'No one can know anything completely'. This kind of knottiness (not mysteriousness) is the key to understanding the drifting life of the public.

6. Postscript

After forty years of modern history, the literal sense of Cheonggyecheon that I have emphasised above is becoming more invisible. Actually, it is almost imaginary. That's why we wanted to make an artistic production which didn't depend on documentary style records. After analysing the metal workshop network, we moved on to the other marginalised social group of street vendors. According to our site research and interviews, the street vendors use similar principles of survival to those of the metal workshops: finding niche markets, appropriating existing production methods, adapting themselves to unexpected changes of situation. They drift. This observation is an empirical explanation coming from their experiences, but can also be seen from an economic point of view. Street vendors are creating money circulation mostly among the poor. They recycle waste items, invent new businesses like street fashion, and introduce new goods like mobile phones for a younger generation. That they are absorbing the unemployed in times of deflation is also important.

These stories themselves were very interesting. But the city government never acknowledged their existence with the excuse that selling (without permission) in the middle of the pavement is illegal. The evacuation issue became so urgent that past stories of everyday life were about to be forgotten. The street vendors played a large part in turning the area into a flourishing market. Now that this market has grown up, it is nonsensical to claim that the street vendors are occupying the street illegally and have to move away. So we thought out a project that combines the present issue with the drifting paths of the street vendors from the past.

During our research we heard lots of stories, but the images of everyday life were harder to come by. Flyingcity's *Talkshow Tent* was conceived to listen carefully to the street vendors' stories. Eleven tents stood there as protest against the city government's new developmental policy. It was not desirable to have their voices reduced to the plain anger of an interest group, so we chose a form to attract people's attention – a form suggesting quieter voices rather than the usual loud ones heard in a demonstration. This led to a talk show-like event with installations of flags and tents designed like the parasols popular among street vendors.

The demonstrating street vendors were evicted by force on 30 November 2003 by the city government.

태창전열

수입목재

신성철판

을지금속

대성상사

광명전기

중앙목형

영광주물

유진정밀

신성공업시보리

부광철

원오철강

월드특수조명
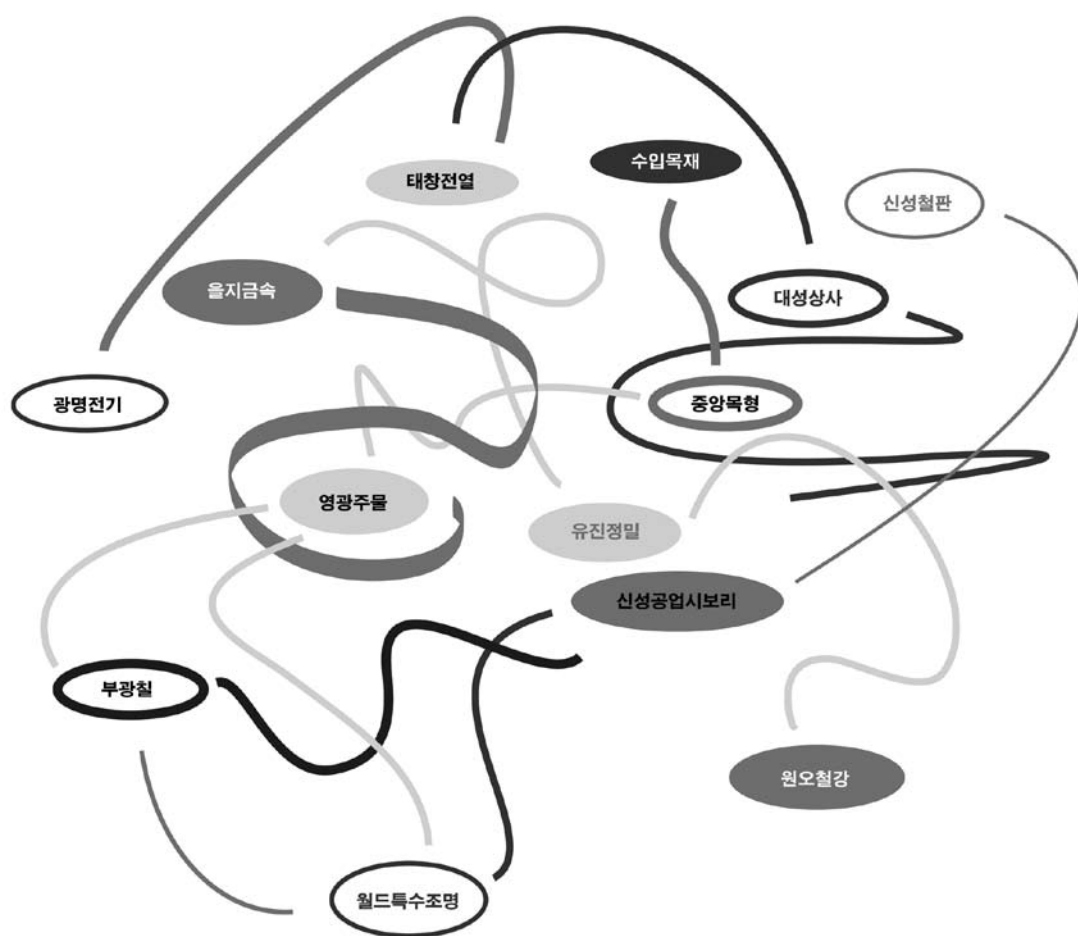
Flying City *Drifting Producers*, 2004
Diagrams of the production system network
in Cheonggye, Seoul
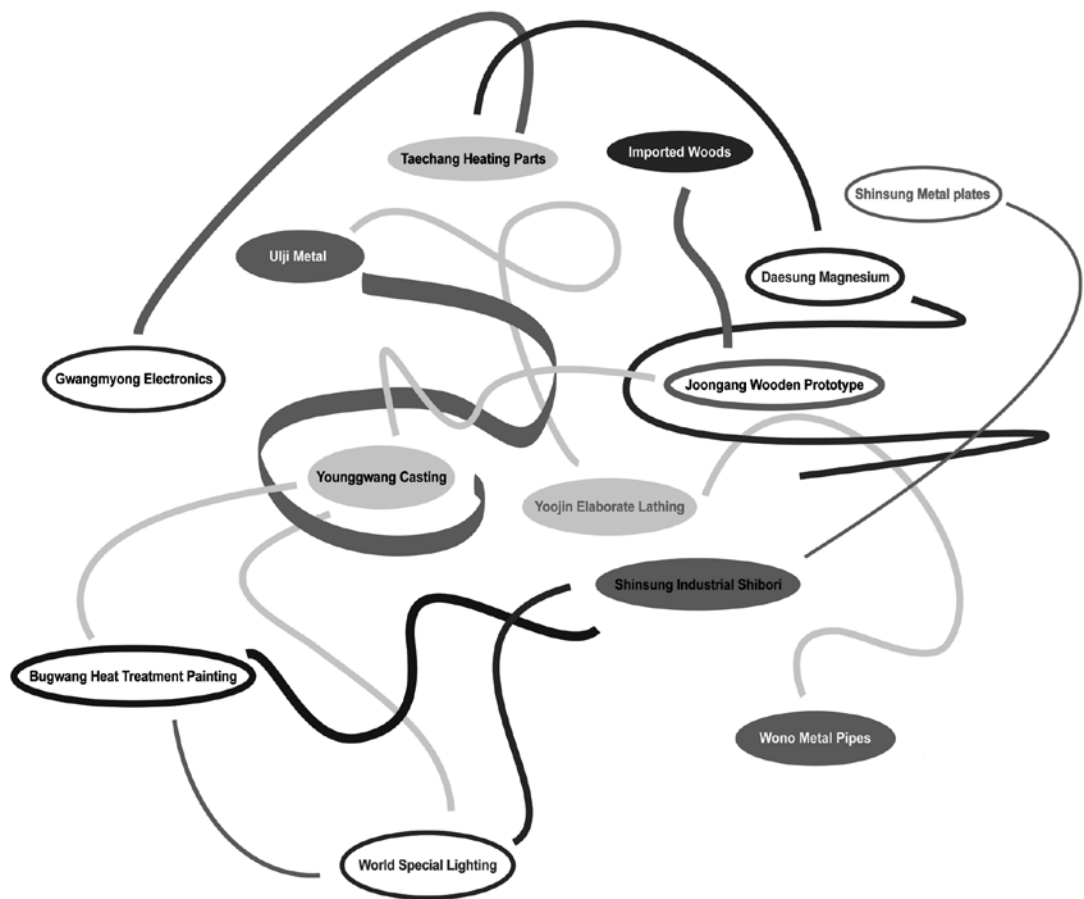
THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE:
THE FUTURE IS SELF-ORGANISED

STEPHAN DILLEMUTH, ANTHONY DAVIES AND JAKOB JAKOBSEN

Stephan Dillemuth in Munich,
Anthony Davies in London and
Jakob Jakobsen in Copenhagen,
12 June 2005.

Part 1

As workers in the cultural field we offer the following contribution
to the debate on the impact of neoliberalism on institutional relations:

– Cultural and educational institutions as they appear today are
nothing more than legal and administrative organs of the dominant
system. As with all institutions, they live in and through us; we participate
in their structures and programmes, internalise their values, transmit
their ideologies and act as their audience/public/social body.

– Our view: these institutions may present themselves to us as socially
accepted bodies, as somehow representative of the society we live in, but
they are nothing more than dysfunctional relics of the bourgeois project.
Once upon a time, they were charged with the role of promoting
democracy, breathing life into the myth that institutions are built on an
exchange between free, equal and committed citizens. Not only have they
failed in this task, but within the context of neoliberalism, have become
even more obscure, more unreliable and more exclusive.

– The state and its institutional bodies now share aims and objectives
so closely intertwined with corporate and neoliberal agendas that they
have been rendered indivisible. This intensification and expansion of free
market ideology into all aspects of our lives has been accompanied by
a systematic dismantling of all forms of social organisation and
imagination antithetical to the demands of capitalism.

– As part of this process it's clear that many institutions and their
newly installed managerial elites are now looking for escape routes out
of their inevitable demise and that, at this juncture, this moment of
crisis, they're looking at 'alternative' structures and what's left of the Left
to model their horizons, sanction their role in society and reanimate their
tired relations. Which of course we despise!

In their scramble for survival, cultural and educational institutions have shown how easily they can betray one set of values in favour of another and that's why our task now is to demand and adhere to the foundational and social principles they have jettisoned, by which we mean: transparency, accountability, equality and open participation.

– By transparency we mean an opening up of the administrative and financial functions/decision making processes to public scrutiny. By accountability we mean that these functions and processes are clearly presented, monitored and that they can in turn, be measured and contested by 'participants' at any time. Equality and open participation is exactly what it says – that men and women of all nationalities, race, colour and social status can participate in any of these processes at any time.

– Institutions as they appear today, locked in a confused space between public and private, baying to the demands of neoliberal hype with their new management strucures, are not in a position to negotiate the principles of transparency, accountability and equality, let alone implement them. We realise that responding to these demands might extend and/or guarantee institutions' survival but, thankfully, their deeply ingrained practices prevent them from even entertaining the idea on a serious level.

– In our capacity as workers with a political commitment to self-organisation we feel that any further critical contribution to institutional programmes will further reinforce the relations that keep these obsolete structures in place. We are fully aware that 'our' critiques, alternatives and forms of organisation are not just factored into institutional structures but increasingly utilised to legitimise their existence.

– The relationship between corporations, the state and its institutions is now so unbearable that we see no space for negotiation – we offer no contribution, no critique, no pathway to reform, no way in or out. We choose to define ourselves in relation to the social forms that we participate in and not the leaden institutional programmes laid out before us – our deregulation is determined by social, not market relations. There is no need for us to storm the Winter Palace, because most institutions are melting away in the heat of global capital anyway. We will provide no alternative. So let go!

The only question that remains is how to get rid of the carcass and deal with the stench:

– We are not interested in their so-called assets; their personnel, buildings, archives, programmes, shops, clubs, bars, facilities and spaces will all end up at the pawnbroker anyway…

– All we need is their cash in order to pay our way out of capitalism and take this opportunity to make clear our intention to supervise and mediate our own social capital, knowledge and networks.

– As a first step we suggest an immediate redistribution of their funds to already existing, self-organised bodies with a clear commitment to workers' and immigrants' rights, social (anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic) struggle and representation.

There is no alternative! The future is self-organised.

– In the early 1970s corporate analysts developed a strategy aimed at reducing uncertainty called 'there is no alternative' (TINA). Somewhat ironically we now find ourselves in agreement, but this time round we're the scenario planners and executors of our own future though we are, if nothing else, the very embodiment of uncertainty.

– In the absence of clearly stated opposition to the neoliberal system, most forms of collective and collaborative practice can be read as 'self-enterprise'. By which we mean, groupings or clusters of individuals set up to feed into the corporate controlled markets, take their seats at the table, cater to and promote the dominant ideology.

– Self-organisation should not be confused with self-enterprise or self-help, it is not an alternative or conduit into the market. It isn't a label, logo, brand or flag under which to sail in the waters of neoliberalism (even as a pirate ship as suggested by MTV)! It has no relationship to entrepreneurship or bogus 'career collectives'.

– In our view self-organisation is a byword for the productive energy of those who have nothing left to lose. It offers up a space for a radical re-politicisation of social relations – the first tentative steps towards realisable freedoms.

Self-organisation is:

– Something which predates representational institutions. To be more precise: institutions are built on (and often paralyse) the predicates and social forms generated by self-organisation.

– Mutually reinforcing, self-valorising, self-empowering, self-historicising and, as a result, not compatible with fixed institutional structures.

– A social and productive force, a process of becoming which, like capitalism, can be both flexible and opaque – therefore more than agile enough to tackle (or circumvent) it.

– A social process of communication and commonality based on exchange; sharing of similar problems, knowledge and available resources.

– A fluid, temporal set of negotiations and social relations which can be emancipatory – a process of empowerment.

– Something which situates itself in opposition to existing, repressive forms of organisation and concentrations of power.

– Always challenging power both inside the organisation and outside the organisation; this produces a society of resonance and conflict, but not based on fake dualities as at present.

– An organisation of deregulated selves. It is at its core a non-identity.

– A tool that doesn't require a cohesive identity or voice to enter into negotiation with others. It may reside within social forms but doesn't need to take on an identifiable social form itself.

– Contagious and inclusive, it disseminates and multiplies.

– The only way to relate to self-organisation is to take part, self-organise, connect with other self-organising initiatives and challenge the legitimacy of institutional representation.

We put a lid on the bourgeois project, the national museums will be stored in their very own archive, the Institutes of Contemporary Art will be handed over to the artists unions, the Universities and Academies will be handed over to the students, Siemens and all the other global players will be handed over to their workers. The state now acts as an administrative unit – just as neoliberalism has suggested it – but with mechanisms of control, transparency accountability and equal rights for all.

END

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It was originally conceived as a pamphlet with the aim of disrupting the so-called critical paths and careers being carved out by those working the base structure of the political-art fields. We're aware of contradictions, limits and problems with this text and invite all to measure the content in direct relation to the context in which it may appear. In fact, it has come as no surprise to us that its dodgy, legitimising potential has been most keenly exploited by those it originally set out to challenge.

Having let it fly we now invite you, the reader, to consider why it's in this publication, whose interests it serves and the power relations it helps to maintain.

COMMISSIONED ESSAYS

THE MANY ANDs OF
ART AND REVOLUTION

GERALD RAUNIG

AND is neither one thing nor the other, it's always in-between, between two things; it's the borderline, there's always a border, a line of flight or flow, only we don't see it, because it's the least perceptible of things. And yet it's along this line of flight that things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape.[1]

Not art *is…*, not revolution *is…*, but rather art *and…*, revolution *and….* It is not the essence of an event, a singularity or a concept that is relevant, but rather the becomings, the forces that permeate them, the concatenation with other events, singularities, concepts. The conjunction 'and' indicates these concatenations, and in turn it folds itself, differentiates itself into a multitude of forms and modes of concatenation. These are multitudes that never make up a totality, parts that never were and never become a whole: Deleuze and Guattari call these arrangements machines. These are not machines in the sense of technical apparatuses, mechanisms, the dualistic opposite of organisms and human beings, nor are they to be understood solely in the cyborg sense of human-machines striving to overcome this dualism of human and machine; even less are they machines in the sense of bureaucratic apparatuses, that which Marx calls 'state machinery', and which has been given the name 'state apparatus' in French poststructuralism under various extensions. Machines are not gridded structures and closed identities but rather agents of difference, communicating vessels, open stream-like arrangements. Machines tend to elude stratification, structuralisation and homogenisation. And because so many revolutions – especially the 'great' ones, like the French or the Russian Revolution – had nothing with which to oppose the terror of structuralisation and thus became *molar* revolutions, for this reason Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari speak of revolutionary machines when they describe a different, *molecular* type of revolution.

Thinking of revolution as a machine implies conceptualising revolution neither as a force of nature or as a single major rupture, nor bureaucratically as a process that can be planned as thoroughly and rationally as a more-or-less orderly takeover of power. Instead, the concept of the revolutionary machine brings the discursive and activist lines into view, which have grasped revolution as an uncompleted and uncompletable molecular

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[1] G. Deleuze, 'Three Questions on Six Times Two', *Negotiations, 1972–90* (trans. Martin Joughin), New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p.45.

process; these lines do not refer to the state as essence and as universal, but emerge *before* the state, *outside* the state. This does not mean, however, that revolutionary machines develop in a territory beyond the concrete evidences of the nation-state. It primarily means that they are not fixed on taking over the state apparatus, but rather direct their desire to what is beyond the *form* of the state. Revolutionary machines are arrangements in which three components unfold: resistance, insurrection and constituent power. Hence there is one component of everyday micropolitical oppositionality, one of massive break, and one of the experimental reinvention of social connections. First of all, these three components are inextricably interwoven; secondly, they are not to be understood as following one another in a temporal sequence of resistance, sudden insurrection and new social organisation; and thirdly, they do not fit into a dialectical understanding of negation and affirmation.

Resistance, insurrection, constituent power. Classical revolution theory sees a linear progression along the axis of time here: first all possible forms of resistance against the capitalist or otherwise corrupt incorporation of a contemporary society; *then* the major rupture; *then* the other, new, alternative society. Depending on the context, that means a socialist or – as in the case of the post-Real socialist societies – neoliberal society, or in the case of a Catholic revolution, paradise. Rather than understanding the three components of the revolutionary machine as this kind of linear sequence of major upheavals in the direction of a new society, it is a matter of removing them from the timeline and imagining their relation to one another. Despite their distinction in the analysis, the three components cannot be separated from one another; they mutually differentiate and actualise one another. Their partial overlapping determines the consistency of both the event and the concept of revolutionary machines. The revolutionary machine continuously runs through its components, taking place in the emergence of insurrection, resistance and constituent power interwoven in time.

In a concept of revolutionary machines reaching beyond molar Leninist notions of revolution, everyday resistance is to be imagined in both its complicity and its relation to power, insurrection not as national civil war but as a recurrent, post-national insurrection of non-conforming masses, and constituent power as an ever-new experiment with alternative forms of organisation producing something other than state apparatuses. Just as this constituent power as a potential (*potentia*) flees the forms of constituted power (*potestas*), new forms of resistance and insurrection are also, in turn, more than phenomena of negativity. Contrary to the superficial meaning of the word, resistance is not merely a reaction to domination; as anti-dialectical concepts, resistance and insurrection are productive, affirmative and creative.

Art history, art criticism and aesthetics refrain from mentioning what is political about art, yet they are especially quiet about the

concatenations of art and revolution. As many great names as there are in art history, who also were involved in revolution, the transversal cross-over of artistic and political activism is regularly trivialised, belittled or intentionally omitted. The 'and' is not permitted here; art, like revolution, loses its machinic quality when historicised and filtered through the disciplines of art. Whereas Gustave Courbet became more and more interested in cultural politics in the 1860s, art history only recounts Courbet's artistic decline; Courbet the revolutionary, member of the Council of the Paris Commune, is completely overlooked. While the Situationists played an important role in events leading up to May 1968 in Paris, this phase of their activity, unlike their art-anti-art phase of the 1950s or Guy Debord's films from the 1970s, remains in the dark. And when art practices today result in temporary overlaps between art machines and revolutionary machines in the currents of the counter-globalisation movement, the struggles of migrants or the movement against precarisation, they may perhaps be briefly exploited and marketed in the art field, but not included as transversal practices in the canons of art studies.

In our contemporary experience of molecular social movements, but also in the minority histories of marginal historiography, there are multiple forms of relationships and exchanges between the two machines. The combination art/revolution is not a scurrilous exception, but rather a recurring figure in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, albeit under different conditions and in varying forms. Yet what exactly happens when revolutionary machines meet art machines, when neighbouring zones develop for a certain period of time? What occurs along the lines of flight of art *and* revolution? And, most of all, what is the composition of this 'and', the quality of the concatenation? To conceptually differentiate the multitude of forms, I have provisionally proposed four modes of how these arrangements of revolutionary machines and art machines relate to one another: a sequential concatenation of following one another in time; a negative concatenation of being incommensurably next to one another; a hierarchical concatenation of self-determined subordination; and a transversal concatenation of flowing through one another.[2]

Sequential practices of following one *after* another develop in a linear way along lines of time suggesting a sequence of art, revolution and then art again: for instance, Gustave Courbet's turbulent metamorphosis from artist to (art-) politician in the Paris Commune and then back again to an artist persecuted because of his political phase, or the continuous *passage* of the Situationist International from the art field into the political

[2] For a more intense reading of poststructuralist theory of molecular revolution, see G. Raunig, *Art and Revolution. Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century,* Los Angeles/New York: Semiotext(e), 2007.

Art and Social Change

field.[3] These practices are separated by almost a hundred years, which includes the period in which the ideology of the autonomous artist that was predominant for Courbet – and influenced by him – was overcome through forms of the self-determined heteronomisation of the early avant-gardes of the twentieth century and the radical instrumentalisation of art machines by fascist and Stalinist regimes. Yet a comparison of the two examples of a *temporal sequence* of art machine and revolutionary machine still reveals projects that are equally counter to the contrary patterns of the strict separation of art and politics, and that of the totalising mergence of art into life.

With the politicisation of the Situationist International from the Lettrist beginnings in the 1950s to May 1968 in Paris, despite all the internal practices of exclusion, the S.I. carried out an *opening* into the space of the revolutionary machine as a discursive arrangement. From the artistic-political practice of creating, performing and processing the 'situation', a pre-productive opening emerged in the course of the 1960s thereby triggering revolutionary machines. Although the pre-productive function of the S.I. in no way justifies the obsolete notion of the artistic avant-garde, it indicates the creation of the conditions that make molecular revolution possible. In the history of the reception of the S.I., however, this aspect is more or less overlooked in the separation and categorisation of their actions either into art history or the context of revolutionary action. Whereas the political histories obliterated the role of the S.I. before and during May 1968 in Paris, not least because of the many enemies that Debord made, the attempts at historicisation that inscribe the S.I. in art history place the S.I.'s art affiliation, probably for the same reason, in the foreground at the expense of their effects in or on political movements.

This kind of traditional separation between art and politics, however, corresponds only slightly with the practice of the protagonists, and not at all with the theory of the S.I. Even in the early 'Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play', published in the first edition of the publication *Internationale Situationniste*, there is an unmistakable expression of this twofold and indivisible use of action and representation, of political and aesthetic means in the situation. It is a matter of 'struggle' *and* 'representation': 'the struggle for a life in step with desire, and the concrete representation of such a life.'[4] The explosive mixture of raving cultural criticism, revolutionary theory and contemporary political texts culminating in Debord's *La société du spectacle* and Vaneigem's *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* (both published in the same year, 1967) was one of the most important theoretical antecedents of May 1968 in Paris. Their

3 For more information on the examples to be mentioned here of Gustave Courbet, Situationist International, Viennese Actionism and the radical left Proletkult, see G. Raunig, *ibid*.

4 Situationist International, 'Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play', *Internationale Situationniste* #1 (trans. Reuben Keehan), June 1958: www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/play.html

memorable words spread far beyond the walls of Paris, inspiring several generations of activists *and* intellectuals with their pointed terms, both before and after 1968.

Beyond the effects of the Situationists' publishing activities, the constant politicisation of the S.I. corresponded to their development from an artistic collective simulating a political party into a component of a social movement with no resemblance at all to a political party. During the 1960s the S.I.'s production shifted from art-immanent anti-art propaganda to more political texts and political theory; Debord completely abandoned filmmaking until the end of the S.I. and became temporarily affiliated with the theoretical circle around Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis and their magazine *Socialisme ou Barbarie.* Closer to 1968, however, the practice of the S.I. developed more and more in the direction of an intersection of theoretical impulses for the movement, on the one hand, and an affiliation with the newest forms of political action, on the other. Even though the S.I. remained true to its nonchalant stance and superficially maintained the appearance of a traditional avant-garde (including its outmoded relationship to the masses), the combination of refusing to adapt to the form of the political party and the radicality of their ideas resulted in the spread of Situationist theories beyond the International itself.

Following the influential Situationist interventions of 1966 and 67 at the University of Strasbourg, Situationist positions, signs and strategies were dispersed not only throughout the movement on 22 March, but also in a broad field of subversion and action culminating in the revolts of May 68. The influence of the S.I. is evident especially in the specific Situationist genres of comics and subvertising, but also in the slogans of the posters and graffiti. Debord's increasingly vehement anti-art propaganda and the friction between art and revolution are constants in a long passage, a transition, a successive development from the art machine to the revolutionary machine. Experiences, strategies and abilities that emerged in the 1950s in the art field – in confrontation and friction with traditions of art such as Dadaism, Surrealism and Lettrism – underwent a transformation in the course of this passage. In the 60s the S.I. increasingly left its original field and began cultivating the field of political theory and revolutionary action.

If vestiges of a sentimental view of the avant-garde still echo in Situationist writings, then this is due not least to the problematic aspect of all sequential forms of the concatenation of art and revolution: the linear idea of development beginning with art and ending in revolution. In the concept of a dialectical movement sublating art into revolution, a remainder of the teleological fixation on the relationship between art and revolution is retained. Similar to the way in which Gustave Courbet went from artist to revolutionary and back to artist, Guy Debord also returned to art practice and filmmaking after the dissolution of the S.I.

Around the same time as the pinnacle of Situationist politicisation, the collision of Viennese Actionism and the student activists in Vienna May 68 also took place as an incommensurable side-by-side of art and revolution, which brings us to the second mode of concatenation. In the context of authoritarian post-war Austria the endeavours of artists were concentrated on minimal free spaces for new art practices and thus on marginal public spheres in an otherwise rigidly conservative art field until the late 60s. Beyond the early stance of Otto Mühl, who was in permanent verbal revolt in all directions, the development of the actions by Mühl, Günter Brus, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Hermann Nitsch and others between 1966 and 68 can be seen as a sporadic, wild process of politicisation. Chaos and the destruction of bourgeois society were propagated in these actions, sometimes as a fundamentally critical attack on the state, society *and* revolutionary groups, and other times as use of the over-affirmation, radical escalation and exaggeration of reactionary positions. With the start of more open collaborations with other artists (primarily with the literary scene associated with Oswald Wiener), Mühl and Brus succeeded in opening up the Viennese Actionism group to something beyond individual-anarchist eruptions, and thus also to audiences beyond those which consisted solely of a circle of friends and the marginal art scene in Vienna. The action *Art and Revolution* on 7 June 1968 at the University of Vienna is generally regarded as the culmination and the end of this phase of opening and politicisation.

Whereas in Paris and elsewhere the universities burgeoned as hotbeds of uprisings, the space of the Viennese university – which was not occupied in May 1968 – was doubly ill-chosen for the concatenation of art and revolution. On the one hand – with their half-hour spectacle of pissing, shitting, a little fire and a staged whipping – the Actionists (in addition to the Viennese Actionists' Brus and Mühl, Oswald Wiener, Peter Weibel and others also took part in the action) were unable to break through the hierarchical architecture of the lecture hall, so that the polar and molar relationship of performers and audience intensified. On the other hand, this particular setting resulted in an especially unproductive collision between the positions of the two organising 'parties': the student activists wanted to win over the apolitical artists to the cause of the revolution, whereas the Actionists, for their part, wanted to prove to the political revolutionaries how Catholic or Victorian or bourgeois they really were. This rigidly antagonistic situation, the irrational collision of the two positions or rather of their respective attributions and projections, was to be continued into the structure of the action. *Art and Revolution* was more of a spontaneous montage of individual performances following the pattern of the Dadaist simultaneous lectures than the opening of an art machine in the direction of revolutionary becoming.

Thus, even in its brief phase of politicisation, the practice of Viennese Actionism remained incommensurable with revolutionary machines. As

a secondary effect of this incommensurability and negative form of concatenation, not only was the student organisation dissolved on court order and thus the students deprived of their organisational form, but the parallel persecution of the Actionists by the tabloid press and by the reactionary Austrian courts resulted in a wave of criminalisation in both the media and the legal system simultaneously. Consequently, this loose group previously operating only in the tiny progressive segment of the art field was forced into the representational mechanisms of the media, fragmented and finally sent back into the art field along isolated career paths (partly in exile in Germany). From this point on, the protagonists pursued their respective practices in a self-referential way, and the traces of the failed experiments in overlapping the aesthetic and the political were lost. Schwarzkogler committed suicide in 1969. Brus undertook increasingly radical actions alone ending with *Zerreißprobe* (Endurance Test; 1970), and then returned to drawing and poetry. Nitsch became immersed in the pomp of his *Orgy Mystery Theatre*, constantly building his church and marketing its relics. Mühl radicalised his political experiments in the Action Analytic commune (founded in 1973), building his state within a state with increasingly fascistic structuralisation and finally landing in prison following a charge of sexual abuse in the 1990s.

Negative concatenation experiments such as the middle phase of Viennese Actionism around 1968 are to be distinguished from the *negation* of concatenation that is widespread in the field of art, which fundamentally negates the concatenation of artistic and political activism. In negative concatenations there is no one seeking to 'take over power', nor is there a totalisation of relations. Instead, a relation of non-compatibility arises from the collisions of systems that are all too different. Concatenation as a political practice of organising collectivity, as a constituent power and hence as a necessary component of the revolutionary machine, remains a secret 'desire'. Yet even in its negative mode, even in Vienna in 1968, the potentiality of the concatenation of artistic Actionism and student political activism is apparent – even if only through minor actors such as Otmar Bauer and Herbert Stumpfl, who operated in both contexts but played secondary roles alongside the four (as later defined in art history) Actionists.

The third mode of concatenation consists in the *hierarchical concatenation*, with art and revolution one beneath the other. A hierarchy can be constructed here in both directions: there are cases where artists are accused of appropriating the pathos of revolution and instrumentalising the sensation of revolution. There is also a long history of lamentations that suggests politics subordinates art. The history of the art of the Russian Revolution frequently serves as a prominent example of the latter. In this case, however, it is also clearly evident that a hierarchy is by no means preconditioned by a relationship of *coerced* subordination, as was taken to an extreme, especially in Stalin's purging orgies. Rather, most artistic practices

around 1917 involved a subordination *self-determined* by the artists, who did not merely subordinate themselves to the revolution, but appended an 'and' onto it. For a certain period in the setting of the Russian Revolution and early post-revolutionary Soviet society, radical art practice was able to assume the function of affirming, expanding, spreading and extending the revolution. Even then it was not simply a case of the dissolution of the difference between revolutionary machine and art machine, nor was it a one-dimensional introduction of instrumentalisation, such as that which is generally and superficially regarded as typical of the Soviet avant-garde, namely placing art at the service of a political party or a state apparatus. In the context of the Russian Revolution, self-determined heteronomisation produced a multitude of art practices that saw themselves as parts and cogs of the revolutionary machine, producing a surplus for the revolution.

Beyond this distinction between a coerced and a self-determined subordination in the early years of the Revolution, a completely different phenomenon in the early 1920s must also be mentioned regarding only *putative* subordination; an apparent hierarchy of revolution and art. In the radical-left *Proletkult* practice of agit-theatre, the hierarchical mode of concatenation was transformed. While Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Tretyakov officially operated a 'theatre of the scientific age', they were experimenting with machines in various forms: with the bodies of the players who continued the development of the practice of Meyerholdian biomechanics; with constructivist stage-sets like technical apparatuses in the factories, into which they took their practices; and finally with the audience as machine.[5]

This subversively affirmative form of self-determined subordination finally brings us closer to the fourth mode of the concatenation: temporary *overlaps*. These micropolitical attempts at the *transversal concatenation* of art machines and revolutionary machines, in which both overlap, do not incorporate one into the other, but rather enter into a temporary, concrete relationship of exchange. In this context we naturally could examine the aforementioned practices of the other three modes in terms of their transversality factor and the quality of the mutual, non-heteronomous exchange, in other words in terms of the manner and the extent to which revolutionary machines and art machines intertwine. To conclude this essay, however, I would like to discuss a more recent example of transversal concatenation.

A group with diverse backgrounds in activism and art production appeared for the first time in 2002 in Barcelona under the name YOMANGO,

5 G. Raunig, 'A Few Fragments on Machines', in Simon Sheikh (ed.), *Capital (It Fails Us Now),* Berlin: b_books, 2006.

which conducted a new performative practice of appropriation with artistic means.[6]

In colloquial Spanish '*yo mango*' means 'I shoplift'; on the one hand, commodities are shoplifted in a very concrete but playful manner; on the other hand signifiers are separated from the things they signify. In the name YOMANGO there consequently is a formal allusion to the group's practice: the appropriation of the name and the logo of the famous Spanish transnational textile corporation 'Mango' exemplifies their programme.

YOMANGO especially likes to liberate products imprisoned by multinational corporations. They did so, for instance, in a broad appropriation action during the European Social Forum in Florence in 2002, which ended in a huge collective dinner performance with all the appropriated food. A multitude of invisible groups had managed to assemble the components of a very visible action of social disobedience. After Genoa 2001 it had become clear that instead of attacking IMF, G8 or WTO, the new forms of direct action would have to be more diffuse, combine components of visibility and invisibility, and become molecular interventions into everyday life.

YOMANGO also stands for the liberation of signs that end up in captivity due to rigid copyright policies, imprisoned less by authors than by globally operating corporations. And just as these corporations sell not only their commodities but increasingly also their brands as lifestyle, YOMANGO celebrates shoplifting as a lifestyle. In honour of the first anniversary of the revolution in Argentina, in December 2002 they incited a dance in the midst of a supermarket. Seven couples not only skilfully danced the tango, but at the same time they also pocketed bottles of champagne in their specially prepared clothing, which they later consumed with pleasure during a collective visit to a bank. In other performances the appropriated goods are distributed amongst those who are hungry and thirsty.

In addition to these kinds of performative actions and a website, there are videos and workshops that open up and distribute the methods of YOMANGO's artistic practice as a machine, carrying it out into the world.[7] YOMANGO seminars are lifestyle workshops on civil disobedience and offer specific instructions for evading technological and communicative security measures as elegantly as possible. Yet the performances and video works are not just anti-capitalist training and propaganda measures, they also are playful examples of a micropolitics of embodied criticism *and* collective wish production. Hence their work does not act as more blatant criticism of capitalistic consumption, but it is the radical affirmation of a *different* form

6 Although the group derived from various fields of the radical left, unlike radical anarchism it has not principally rejected art institutions, but rather has a more parasitic relationship to institutions. Hence the practice of YOMANGO has also been developed, among other contexts, within the framework of the workshop 'Las Agencias' at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona (MACBA).

7 See www.yomango.net

of consumption, the reversal of the appropriation of common goods into private property, and also the reappropriation of cognitive work and the production of signs. It is also along this line that the transversal concatenation of the machines YOMANGO and Euromayday emerges.[8] Founded in 2001 in Milan, the practice of this new Mayday Parade had spread to over 20 European cities by 2006. In a movement of opening up from the narrow focus on labour, unemployment and working conditions to the precarisation of work and life in all their aspects, 1 May was given a new meaning. Euromayday's non-*representationist* forms of action had their predecessors especially in the Reclaim the Streets parties of the 1990s, which arose primarily through combining militant reappropriation of street and rave culture.[9] Yet beyond the temporality of the event (the parade and the actions), a second temporality also developed, that of the process and the duration of organising in a European-wide process that allowed a new mode of internationalisation to flare up.

Euromayday was organised in Barcelona for the first time three years after the first Mayday Parade in Milan, and the artist activists from YOMANGO were among the important components of the concatenation. On the evening of 1 May 2004, some 10,000 demonstrators moved from the central square of the university through the city to the beach quarter, Barceloneta: *sans-papiers* and migrants, autonomists, political activists from left-wing and radical leftist unions and parties, artist activists and education workers of all kinds rolled through the city centre of Barcelona in a stream of people dancing, chanting and painting. This re-appropriation of the street took place primarily as a new arrangement of bodies and signs in an area where action and representation blur.

The streets that the demonstration passed through were transformed into painted zones at breathtaking speed. Under the protection of the demonstration the city was submerged in a sea of signs: stencil graffiti, political slogans, posters, stickers, indications of websites, labelled zebra crossings, contextualising murals and performative actions. The spread of creativity, the diffusion of the artistic into the society of cognitive capitalism thus rebounded on its surfaces: like the logos and displays of corporate capitalism that standardise city centres based on the creativity of a multitude of cognitive workers. Creativity – practised in precarious jobs – spread out over these logos and displays of the urban zones of consumption as their counterpart, making their way across the shop windows, city lights, rolling boards and LED screens, and across the walls of the buildings and the streets. What was painted over the urban displays of Barcelona, which was to mark the cityscape for days afterwards, was not reminiscent, neither in form nor in content, of familiar old-style political propaganda. A mixture of

8 See www.euromayday.org

9 See M. Hamm, 'Reclaim the Streets! Global Protests and Local Space', http://eipcp.net/ transversal/0902/hamm/en

adbusting, culture jamming and contemporary political propaganda predominated as a generalisation of the street art of sprayers and taggers. For a brief period the practices blurred: the concatenation of the art machine YOMANGO and the revolutionary machine of Euromayday created a confusion, an 'and', in which art machine and revolutionary machine permeate one another, mutually interlock and become parts of one another.

> AND is of course diversity, multiplicity, the destruction of identities. […] But diversity and multiplicity are nothing to do with aesthetic wholes … or dialectical schemas…. When Godard says everything has two parts, that in a day there's morning and evening, he's not saying it's one or the other, or that one becomes the other, becomes two. Because multiplicity is never in the terms, however many, nor in all the terms together, the whole. Multiplicity is precisely in the 'and', which is different in nature from elementary components and collections of them.[10]

[10] Gilles Deleuze, 'Three Questions on *Six Times Two'*, *Negotiations, op. cit.,* p.44.

REBUILDING THE ART OF THE PEOPLE

JOHN MILNER

Standing at his lectern the veteran socialist, artist, designer and poet William Morris declared that 'association instead of competition, social order instead of individualist anarchy' were the only ways to free creativity from commerce and return it to the working man. His radical lecture 'Art and Socialism' in 1884 demanded an end to competition and a new relation between art and work, enabling the creativity of the worker to flourish, and the art of the people to be rebuilt.

The dreamer in Morris loved the anonymous creativity of medieval times, but the businessman Morris wanted his workers creative and happy. He attended rallies and shouted loud about a new society. There was growing awareness of the revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871, its bloody suppression, and the rise of international socialism.

Morris's fellow socialist, artist and craftsman Walter Crane designed banners for British workers' parades. He also published a work dedicated 'To the Memory of the Paris Commune 1871', in which a black-winged figure wearing a revolutionary cap and carrying a hammer in her waistband holds up a torch and wreath above a distant Paris. In a comparable image made in 1879, *The Body is in the Earth but the Idea Still Stands*, the French Communard artist Georges Pilotell drew a banner above the fallen figure of the Commune, declaring that the Commune of Paris saved the Republic, decreed the sovereignty of labour, atheism and the destruction of monuments that perpetuate hatred between peoples.

The antithesis of individual creative will and collective creativity runs throughout the period of 1871–1917, from the Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution, in artists' attempts to change the world.

Walter Crane
To the Memory of the Paris Commune, 1871

The painter Gustave Courbet was arraigned before a crowded tribunal in Versailles in 1871. He could expect the death penalty. Courbet, as Minister of Art under the revolutionary Commune in 1871, had defied the French Republican government that settled with the Prussian invaders. Courbet, the sculptor Jules Dalou and others, had vigorously supported the revolutionary rebellion that descended the hill of Montmartre and took control of Paris.

As all of this happened, Prussian forces encircling Paris watched and waited for the Versailles government to destroy the Commune. Eventually the Versailles forces pushed through Paris from the Arc de Triomphe to the cemetery of Père Lachaise. Thousands were slaughtered in the streets, part of the Louvre was burnt, the Palais des Tuileries and the Hôtel de Ville were gutted by flames. Both sides fought ferociously and the beautiful parks of Paris were used as communal graves.

Jules Dalou had escaped to London, but Courbet was arrested as a revolutionary insurgent. He was marched 20 kilometres to Versailles to face the tribunal condemning communards to prison, deportation or death. Courbet was charged with demolishing the Vendôme Column, a monument to Napoleon's military victories. It presented Napoleon as a great emperor in the Roman manner, complete with toga. By contrast the Commune despised war on principle, and had even invited Prussian troops to throw away their weapons to join their international brotherhood. The Commune, including Courbet, had voted to destroy the column.

The Demolition of the Vendôme Column, 1871
© Roger-Viollet

Photographers, reporters and on-lookers saw the column smash to the ground on 16 May 1871. Courbet proposed a replacement made from French and German cannons to mark an end to war. At the tribunal he said in mitigation that he had removed bronze relief sculptures from the column before its destruction. Awaiting judgment he had the presence of mind to draw the women and children incarcerated with him, but in court he was clearly a sick man, sweating with dropsy. Manet, who admired Courbet's independence, drew the courtroom. Courbet was found guilty, but was spared deportation or death. Instead he was jailed and presented with a vast bill for the column's reconstruction. Finally, when illness had gained him freedom, he fled to Switzerland to escape the monumental debt.

Courbet could reflect upon a career in which public and private met. Many found him arrogant. As his *The Painter's Studio, an Allegory of Seven Years of my Creative Life* had shown in 1855, he alone was the centre of his creative

world, painting in a vast studio surrounded by artistic and intellectual friends, and others that he knew or observed. A child admires his painting like an innocent critic, while a female model watches him at work. Courbet admired their directness of observation, free of learned conventions, obscure theories and elitist good taste. He was not a caricaturist offering social criticism, as his friend Daumier was. Like the child he simply and stubbornly maintained his viewpoint.

The structure of opportunities for artists of ability in Courbet's day made this stance important. The annual Paris Salon, administered effectively through the Académie and jury, displayed works and allowed anyone who wished to buy. As Courbet was not Parisian, and did not comply with conventions, an irreconcilable confrontation arose. To see and paint the world his way was an affront to authority, leading to meetings with government ministers and a cynical offer of honours that Courbet loudly rejected. At the great 'Expositions Universelles' held in Paris in 1855 and 1867, when Napoleon was host to world leaders, Courbet erected independent pavilions in an act of defiance. Manet followed Courbet's example in 1867, exhibiting his paintings of the *Execution of the Emperor Maximillian*. These rebuked and exposed Napoleon for installing Maximillian in Mexico and then abandoning him. Exhibiting 'against the grain' created opposition and debate. It challenged the structure of control where prizes acted like a filter to sustain the established cultural framework. To challenge this was to adopt a radical position politically. At a World Fair its effect was magnified into a political challenge.

Later, in 1871 when Courbet was part of the Commune, he proposed exhibitions without juries or prizes, as well as the nationalisation of museums. Entrance fees were to fund exhibitions. He outlined a structure of state exhibitions and museums owned by all. Artists would find their own means of production, promotion and sales.

Only three years after the catastrophic events of the Commune, the first Impressionist group exhibition opened in Paris. Here, in 1874, younger artists showed paintings filled with sunlight and the colourful life of the elegant, commercial boulevards. Yet the ruins of important buildings in Paris had not been cleared away. For the Impressionists, painting the pleasures of the Tuileries Gardens somehow involved deliberately avoiding the wreckage of the Tuileries Palace to the west, and the burnt-out Hôtel de Ville to the east (rebuilt 1880). They simply omitted this evidence of insurrection and carnage. Instead they generalised the communal daily experience of citizens now forming a vigorous republican organism. This form of amnesia allowed Paris to be celebrated for its own vitality. There is no trace of the Commune.

Under the Second Empire, patronage descended from the court, but in the new republic the commerce, diversity and independence of life in the boulevard provided patronage. Impressionists in 1874 called themselves Independent Artists when they exhibited in the galleries of the celebrated

photographer Nadar, in a fashionable boulevard, in the midst of trade, patronised by customers who experienced these same streets, parks, bars and entertainments. Soon art dealers' galleries became an established outlet for contemporary artists. All of the Impressionists took advantage of this. Their paintings showed the republic as a dynamic mode of life in which art, fashion and business could thrive. To achieve this they ignored destruction, poverty and squalor.

Only the World Fair of 1889 finally obliterated the damage of 1871. During that time Impressionist painting was reinterpreted and developed by a younger generation. Seurat recognised the modernity of the Eiffel Tower and painted its construction in 1889. He recognised the Republic rebranding itself internationally as the capital of elegance and industry, qualities that the tower perfectly combines. The great exhibition formally commemorated the centenary of the French Revolution of 1789 but ignored anything inconvenient within this period, so as to project a Republic triumphantly able to embrace a wide spectrum of political views.

When a competition was announced for a monument to the Republic, the fugitive communard Jules Dalou anonymously submitted an ambitious design for the *Triumph of the Republic*. The largest bronze of its time, it was unveiled to immense crowds in the Place de la Nation. Dalou's figure of Fortune stands on a globe mounted on a triumphal chariot drawn by lions. To one side walks a female figure (Agriculture), and to the other a powerful worker with hammer and tools (Industry). At the rear, Plenty pours out fruit and cereals from a trailing cornucopia. It was far more vigorously optimistic, complex, robust and impressive than the *Monument to Labour* designed by Rodin, or the monumental figures of workers designed by Constantin Meunier in Belgium.

Among the Impressionists it was Camille Pissarro who was most committed to a political position sympathetic to the ideas of the Commune. As the Republic grew in confidence and wealth, the contrast of rich and poor in the city became sharper. Pissarro despised its effervescent sexuality and theatricality. His *Turpitudes Sociales* of 1889–90 illustrates his despair at such frivolity amidst poverty and degradation. Like Courbet, he had an anarchist revolutionary outlook. Pissarro formed an allegiance with the young Georges Seurat and Paul Signac. He adopted their *pointilliste* technique of painting, and he shared their radical views. Seurat, Signac and especially the divisionist painter Maximilien Luce saw the Commune as a task not yet complete. Thirty years after the barricades had fallen, Luce was still painting anonymous fallen communards lying dead on the cobblestones of the barricades.

The critic Félix Fénéon was among their supporters and a promoter of the project for the *Salon des Indépendants* that was founded in 1884, the final realisation of a salon without a jury, an egalitarian structure enabling cultural change from below. Fénéon was a critic, journalist and magazine editor who

became editor-in-chief of the *La Revue Blanche*, for which the painters Bonnard, Vuillard and others made designs and posters. Fénéon also worked for overtly anarchist publications in 1891–94. He was a friend of the anarchist Emile Henry, who was executed in 1894 for two fatal bomb attacks in Paris. Fénéon himself was accused of bombing the foyer of the Hôtel Foyot on 4 April 1894, but was acquitted at his trial. Luce made a lithograph portrait of him at Mazas prison. Fénéon, the aging Pissarro and the young Luce all despaired of Parisian society and Republican government, and kept alive the fundamentalist revolutionary views of the Commune well into the 1890s.[1] It was the divisionist Signac who made the most celebrated portrait of Fénéon. He also appeared in a group portrait by the Belgian neo-Impressionist Henry van der Velde, along with the playwright Maurice Maeterlinck and others. Fénéon's artistic and political attitudes were well known in artistic and literary circles in Brussels, in the groups *Les XX* and *La Vie Moderne*. They also found an echo in the industrialised landscapes of Northern Flanders. They became one of the growing number of independent groups, periodicals and exhibition societies springing up across Europe in the 1890s. Divisionism and the workers' movements frequently appeared together. In Italy, Giuseppe da Volpeda's immense protest painting *The Fourth Estate: The Proletariat*, a rousing public work, was painted with a divisionist technique. Similarly the divisionist works of Giacomo Balla, including *The Worker's Day*, and Umberto Boccioni's *The City Rises* of 1909, with its new building-sites and scaffolding, continued to associate divisionist technique with the emergent power of the labour force. In a related development, the independent Secession groups in Munich, Berlin and Vienna brought art and work together in the context of design and architecture.

Politically-active and committed artists used the *Salon des Independants* to persuade the viewing public to change the world around them. Some introduced the Republic's workers into grand compositions to make a new image for society. So Seurat's confident and ordinary suburban workers taking in the spring warmth replace the river gods and water nymphs of academic art, and exude an atmosphere of harmonious society in which work and pleasure each have their measured place. In Seurat's idyllic *Bathers at Asnières*, they sit along the Seine within sight of their factories. As these bland and anonymous workers relax from their labours in a golden light, they take on the stature of heroic figures. But when Seurat, and also Vincent van Gogh, turned to the poorer industrial suburbs of Paris, they painted gaunt fragmented apartment blocks – sites less coherent, less pleasant, cheaper and grimmer than the city itself. At the same time Luce was painting industrial suburbs and factory yards in a way that made his political sympathies clear. Many people in Monmartre were still living in wooden

[1] See John G. Hutton, *Neo-Impressionism and the Search for Solid Ground: Art, Science and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.

sheds. Graphic artist and anarchist Théodore Steinlen lived there, for example, surrounded by the cats that feature in his posters for the *Chat Noir* cabaret in Montmartre. Steinlen, who lived in poverty, used his formidable graphic skill to draw the dead of the Paris Commune rising up through the city streets to haunt complacent citizens who had forgotten what happened, while the printmaker Félix Vallotton recorded the unrest and aggression that he witnessed between the police and the poor.

In Germany, the printmaker and sculptor Käthe Kollwitz had first been drawn to the engravings of Max Klinger, the Symbolist painter, sculptor and engraver of the later 1880s and 90s, who was among the most celebrated and strangest artists of his time. Klinger had unnerving narrative skills which he employed in portfolios of prints executed in minute detail to create the uncanny clarity of nightmare, in low-life scenes of the dark city streets, scenes of prostitution and violence, as well as strikes, political protests and rebellion.

When Kollwitz seized upon these dramatic skills, she stripped them of their fantasy and instead made unforgettably harrowing images of the poor, bereaved and suffering. These she witnessed and drew frankly, without illusions, but with immense sympathy. Her images of the *Weavers' Revolt*, closest to Klinger's example, have the pathos of contemporary theatre. Her sympathy for herded and defeated workers had the potential for use as political comment, but she refused to commit her message into the hands of others. As the wife of a doctor, she constantly witnessed the long line of the destitute poor and sick, an experience that informed her *Mother with Dead Child* (1903). The unprecedented emotive power of these works is based on intense observation that she promoted through the medium of lithography. This medium permits the slightest soft touch to be caught and made public. Chéret, Bonnard and Lautrec had used colour lithography to revolutionise the poster and to find an outlet for the artist literally in the street. Kollwitz, however, refrained from colour in her prints, which enhanced their intimacy and impact. She was also a sculptor; her sense of form is explicit in the visual modelling of her figures in both her lithographs and bronzes. No erudition was demanded of the viewer, no obscurity impaired her directness. Grief at her son's death in war was an utterly personal agony, but her prints condemn this cruel stupidity in any country and at any time. Kollwitz reconciled personal agony and universal experience. When she makes a figure shout 'No More War!' her outraged demand is public and universal, but no less personal and private. Here is no nationalist pomp, no political jargon, only an appalled demand for change.

By contrast, Edvard Munch's *Sick Child* (1907) was not a cry for change, and the allegories of suffering in Max Beckmann's visions seem elaborately theatrical and tuned to a private iconography. These show the modesty of Kollwitz's position. There is no paraphernalia about her unrelenting observation of human hopes, love and suffering. Kollwitz avoided the

rhetoric of nationalism and heroism, even as the evidence of suffering in war rose higher round her.

In neutral Switzerland protest against war was possible and a pacifist fury provoked the eruption of Dada events in Zurich to fight 'against the death-throes and death-drunkenness' of the time.[2] The anarchic gatherings of Dada employed irrational spontaneity, but their underlying sense was clear and driven by despair. As Dada poet Tristan Tzara declared:

There is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished. We must sweep and clean. Affirm the cleanliness of the individual after the state of madness, aggressive and complete madness of a world abandoned to the hands of bandits, who rend one another and destroy the centuries.[3]

Many Dadaists embraced this communist internationalism and abandoned patriotism – especially after the Russian Revolution of 1917. 'Dadaism demands,' wrote Richard Huelsenbeck and Raoul Hausmann in 1919, 'the international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual men and women on the basis of radical communism', requiring 'the immediate expropriation of property (socialisation) and the communal feeding of all; the erection of cities of light and gardens which will belong to society as a whole and prepare man for a state of freedom', as well as 'the immediate erection of a state art centre' and 'the elimination of the concept of property'.[4] In the shadows a new image of harmonious society was glimpsed, in a clean, healthy and Utopian world. In this context art as a luxury commodity was soon the target of attack in both Germany and Russia.

Dadaists, at their most political in Berlin, operated between horror and entertainment, in absurd celebrations and mockery of ruthless militarism and violence. George Grosz published bitter images of a defeated postwar Germany where desperate soldiers beg in the street and financiers patronise prostitutes in bars and cabarets. His contemporary, the painter Otto Dix, made his protest against the horrors of war on a grand scale in a triptych of death and destruction, where decaying bodies are caught on the wire at the front. There is no redeeming light here. Both Grosz and Dix teetered at the edge of psychological disaster to make their vitriolic message effective as agitation, flying fiercely in the face of common sense, nationalism, religion and decency. A dead pig, hanging in military uniform from the ceiling of a Berlin Dada exhibition made their point. But the German communist revolution of 1918, failed when it might have succeeded in the wake

[2] Hugo Ball, 'Dada Fragments 1916–17', *Flucht auf der Zeit* (Flight from Time), Munich/Leipzig, 1927; cited in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p.251.

[3] Tristan Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto', read in Zurich 23 March 1918 and published in *Dada*, no.3, 1918; cited in C. Harrison and P. Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, *op. cit.*, p.256.

[4] Richard Huelsenbeck and Raoul Hausmann 'What is Dada and What Does it Want in Germany' *Dada*, no.1, 1919. See C. Harrison and P. Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, *op. cit.*, p.259–60.

of revolution in Russia. Even so, the young architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe designed a public monument to the German revolutionaries Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg. There were enough artists sympathetic to the German revolution of November 1918 that they formed the *Novembergruppe* within one month of it happening to express their commitment. The painters Max Pechstein, Ludwig Meidner and Cesar Klein were prime movers in the group, as was the architect Walter Gropius, who shared its goal of a new world order. Gropius was also affiliated with the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Workers' Council for Art), the aims of which included the destruction of commercialism.

Collective creative work and the desire to design a new society were aims adopted by Walter Gropius in founding the Bauhaus at Weimar in 1918, a fusion of the Weimar Academy and the School of Arts and Crafts. The *Werkbund* in Germany also sought to establish new social norms by organising and building housing and factories with a new clarity of structure and purpose. Architecture and design were more practical means than painting with which to clarify and realise utopian visions and the rebuilding of society.

In Russia, where revolutionary communists successfully seized power under Lenin in 1917, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat made immediate and radical demands on artists. Bolsheviks destroyed the private ownership of art collections, created new Museums of Pictorial Culture and committed avant-garde artists to making art public and political, from agitational street decorations to the teaching in Free State Studios and the creation of State Exhibitions.

Major pre-revolutionary movements in art were transformed, including the Suprematism of Kazimir Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin's Constructivism, first launched in 1915 in Petrograd. Their innovations were useful to a revolutionary regime in need of a dynamic visual language to promote communism. Malevich, Tatlin, Kandinsky, Chagall and Rodchenko all held important posts devising a new art of the masses that was collective in development, political in content and public in its manifestation. For once the avant-garde were supporting the dominant ideology and were politicised by events.

Ideologists, critics and artists who held fundamental debates on the function, purpose and form of communist art soon concluded that it could no longer be a private studio activity. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat was committed to constructing a new society and artists had a role in its realisation. Lenin's Programme for Monumental Propaganda confirmed this. Artists producing luxury commodities were warned that producing shoes was more useful: artists and workers needed a new relationship with which to change the world. The *Proletkult* group argued that new art would rise from the workers themselves. Others argued that communist art must be free of class associations and should be studied

objectively. In any case, the State had become the single great patron.

At the Institute of Artistic Culture (*Inkhuk*), where art was examined in the light of ideology, Kandinsky, Rodchenko, Stepanova, Popova, Exter, Vesnin and others discussed construction as a creative process common to the engineer and the artist. These painters and sculptors plunged into useful work in graphics, propaganda, fabric design or ceramics, or worked in theatre and film, attempting the material realisation of communist society. Every new cup and chair had this ideological dimension. When building recommenced from 1923 in Russia, architects and planners were consciously building communist society, designing propaganda kiosks, workers' clubs, a Palace of Labour, a Palace of the Soviets and communal housing. Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* proposed a colossal structure to house the communist government of planet Earth. In 1921–22 there were cries of 'Death to Art' and deliberate attempts to destroy it, to be replaced by communism expressed in material form. Painting, in the work of Malevich, Lissitzky and others, functioned as prototype creativity prior to design or architecture.

It was dangerous to argue that art was above politics. In 1932 all art groups were abolished by Stalin's decree, and the monolithic Artists' Union was created. If you were not a member, you were not an artist. The Artists' Union could be your support, critic or nemesis. Under Stalin, Socialist Realism became the official style, applying nineteenth-century narrative realism to Soviet political aims.

Vladimir Tatlin
Monument to the Third International, 1919

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet state in 1921 reopened trade and travel between Russia and Germany. Many artists emigrated as and when they were able to travel, and in 1921, for example, Kandinsky left Russia for the Bauhaus in Germany. Artists leaving Russia usually moved through Berlin. Chagall, Puni and Gabo were among them. Committed creative communists came there too, including El Lissitzky who travelled officially, establishing contacts and promoting Soviet culture. His little book *Isms of Art* (1925), produced with Jean Arp, confirmed his connections with many movements; Lissitzky even attended the International Constructivist and Dada Conference at Düsseldorf in 1922.

German responses to Russian works included Gropius's *Monument to the Victims of March* of 1921, a zigzag geometric form

reminiscent of Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*. It was erected at the Weimar cemetery to commemorate workers killed in the *Kapp Putsch* against the Reich the previous year.

In addition, there were technical links. Dadaists in Germany and Constructivists in Russia made special use of photomontage as a technique. Its powerful creative and agitational effect involved the manipulation of apparently factual material of photographs. Ernst, Grosz, Rodchenko, Lissitzky and John Heartfield all used it this way. But while Heartfield targeted with fierce ridicule those figures of authority that he despised, Soviet photomontages by Lissitzky and Rodchenko were required to positively promote the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Kandinsky had moved to the Bauhaus, Lissitzky and Malevich also visited. There were many links and connections between Russia and the Bauhaus at Weimar and, from 1926, at its new building erected by Gropius in Dessau. Rhetoric linking art and work to build a new world could be heard in both Russia and Germany. When the National Socialists finally closed the Bauhaus in 1932, they described it as a Bolshevik cell. In 1935 they also demolished Gropius's *Monument* (it was rebuilt in 1946). But the Bauhaus was not averse to business enterprise and its influence is still felt in design and architecture from the smallest lamps to the tallest towers of commercial buildings across the world. Bauhaus designs readily crossed social and political boundaries. Like Morris thirty years earlier, Gropius pursued successful business while redesigning society.

The Bauhaus shared with early Soviet institutions a rational, geometric and material approach designed to construct and organise society in a new way, from painting to manufacture, from individual invention to collective design. Its clarity and sense made the tubular chair universal and useful.

International aims characterised the small-group magazines spreading across Europe at this time, including *De Stijl* in Holland, *L'Esprit Nouveau* in France and the trilingual *Veshch/Object /Gegandstand* in France, Germany and Russia. At the International Dada and Constructivist Congress in Düsseldorf in 1922, Schwitters, Arp, Van Doesburg and Lissitzky debated together. Between Eastern and Western Europe, further groups articulated their differences and similarities, including *MA* in Hungary, *Blok* in Poland and *Zenit* in Yugoslavia. Photomontage, rational design and internationalism were common features of them all. Their aims might be practical, or utopian, but they always offered models of a new society.

In so far as Dada asserted individualism over collective responsibility, it was of little use to any government, even a revolutionary government. The politicised anarchy of Dada defied containment, though in New York and Paris it achieved cultural change. In both places Marcel Duchamp devised strategies that made exhibitions problematic. Like the Constructivists in Russia, Duchamp attacked the very existence of art. His strategies were

rational and calculated. Duchamp did not follow those Dadaists who, from 1924, contributed to Surrealism in Paris under the leadership of André Breton.

For Surrealists the liberation of the imagination encompassed both an appalling nightmare and a blissful dream. A link between Marxist and Freudian theory flickered through its periodicals, *La Révolution Surréaliste* and *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*. Marx had called workers to cast off their chains. André Breton used Freudian theory to demand unfettered imagination. The French Communist Party did not share his views. The tumultuous consequences of Surrealism opposed the collective creativity pursued by Constructivists and those at the Bauhaus.

Anarchic creativity found political discipline a crushing infringement of individual liberty. Collective creativity was easier to identify in the factory, in the architect's or in the planner's office, however overbearing their utopian goals may have been.

The social environment – culture, location, nationality, economics and conventions – defines both the possibilities open to artists and the restrictions they face. Given the places and the period under discussion here, the nature of the opportunities available almost always led artists to reach towards a wider and more urban vision. The road to recognition and success demanded an ever-expanding public range, from meeting other artists and forming new groups to becoming supported by critics, promoted by dealers and purchased by collectors and, ultimately, by museums.

However, while the mass of artists pursued these possibilities, they were perhaps not so much opportunities as a system of filters. Most artists were *not* accepted by the Salon, were *not* awarded prizes and were *not* commissioned to make major public works; they are largely lost to history. Both success and failure can politicise an artist as they learn more about this system.

Imperial, royal, national or civic patronage is expensive and performs a public political purpose. In France, for example, Emperor Napoléon III beautified Paris out of personal and nationalist ambition and to achieve this he needed artists and architects. The art that he commissioned was essential to creating his cultural vision of his time, place and politics. Artists who worked for him were instrumentalised and, in the process, politicised.

Failure as well could politicise artists. Self-assertion, bolstered by radical journalists and social theorists, was one form of resistance to the established cultural structure of opportunities. In France, Courbet's assertive personality and sheer ability drove him into confrontation when public success was denied him. The press, both for and against him, provided a public platform where caricature, ridicule and a sense of scandal translated conflict into fame.

Success was an urban phenomenon. Formal recognition, typically, was granted from an established power-base, located in the capital city. Academies and Salons were situated there. An artist from a small town or rural background had to adapt to the urban location, reaching beyond family, village, town and regional cultures to the capital. Even a dedicated rural painter, such as J.F. Millet, had to negotiate Paris for success and sales. Clinging to a personal identity grounded in the realities of rural experience politicised Courbet. From the Jura to Paris was a long cultural journey and Courbet refused to compromise *en route*. An anarchist not only intellectually but at heart, he also sought to change the world as he encountered it. His culture was a counter-culture, developing by example, provocation and confrontation. By 1871 he was the most radical artist of his day, committed to the revolutionary Commune in Paris and working for the downfall of the Republican government that followed the demise of the Emperor. Courbet's politics and his talent were bound together. That his talent was neglected on account of his politics drove him to direct action for the revolutionary cause.

In the following years the Impressionists' Group of Independent Artists brought landscape painters into the capital – painters originating from Le Havre, Aix-en-Provence and even, in Pissarro's case, the Caribbean. Their routes to the capital reveal their amenability to compromise or resistance. Their landscapes of the city demonstrated a new adjustment that synthesised the distinction of city and country, and they established alternative networks and exhibition opportunities that circumvented the Salon. Pissarro, who traveled furthest, remained stubbornly independent, left-wing and sympathetic to the aims of the suppressed Commune. He mixed with anarchists in the later 1880s and warned his colleagues against Georges Seurat whom he considered an academician in disguise, and by implication a painter of a wholly different political persuasion.

Though Marx wrote about the Paris Commune, his politics were less evident as a moving force among these artists than might be expected, even if it remains fruitful to apply a Marxist critique to the art of the period. Often, for politicised artists who wanted to change the culture of their time and place, the anarchist message predominated. Few artists joined recognised parties, unions or pressure groups to improve workers' rights and conditions, as William Morris or Walter Crane did in England.

Marxism was much more of a political force during the collapse of whole empires during the First World War. The Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Prussian empires all disintegrated and the centuries-old Romanov dynasty in Russia ended in the revolutions of 1917. In the midst of these cultural collisions and reversals, Marxism played an important cultural role, both in Russia, where revolution succeeded, and in Germany where it failed. Communists in Russia in October 1917 banned private enterprise, closed commercial galleries and nationalised private art collections. The State became effectively the only patron; there was little room for anarchists.

It was artists' social obligation to work communally to create a public art that promoted communist ideology and the creation of the workers' state. Political caricature was reserved for its opponents. Street festivals in Moscow and Petrograd celebrated the new political and cultural era, and artists promoted its propaganda with dynamic skill and inventiveness.

In Germany, by contrast, devastation was evident in the streets, among the desperate, bereaved, maimed and wounded. Revolutionary artists, including Ludwig Meidner and George Grosz, experienced the panic of bitterness and despair. The failure of revolution further depressed politicised creative figures in the *Novembergruppe* and its successors, groups that included many artists barely moving from anguish towards designing a new world, scarcely shifting neurosis towards construction. Russian cultural organisations rapidly established links with groups in Germany where they found fertile ground for communist infiltration. But it was in Germany too that a less specific and broader social aim arose – the Bauhaus dream to design a newer, cleaner, more anonymous and orderly society in which art, design and architecture would come constructively together.

Though Morris wrote enthusiastically about the ideals of the Paris Commune, which Courbet was working actively to realise, the opposition between Morris's vision of association and social order and Courbet's anarchistic individualism remained salient for radical artists throughout this period. It was reflected not only in the rhetorical positions that artists adopted, but in the nature of their production and working methods. While Morris emphasised tradition and collaboration, Courbet pursued a contemporary realism and personal engagement. While the Dadaists attacked utopianism wherever they found it, the Bauhaus was founded as a 'cathedral of socialism' where a new society would be designed. It remains only to note that, while elements of all these practices were co-opted easily and have become part of the fabric of contemporary culture, the underlying ideas have not been synthesised and remain, on both sides, in radical opposition to the current situation.

TIME CAPSULE

LUCY R. LIPPARD

The function of the radical is sacrificial. The radical proposes ideas that cause destruction and later become orthodoxies.[1]
    E.L. Doctorow

The mythology of the 1960s lives today, and for good reason. To begin with this is a disillusioned Western society that craves hope and optimism at both ends of the political spectrum. Even when the media fog is cleared away, the exhilarating and finally tragic substance of that decade – the dashed hopes of revolution, of equality, of social justice – though now threatened by cultural amnesia, will remain important until an equally widespread social upheaval comes about for activist artists no less than for others. Encapsulating the 60s has never been an easy job. My image of the times – garnered primarily from New York and my own lived experiences there – is a tangled thicket of multicoloured threads with elusive origins.

    'Social change' itself has many definitions within the arts. I will focus here on activist or 'oppositional' art, because the United States' false claims and dangerous acts in the 'war on terror' and the consequent drain of constitutional rights has many of us in the mood to act, to recall and to analyse previous actions.[2] However, I suspect that the greatest legacy of the 1960s (which took place in ensuing decades) is the 'community-based' arts, otherwise known as 'interventionist' or 'dialogic art', which has more quietly contributed to social change since the 60s. An astounding array of work has been produced with every imaginable 'community' (ie. marginalised or disenfranchised groups). Suzanne Lacy alone has made a long series of visually striking public performances aimed at change in social policy, based on years of work with poor women, elderly women, homeless women, incarcerated women, cancer victims, teenagers, cops... and more.

[1] E.L. Doctorow quoted in L. Lippard, 'Notes on the Independence Movement', in Janet Kardon, (ed.), *1967: At the Crossroads*, Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987.

[2] For me, the most thorough book on art in 1960s New York is by an Englishman; see Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America*, Manchester University Press, 1999. It provides a detailed and analytic account of most of the events mentioned here. See also L. Lippard, *A Different War: Vietnam in Art*, Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1990; and for the broadest picture, Julie Ault, *Alternative Art*, New York, 1965–1985, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Art inspired by social energies – including community murals and gardens, works embedded in urban planning, education and social policy – is today more organised, better funded, less funky than it was in the 1960s. Sometimes these forms are framed as art, sometimes not, but that is another story, demanding an entire essay of its own.[3] Whereas community-based art is grounded in communication and exchange, activist art is based on creative dissent and confrontation. Community-based arts tend to be affirmative while most 'political art' is rejective of the status quo.[4] Although this trend has developed primarily since the 1960s, its roots lie in the Utopian countercultural values of that fertile decade, with its ongoing challenges to the 'privatisation' of art that ruled in the 1950s and was on the throne again by the 1980s. As attorney Amy Adler has remarked, 'there is a history of suppressing and controlling what people see, based on elitist fears of mass access'.[5]

My generation of American artists (born between the late 1920s and the mid 1940s) was abysmally ignorant of the socio-political art that existed before World War II, which had been erased from the histories we learned in school. In the economically triumphant and politically fearful McCarthyite 1950s, we were cut off from any notion that art could be related to politics, unless we were red-diaper babies. Formalism reigned. Everything was universalised. (Who knew that *Guernica* was painted by a communist? That it was an outcry not against war in general but against a specific fascist attack?) So, when artists were sparked into action by the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War or the Women's Liberation movement, they were forced to reinvent the wheel, a state of affairs that continues, to a lesser extent, today.

Contemporary artists' commitment to social change waxes and wanes unpredictably. Sometimes the impetus is obvious, such as the international movement against the war on Vietnam. Sometimes a similar impetus, such as the war on Iraq, has less effect than might be expected. While artists are never the vanguard of political movements, once they are swept into action they can be valuable allies. In the United States few seem to believe this, despite the fact that elsewhere poets, artists and popular musicians are early targets of repressive regimes that know how powerful the arts can be. Even on the Left, where most activist art comes from, there is a tendency to dismiss its effectiveness, to consider the arts as window dressing, useful only for fund-raising. In a sense this is true; art often reflects rather than

3 On the topic of community-based arts and cultural democracy, see Eva Cockcroft, John Weber and James Cockcroft, *Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977; Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *Crossroads: Reflections on the Politics of Culture*, Talmage, CA: DNA Press, 1990; Suzanne Lacy (ed.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1995; Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier (eds.), *Cultures in Contention*, Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1985; Mark O'Brien and Craig Little (eds.), *Reimaging America: The Arts of Social Change*, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990; and Linda Frye Burnham and Steven Durland (eds.), *The Citizen Artist: 20 Years of Art in the Public Arena*, Gardner NY: The Critical Press, 1998.

4 See J. Kardon (ed.), *op. cit.* (with essays by Hal Foster, Lucy R. Lippard, Barbara Rose, Janet Kardon and Irving Sandler).

5 Amy Adler, 'Age of Innocence', *frieze*, January 1996, no.34; quoted by F. Frascina, p.219.

leads social agendas. Most images may not be 'worth 1000 words' but sometimes they can operate parallel to rhetorical texts and dense information barrages, providing jolts to embedded opinions. Art is the wildcard in many a fixed game. Witness the 'Culture Wars', begun in the late 1980s, which have not yet subsided.[6] Images offensive to extremists on the 'Religious Right', or any kind of opposition to the corporate status quo, are grist to their mill. Yet in this and most other developed countries, the market – we call it the 'art world', a sign of its isolation from other 'worlds' – has more power than artists, and those with the courage to take a social tack away from the centre have often suffered for it. Dissenting voices cannot always be heard. At the outset of the Iraq war, radio stations in the UK censored their own playlists favouring 'light melodic' tracks that would not upset or offend their listeners.[7] Even now, images offensive to extremists on the Religious Right, or any kind of opposition to the corporate status quo, are barely permissible. In the Bush administration, censorship has extended to a ban on certain t-shirts if worn in public places (many of which have been privatised). Though artists are often perceived as lone voices for freedom in times of crisis, art is only as free as the society that envelops it.

The Civil Rights Movement was of course the great wake-up call that inspired the student movement, the antiwar movement, and the women's movement in the decade to come. Its militant heyday in the late 1950s and early 60s offered a break with the recent past and coincided with the peak of Abstract Expressionism or the New York School – a tendency most unlikely to reflect immediate social concerns, although this did not of course keep some abstractionists off the protest lines. By 1965 a small group of artists called Artists and Writers Protest (initially Writers and Artists Protest) had already been decrying the escalation of the Vietnam war for three years. Among the earliest to speak out against the war was the ultimate abstractionist, Ad Reinhardt, as well as the blunt Minimalist artist/critic Donald Judd and 'socialist formalist' Rudolf Baranik.[8]

Mark di Suvero
Peace Tower or
Artists Tower,
1967

THE TOWER BEING BUILT
(Reprinted from the Free Press, Feb. 11 and 18)
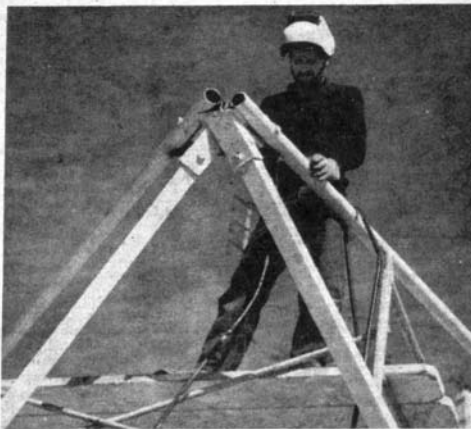
photo by Allen Zak

Sculptor Mark di Suvero is at work building the Artists Tower Against the War in Vietnam at the corner of Sunset and LaCienega. After this photograph was taken, an old wrecked car was hung from the center of the tower in preparation for a city stress inspection.

1965 was the year of the 'Watts Riots' in an African American ghetto in Los Angeles, and the death of Simon Rodia, builder of the brilliant Watts Towers;[9] it was also the year that artists (notably Irving Petlin and Leon Golub) held their own in a public debate with the Rand Corporation, a cold-war think tank. In 1966 artists and critics on the Artists Protest Committee created the Peace Tower in Los Angeles.[10] The tower was intended to remain

in place until the war was over, but the landlord caved in to political pressure and it was demolished in weeks. In New York that same year, a legal controversy erupted around the 'aesthetic' use of the American flag, an issue that continued to preoccupy artists and was the centre of the 'Judson Flag Show' in 1970, where three artists were arrested for desecration of the flag.[11]

Early in 1967 Artists and Writers Protest, by then based in New York, produced Angry Arts Week – the first large public-art antiwar campaign. One of its most memorable manifestations was a long solemn procession of black body bags. Attending police were as moved as the spectators, and flowers were laid on the bags as they passed by. Another component was the *Collage of Indignation*. 150 artists worked simultaneously on 10′×6′ canvases that filled the gallery at New York University's Loeb Student Center with both subtle and screaming images on various political subjects. Participants included well-known artists, many of whom had not previously ventured into social commentary (as opposed to countercultural poster artists whose work reached a far larger audience than those from the 'high art' worlds). Needless to say 'quality' was mixed, but as a collective howl of outrage from the art world it was a powerful statement. Stalwart political artist/activist Leon Golub called it 'gross, vulgar, clumsy, ugly! [...] The artist breaks the contained limits of his [*sic*] art. His actions spill over into the streets.'[12]

The murder of Martin Luther King in 1968 roughly coincided with the student uprising in Paris in May, with an antiwar movement re-empowered by the Tet Offensive, and, on the darker side, disempowered by the increasingly pervasive drug culture that defused political radicalism.[13] Opposition to the US war on Vietnam's 'gooks' was consistently paralleled by opposition to racism, and sexism was the next target. But 1969 rather than 1968 was the beginning of the broader New York art world's confrontation with these issues.

In January 1969 an international group of artists based in New York protested against the Museum of Modern Art over a strictly aesthetic

[6] See James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, New York: Basic Books, 1992.

[7] See http://arts.guardian.co.uk/war/story/0,,921514,00.html

[8] See David Craven, *Poetics and Politics in the Art of Rudolf Baranik*, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1997.

[9] The Watts Tower is a collection of 17 interconnected structures built by construction worker Rodia over a period of 33 years.

[10] The Peace Tower was a 58-foot steel tetrahedron that served as a platform for '2' × 2" – works by 418 artists including Judd, Reinhardt, Frank Stella, Eva Hesse, Nancy Spero and others from all over the world.

[11] See GAAG, *GAAG: The Guerrilla Art Action Group 1969–1976: A Selection*, New York: Printed Matter, 1978.

[12] Leon Golub, 'The Artist as Angry Artists: The Obsession with Napalm', *Arts Magazine*, April 1967, pp.48–49. After being shown at Columbia University, the donated art was burned in order to keep it off the market. The male pronoun for artist in Golub's article was surely disputed by his wife, artist Nancy Spero, who – amongst others in Artists and Writers Protest, including May Stevens – was a force to be reckoned with in the antiwar movement; Spero was a co-founder of WAR, the first women's art group in New York. Three years later, Ron Wolin and I organised *Collage of Indignation II*, a series of individual poster designs at the New York Cultural Center in midtown Manhattan (and elsewhere), with the Utopian goal of printing all contributions as posters. Only Robert Rauschenberg's was eventually produced.

[13] The influence of the Beats in the 1950s has often been noted with regard to the use of drugs in the 60s; they were adamantly indifferent to political action, though eventually Allen Ginsberg did not follow this path.

(and arguably careerist) artists' rights issue – the selection for
a major kinetic art show of a minor Takis sculpture from the museum's
collection, without the artist's approval. Takis calmly removed his work;
a demonstration followed in the museum's garden, and from this event
emerged the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), which epitomised New York art
world politics in the 60s. Participants crossed all aesthetic and stylistic lines.
The international makeup of the founding group, which included several
artists working in kinetic mediums then showing at the Howard Wise
Gallery, was significant. In fact, the 'foreigners' involved (from Greece,
Germany, Iran, New Zealand and Flemish Belgium) were far more politically
sophisticated than the young American artists.[14]

An Open Hearing held by the AWC in April 1969 at the School of Visual
Arts was jammed, exuberant and wildly contradictory. Yet even the latently
right-wing art critic Hilton Kramer, then writing for *The New York Times*,
complimented the Coalition for raising 'a moral issue which wiser and more
experienced minds have long been content to leave totally unexamined [...].
A plea to liberate art from the entanglement of bureaucracy, commerce and
vested critical interests....'[15] Although galleries and museums were seen by
some as the opposition (neglect by them could ruin artists' lives), certain
dealers were supportive. The opening show at Paula Cooper's new space on
Prince Street in November 1968, a handsome minimal art exhibition, was
a benefit for Student Mobilisation Against the War in Vietnam curated by
an artist, a Socialist Workers' Party organiser, and a critic. In 1973 a block
of West Broadway below Houston was commandeered for replicas of the
Chilean murals that were being destroyed by the Pinochet regime, and a
benefit show for dispossessed Chilean artists was held at OK Harris on
West Broadway while it was still under construction. Meanwhile, the
network of alternative galleries that sprang up in the late 60s provided
local support for many socially-engaged artists.

As I recall, it was Carl Andre, dressed in his workman-like overalls,
who gave the AWC its name by introducing the concept that we were all 'art
workers' in precarious solidarity with the working class. (The very idea was
taboo in a 'classless' USA, not to mention the internal contradictions, given
the middle-class background of most artists and the greater wealth of their
collectors.) The Coalition evolved into a chaotic omnipresent anti-
organisation that recklessly tackled all the social issues of the day, from
antiwar demonstrations to guerrilla theatre performances to innumerable
broadsides to analyses of the museums' hierarchies to development
of neighbourhood cultural centres. The constantly morphing main body

[14] See L. Lippard, 'The Art Workers Coalition: Not a History', *Studio International*, Nov 1970, pp.171–74.

[15] Hilton Kramer quoted in L. Lippard, 'Notes on the Independence Movement', *op. cit.*, p.26. The AWC published all testimonies in *Open Hearings*, a 1969 booklet, followed by a second volume of *Documents*, 1971.

of the AWC (whoever showed up at meetings) was forbidden to veto anything planned by the committees. The Guerrilla Art Action Group (known as GAAG, and including Jean Toche, John Hendricks, Poppy Johnson and Silvianna, with connections to Fluxus and to European Destruction Art) was the fearless progenitor of the AWC's 'Action Committee', the most radical faction. The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition was a frequent ally (and vice versa).[16] Discussions were hot and heavy. At one point when attendance was flagging, a postcard provocation announced a meeting 'to kidnap Henry Kissinger'. It attracted not only radicals, but the FBI.

Out of the main body of the AWC was also born WSABAL (Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation) – a tiny 'organisation' consisting of artist Faith Ringgold and her two young daughters, Barbara and Michele Wallace,[17] which packed a wallop out of proportion to its size, and WAR (Women Artists in Revolution) – the first feminist artists group, which in turn gave birth to the Ad Hoc Women Artists Committee in 1970, which picketed and performed around the Whitney Museum of American Art's then-annual exhibition and can be credited with opening the supposedly 'all-American' show to 400 percent more women than it had previously represented.[18] Ad Hoc's demonstrations and actions (a false press release to the media claiming the Whitney had decided to make the Annual half women and half 'non-white'; faked invitations to the opening to facilitate a sit-in; slide projections of women artists' work on the outside wall of the museum; fake docent tours of the show; whistling in the stairwells; the placing of unused tampons and eggs marked '50% Women' in corners; and weekend demonstrations on the Whitney's convenient 'draw bridge') all owed something to the emphasis on process and temporality, and the de-emphasis of 'objecthood' and commodification that arose in the Conceptual and Fluxus art of the 60s – what I have called 'escape attempts' from the art world (where the bourgeoisie were being patted instead of *epaté*) into the 'real world' (where 'the establishment' was represented by universities, the 'military industrial complex' and the Nixon administration rather than by museums).

Conceptual art was critically motivated and socially expansive, though its communication was more *about* than *with* its communicants. Changing the world by changing perception of time and space was, after all, artists' business. Bypassing the institutions, Conceptual artists and their facilitators sped past the conventional procedures of exhibitions and catalogues with a triumphal wave. Decentralising and decentring were among the goals; deprovincialising New York City was a subtext. International Conceptual art

[16] See *Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade: 1963–1973*, New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1985.

[17] See Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, New York: Verso, 1990.

[18] See *A Documentary Herstory of Women Artists in Revolution*, New York: WAR, 1971; a Xerox book reissued by the Women's Interart Center, 1973; and L. Lippard, *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1983.

set up a flexible model that remains useful for socio-political art. It might also be seen as a turnaround of the old figuration/abstraction polarities, given its reintroduction of content to Minimalist form.[19]

Yet it was more often the form than the content of Conceptualism that could be perceived as political. (The power of repetition, for instance, has since been applied to public installations of warheads, crosses, caskets, shoes and names in activist art.) Like Minimalism's 'neutrality', 'non-relationalism' and industrial fetishism, Conceptualism was part of a rebellion against the (male) artist-as-hero syndrome of the Abstract Expressionists (who had submitted to exploitation for the official United States cold-war agenda)[20] and the formal obsessions with surface and edge of 'post-painterly abstraction'. The 'Information' show at the Museum of Modern Art in June 1970, which included art created in the heat of the Cambodian incursion by the US and South Vietnam known as 'Cambodian Spring', has turned out to be the most political exhibition to be shown at MoMA to this day.[21] Nevertheless, most of the participants, even those of us who were most committed to social change, were ambivalent about the extent to which art could bend toward politics. 'In the post-war United States,' writes Francis Frascina, 'the concept of [art's] autonomy had been deprived of its oppositional political credentials and subsumed within a formalist aesthetic.' Having thoroughly examined the often dubious and ambiguous positions adopted by artists and critics in light of the inherent contradictions within which we worked, he concludes: 'it is the contradictions that tell us most.'[22]

The arts inspired by Minimalism's spatial 'realism' – perceived along with Pop Art as somehow 'democratic' and opposed to (and by) the Greenbergian aesthetic aristocracy – seemed best served by photographic mediums, though they were then raw and rough-edged, bearing little resemblance to their slick, high-tech descendants. Video (hand-held, black-and-white) and photography (also usually black-and-white as colour was, for a while, seen as pandering to pleasure), public and guerrilla performances, printed (or more likely photocopied) texts and publications such as artists' books – were all influenced by the dematerialisation that defined Conceptual art in the 60s.[23] Whereas Conceptualism's goal of subverting museums and markets was, in retrospect, mostly wishful thinking, and whereas the concept of publications as a public space has been nudged aside by the

[19] See L. Lippard, 'Escape Attempts', in Anne Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (eds.), *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975*, Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996, pp.16–39.

[20] See Max Kozloff, 'American Painting During the Cold War', *Artforum*, Sept 1970; and Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War', *Artforum*, June 1974.

[21] Deborah Wye's *Committed to Print* (drawn from the PAD/D Archive), 1988 is the only other contender, but it was smaller and sponsored by the less-powerful Print Department.

[22] F. Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent, op. cit.*, pp.148 and 227.

[23] See L. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, New York: Praeger, 1973; reprinted by the University of California Press in 1997; translated into Spanish by Akal, Madrid, 2004.

Internet, its irreverence did distract from conventional modernism – so used and abused in the interests of capitalism and imperialism – and prepared the way for postmodernism and all the 'posts' of the 1970s and 80s. Mass-reproduced photo/text mediums continue to prove most effective in pushing the outer frame and challenging the powers that be. They are more easily disseminated into public space and can be more locally productive than cumbersome object media such as painting and sculpture, which may move people in a more visceral but generalised manner. At the same time the role of photographic 'truth' has been successfully questioned to the point where nobody really believes anything they see, which in turn provides yet another challenge to those committed to 'speaking truth to power'.

Having organised politically with artists for many years I admit to complaining, 'It's like herding cats.' The troops are usually more anxious to get back into their studios than to make studios of the streets. In the late 1960s, however, world events had reached a crisis point where artists felt an obligation to speak out whether or not they were well informed or motivated. As Robert Smithson wrote in 1970, 'The rat of politics always gnaws at the cheese of art. The trap is set. If there's an original curse, then politics has something to do with it.'[24] Not everyone felt that way. Many younger artists welcomed the chance to be embroiled in 'real life' outside the art world. Their experiences there contributed to a great variety of 'engaged art' from then on.

Difficult as it may be for artists to forego their individual trademarks, political work demands collaboration, setting up different ways of working and opening up different contexts. For all the extraordinary images created in studio solitude, communal work has consistently been more effective in the social realm, where rugged egos are a disadvantage. (It is telling that much of the best public art has been made by women.) As Martha Rosler has observed, 'such a system determines that individual subjects identify the ideas and opinions as their own and so do not form coherent, externally directed resistance'.[25] An individual artist – no matter how much of a genius – can rarely present concerted visual opposition as effectively as a group. Over the years, artists' collectives have proven that there is courage and impact in numbers, and much of the work they do best is virtually invisible as 'art'.[26]

[24] Robert Smithson in 'The Artist and Politics: A Symposium', *Artforum*, September 1970, p.39. This 'symposium' in print contains a number of fascinating statements by artists on political action.

[25] Martha Rosler (untitled manuscript) in forthcoming history of *Creative Time*.

[26] Steve Kurtz, a member of Critical Art Ensemble, a collective that has specialised in 'tactical media' was subpoenaed by the United States Attorney General under the 2001 Patriot Act for possessing 'biological agents' (laboratory equipment intended for an art project called *Free Range Grain* for the 'Interventionists' exhibition at Mass MoCA. Though he was cleared of 'bioterrorism' Kurtz and another professor are being charged and tried with alleged mail and wire fraud. The twenty-first century has spawned many art collectives internationally, the best known of which is probably Germany's Wochenklausur. Younger artists are gathering, more or less anonymously, often to make 'utilitarian art' about solving urban and even global problems, among them the Yes Men, SubRosa, Free Soil and Spurse.

The geography of Lower Manhattan – the tenements of the Lower East Side and the cast-iron district that became known as SoHo (South of Houston Street) – was an integral component of collective activity in the 60s and early 70s, when artists moved into vacated light-manufacturing lofts (soon to be gentrified by 'yuppies').[27] There we briefly sustained a refuge, a real live/work artists' community where artists, dancers, musicians and politicos played and rabble-roused in apartments, lofts, rooftops ('tar beaches'), galleries and streets. The walls of SoHo were a palimpsest of artistic, political, countercultural and eventually commercial posters, sometimes publicising events and sometimes standing out as events themselves. 'Streetworks' – short-lived art 'objects' and performative pieces that were essentially vignettes, rootless within the system, free to create their own structures and experienced casually by chance audiences – revealed a basic dissatisfaction with the 'white cells' of the institutional/commercial art world. Although the content was seldom directly political, streetworks by nature were radical acts of rejection or celebration.

With every minority group fired up for equality in the 1960s, artists' rights remained an issue for the AWC. Artists demanded representation on all museum boards, free admission for the public, special galleries for minorities and a voice in institutional decision-making, as well as control over how, when and where their works were shown. A major declaration of independence was Seth Siegelaub's and Robert Projansky's 'The Artists Reserved Rights Transfer and Sales Agreement' (1971), tailored to accompany the sale of every artwork, committing the buyer to pay the artist a percentage of each future sale. Though mightily disliked by galleries, collectors and museums, it was used consistently by a few brave artists and is overdue for resurrection.

Artworkers Coalition *Q. And babies? A. And babies.*, 1970

Discussions with the Museum of Modern Art dragged on until the AWC realised they were just delaying tactics. In late 1969 news of the My Lai (Song My) massacre hit the press and in 1970 the AWC's Poster Committee published the widely distributed poster *And Babies? And Babies.* without the museum's initially promised aid. Photographic masks of Lieutenant Calley's face were worn *en masse* in a demonstration in Washington D.C., the idea being that we were all as guilty as Calley of the massacre because we had not stopped the war. (This was misread by some as support for Calley; so much for irony.) Also in 1970 protests were held in front of Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) at MoMA. An artists' letter to Picasso asking that the painting be removed from the museum as long as its administration and trustees tacitly supported the

war was derailed by major art-world figures, including Alfred Barr.[28] Although MoMA and later the Whitney were prime targets for protest, given their focus on contemporary art, the Metropolitan Museum was also picketed by artists on several occasions, including demonstrations by Black artists against its documentary show on Harlem. Later a group from the AWC Action Committee broke into a trustees' dinner party (taking place in Metropolitan Museum galleries closed to the public) and, in an *ad hoc* gesture, one artist scattered cockroaches on the table 'to keep Harlem on your mind'.

The external art world was no more unified around these actions than was the internal 'membership' of the AWC, which claimed to speak for all artists who did not speak up for themselves. A large number of now well-known artists from the Minimalist and Conceptualist camps participated in Coalition events while others stood at the back of the room watching the three-ring circus with cool condescension. Some older Abstract Expressionists who had been politically active in the 1930s and 40s (and younger artists who were already reaping the benefits of success in the art world) were horrified by our antics and retreated to their studios. The New Left's tactics were clearly a threat to the Old Left, a situation not improved by the AWC's opposition to MoMA's 'First Generation' show; the exhibition was considered 'blackmail' because it encouraged donations to the museum's collections by New York School artists whose work they had not bought (cheap) early enough.

In the 'Cambodian Spring' of 1970, when resistance to the war was at its height after the Kent State and Jackson State shootings, New York Art Strike attracted a critical mass of artists who had not been drawn to the AWC's New Left/Anarchist core, among them Robert Morris, who was Art Strike's elected leader along with GAAG's Poppy Johnson. Demanding closure of all the museums, Art Strike succeeded in briefly shutting down some galleries, as well as Morris's own solo show at the Jewish Museum. (Ironic stickers went up downtown: 'Robert Morris Prince of Peace'.)

The fervour of actions and organising did not last forever. Much of the energy in the AWC was siphoned off in late 1970, when the feminist/women's art movement began in earnest.[29] The Coalition's last major action was a 1971 protest against the Guggenheim Museum which had cancelled Hans Haacke's solo exhibition six weeks before it opened, citing its social content as the reason, and fired curator Edward Fry. An AWC conga line spiralling up Frank Lloyd Wright's ramps was led by choreographer/

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[27] See L. Lippard, 'The Geography of Street Time: A Survey of Streetworks Downtown', in Rene Block, *SoHo: Downtown Manhattan*, Berlin: Akademie der Kunste/Berliner Festwochen, 1976, pp.180–210.

[28] The long stories of MoMA's disengagement from an unlikely collaboration with the AWC on the My Lai poster, and the machinations involved with the letter to Picasso are described in detail by Frascina, who notes that the FBI had a huge file on

Picasso. See F. Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent, op. cit.*, pp.161–62, 165–174.

[29] WEB, or West-East Bag, founded in April 1971, was a national network of women's slide registries and centres for local organisations.

filmmaker Yvonne Rainer before a gaping public, some of whom joined in. One-hundred or so artists signed a petition vowing not to show at the Guggenheim until the guilty administration was ousted.

Although the subject of this essay is the 1960s, it is difficult to ignore the continuum. When the US abandoned Vietnam and Nixon resigned in disgrace there was a brief lull in oppositional art, but the veterans of all that activism were still around, still young and increasingly better educated in socio-political art theory. The progressive artists groups of the mid 1970s, from Artists Meeting for Cultural Change (AMCC) to the feminist Heresies Collective, reflected the trend toward theory that had been neglected in the exigencies of direct action. The influence of Conceptual art continued to be felt in a number of collectively edited artists' periodicals and publications perceived as public spaces. Printed Matter was formed in 1976 by an artists' collective to publish and distribute artists' books (books *as* art, not *about* art), seen then as a means to infiltrate the general public with cheap, subversive art. Franklin Furnace initiated an archive of artists' publications and provided a venue for innumerable progressive performances and exhibitions.

Within the women's movement, the mid 70s saw conflicts between 'cultural', 'socialist' and 'radical' feminisms, which also led to an era of theoretical focus as actions diminished. In fact, it could be argued that the emphasis on theory directly diminished activism by belittling

Guerrilla Girls
Do Women Have to be Naked to get into the Met. Museum?, 1989

'essentialism'. Yet in 1985 the Guerrilla Girls burst on the scene as 'cultural terrorists' with their gorilla-masked anonymity and posters exposing the art world's institutional racism and sexism by naming names – always unpopular in the art hierarchy. They were followed by the spectacular rise and fall of the media-savvy Womens Action Coalition (WAC) in the early 90s.

In 1979 the non-profit gallery Artists Space ill-advisedly mounted an exhibition titled 'The Nigger Drawings' by a young white male artist looking for some attention (which he got, although when the dust cleared he was never heard from again). Howardena Pindell led the campaign against those who insisted that artistic 'freedom' trumped any moral outrage. Artists Against Racism in the Arts (AARA) was formed to ferret out daily racism in the 'unconscious' art world, as well as in the supposedly conscious Left. The same year, concern over the slow-down of art activism sparked the organisation of PAD/D (Political Art Documentation/Distribution), which began as an archive of socially concerned art based in a community centre

on the Lower East Side, and ironically ended up in the Museum of Modern Art Library, then directed by one of PAD/D's founding members. At the same time, a new generation emerged from the art schools and hit the streets of the East Village, less concerned with geopolitics, but equally reluctant to be swept into the commercial art world without a murmur. They founded free-ranging groups such as the wide-ranging Collaborative Projects (CoLab) and Group Material, Fashion/Moda in the South Bronx, ABC No Rio and *World War 3 Comics* (the hub of neighbourhood organising around the Squatters movement) on the Lower East Side.[30]

Gentrification and homelessness were among the urban issues that drew artists to act in the poor neighbourhoods where they lived. These groups created art venues rather than political actions; their unconventional exhibitions were social statements and artworks in themselves – content-focused, temporary, gritty and grungy like the Punk/New Wave club culture that provided their dominant context. If 'rigid' Left politics and feminist 'righteousness' turned some of the younger artists off, and their 'retrochic' and 'politically incorrect' images sometimes turned off the old/new Left in turn, their aesthetic vitality made up for the differences. During the 1986 Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America, a national arts campaign, these 'fringe' elements, along with PAD/D, joined the main-stream in some 30 exhibitions in New York City alone.

The most visible activist group during the Culture Wars of the late 80s was ACTUP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), with its pink-and-black 'Silence = Death' logo. ACTUP targeted the homophobic Senator Jesse Helms, the Christian Coalition, the far-flung empires of corporations such as Philip Morris and the innate puritanism of American culture, which showed when faced with art about body, desire and sexual identity.[31] In 1989 Gran Fury, a smaller related collective, mounted a poster on the sides of New York City buses showing three variously-gendered couples kissing (some of them people of colour, mimicking then-ubiquitous Benetton ads), with the text: 'Kissing Doesn't Kill, Greed and Indifference Do'. This was the era of media criticism, also a product of the 1960s, when 'The Whole World Is Watching' was a popular slogan. Since then, it has become harder and harder for artists to compete with or even satirise the inanities of commercial media.

30 See L. Lippard, 'Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power', in Brian Wallis and Marcia Tucker (eds.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, pp.340–358; and Nina Felshin (ed.), *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art Activism*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1995.

31 See Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDSDEMOGRAPHICS*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1990. This puritanism extended to political opinion, as shown when NEA grants to the publications *PAD/D* and *Heresies* were vetoed in 1983 (I happened to have co-founded both groups). See L. Lippard, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change*, New York:

E.P. Dutton, 1984, especially 'The Dilemma', 'Sweeping Exchanges', and 'Hot Potatoes'.

Jonathan Schell recently observed, 'All over the world, autocratic-minded rulers … have learned that *de facto* control of the political content of television is perhaps the most important lever of power in our day. They have learned that it does not matter politically if 15 or even 25 percent of the public is well informed, as long as the majority remains in the dark.'[32] This statement challenges progressive visual artists. Television (despite years of hard work by proponents of public-access TV such as Paper Tiger) is economically beyond the reach of virtually all visual art workers.

> *Speaking the truth to power is no Panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change.*[33]
> Edward Said

> *Information presented at the right time and in the right places can potentially be very powerful. It can affect the general social fabric.*[34]
> Hans Haacke

Is art the right place? Haven't we always known that art alone cannot change the world and that the support of a majority for the avant-garde is unlikely? ('The people have spoken – the bastards', as a disgruntled US politician once put it.) The question of the freedom of art remains dependent on the broader context in which the art takes place. The faith in information and communication that permeated so much progressive art of the 1960s and early 70s, expressed by the Haacke quote above, was not misplaced nor has it been confirmed, cyberactivism and the blogosphere notwithstanding. The 'global' has replaced the 'international', indicating the strength of multinational corporations and the world organisations that do their bidding. The crux of the matter remains the economic power held by the few and the waning impact of political confrontation in the United States, no matter how many people are out in the streets. Museums are no longer in the picture except when they censor or self-censor; while they still do not appreciate damaging publicity, since the 70s they are mostly indifferent to protest.

This rapid rundown of a mere fraction of artists' contributions to social change originating in and beholden to the 1960s does not do justice to the amount of energy that continues to be poured into social issues even in these hard times. September 11th, 2001 could have been a watershed in some ways. But even as Abu Ghraib and Bush caricatures are omnipresent among the

32 Jonathan Schell, 'Too Late for Empire', *The Nation*, 14 August, 2006.
33 Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, New York: Vintage, 1996, p.102.

34 Hans Haacke in Jeanne Siegel, 'An Interview with Hans Haacke', *Arts Magazine*, vol.45 no.7, May 1971.
35 A video called *Disarming Images*, the product of an artists group originally affiliated with Not in Our Name is

a compendium of antiwar art that has been shown at Camp Casey, at the gates of Bush's Crawford, Texas ranch and has travelled the country. *Our Grief is not a Cry* for War was one of the group's first actions after September 11th.

'disarming images'[35] produced ever since, large-scale, ongoing activist artist organisations have been another of its casualties. This is in part, I believe, because of the pall cast by the Bush administration's inept handling of the crisis and the Afghanistan/Iraq wars, not to mention deteriorating rights to privacy, covert/overt government surveillance, increasing executive privilege, a widening abyss between rich and poor, environmental and human health... the horrors are too many to list. Yet the effect of a single super-power and lack of a universal draft has led to a certain apathy about wars being fought mainly by the poor. Gramsci's 'pessimism of the intellect' is pervasive, but his 'optimism of the will' is in short supply. Significantly, the artwork that has attracted most attention is the collaboratively created *Tribute in Light* – vertical beams rising from the World Trade Center's Ground Zero; its politics are ambiguous but the image is immensely powerful.

So where are we now? The following remarks give some indication: some radical young artists and groups committed to 'the creative disruption of everyday life' were asked, 'Can there be revolutionary art without a revolution?'[36] The Surveillance Camera Players simply say 'No'. Critical Art Ensemble qualifies the negative: 'No. There are resistant or contestational cultural or political movements, campaigns and actions but not revolutionary ones.' Alex Villar replies: 'I think it is absolutely necessary to sustain goals irrespective of imminent possibilities. Without a radical argument to expand the spectrum of public debates, the democratic range of possibilities contracts to an unbearable degree.' Similarly, Ruben Ortiz-Torres states: 'I believe the voice of an individual can exist in a revolutionary way.' The group e-Xplo cites Julia Kristeva, advocating 'a renewed relationship to revolt, one in which revolution would involve a critical relationship with oneself...'. Lucy Orta offers: 'We need to find a new word for revolution.' And the Yes Men, true to their name and their extraordinary art of disguise and deception, say: 'Sure!'

[36] Separate interviews with the artists in Nato Thompson and Greg Sholette (eds.), *The Interventionists*, North Adams, Mass.: Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004.

SECULAR ARTIST, CITIZEN ARTIST

GEETA KAPUR

Framing Categories

The two terms I use to construct this argument – secular and citizen – annotate each other and suggest ways to connect contemporary art practices with a historical agenda. The secular is constructed on an agonistic principle that is particularly relevant to artists working in the public domain. Citizenship is a contestatory site involving struggles for civil rights and forms of political empowerment in relation to the state.

For all its worldliness, the term secular (meaning 'of this world') could indicate, as with Edward Said, a sense of liminality: secularism is an oppositional critical practice whose meaning emerges in contrast to the practice of religious solidarity, nationalist movements, professionalism and 'organic' or class-aligned intellectualism.[1] A witness-in-exile is a favoured trope of the twentieth century; it becomes an enabling form of internationalism that empowers intellectuals in the Third World to dismantle and reshape metropolitan systems of authority. On the strength of Said it can be further argued that the secular is central to the very formation of modernity and artistic modernism, and that being secular is an integral part of being an artist in modern times.

To be secular implies participation in an abstract form of citizenship that approximates a universal condition and, hence, a dialectically understood (un)belonging. Vulnerabilities within the practice of secularism have been foregrounded in the global present by the paradoxical re-emergence of specifically nationalist, ethnic and religious communities. These vulnerabilities have brought into focus a more situational idea of citizenship, making it imperative that we acknowledge historical dilemmas of identity and advance specific instances of radical partisanship within the nation-state and outside it, within civil society and across the more volatile ground of the political.

A distinction made by the political theorist Partha Chatterjee between civil society, political society and the state is relevant here. Chatterjee states:

[1] Reference here is to Edward Said's famous 'Introduction: Secular Criticism', in his *The World, The Text and the Critic*, London: Vintage, 1991; and to his later monograph, *Representations of the Intellectual (The 1993 Reith Lectures)*, London: Vintage, 1994.

'The question that frames the debate over social transformation in the colonial period, is that of modernity. In political society of the post-colonial period, the framing question is that of democracy.'[2] He argues that civil society comprises the realm of rule-governed negotiations in a legal framework that privilege certain citizens on account of class, caste, etc.: the political domain consists of a more chaotic process of negotiation in which different sections of the population fight – within a manifestly unequal society – for their democratic rights to benefits, public services, representation and entitlements on behalf of a community or cause.[3]

Being a citizen within the terms of the nation-state rests on contractually conducted, ideologically over-determined and often *exclusionary* privileges. Global citizenship (necessitated by the logic of global capital and the contingent need for a mass movement of labour) frequently translates into a systematic process of *disenfranchisement*: the badge of alienation is worn by millions of migrants. Heavy with historical contradictions, an international civil society is postulated at an elevated (possibly utopian) level, even as the discourse of citizenship is rhetorically renewed by asking how the citizenry – as a multitudinous force – comes to be redeemed within and outside state formations.

If what distinguishes political from civil society is that the discourse of citizens' rights must translate into a preemptive commitment to radical change, we need to reopen a familiar, intensely polemical question: *does the artist-as-citizen still have a role to play in translating political projects into a vanguard aesthetic?*

Progressive Movements in Indian Art

There is a recognised set of historical precedents exemplifying styles of political intervention in modern Indian art. These are the two left-initiated writers'-and-artists' movements in pre-independent India of the 1930s and 40s: the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), formed in 1936 in the syncretic culture of the North Indian city of Lucknow, and the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA), formed in 1943 amidst the great political ferment in Bengal.[4] IPTA remains the most valorised movement of 'revolutionary' artists to this day. Most members of IPTA were communist sympathisers, and the organisation served as a Communist Party Cultural

[2] Partha Chatterjee, 'Beyond the Nation? Or Within?', Carolyn M. Elliott (ed.), *Civil Society and Democracy: A Reader*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

[3] This includes, above all, the mass movement led during the 1940s by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his followers until the present day to claim an equitable space for the *dalits* in a modern Indian state; armed struggles by the Maoists/ Naxalites to claim land rights for displaced peasants from the 'land-lord-capitalist' state; insurgencies by neglected/alienated 'nationalities' and other minorities seeking autonomy from the space of the nation-state; forcible negotiations by disenfranchised labour and urban 'slum' dwellers to secure their living rights.

[4] See Sudhi Pradhan (ed.), *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents Vol.III 1943–64*, Calcutta: Mrs Pradhan (publisher), Pustak Bipani (distributor), 1985. See also Malini Bhattacharya, 'The IPTA in Bengal', *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, no.2, January–March 1983; and Rustom Bharucha, *Rehearsals for Revolution: Political Theatre in Bengal*, Calcutta: Seagull, 1983.

Front. Comprised largely of performing artists – actors, singers, dancers, pedagogues – these spirited troupes saw themselves as the cultural vanguard and formed virtual 'brigades', going into the country to gain nation-wide solidarity. IPTA's proclaimed task was to mobilise people into a performative mode in preparation for a revolution, tapping nationalist and revolutionary fervour alike. Indeed, IPTA should be seen as a moment of culmination for a liberationist agenda when flanks of creative youth joined the national struggle and took on, in one concerted effort, the malaise of indigenous feudalism, British imperialism and fascism. (Notwithstanding their ongoing struggle against imperial rule, Indians fought in willing collaboration with the Allies against fascism).

Though named after Romain Rolland's idea of a 'Peoples' Theatre', IPTA was in fact part *narodnik* in style, part Soviet in ideology, referring especially to agit-prop movements and artists' collectives in the early decades of the Soviet revolution. Thus, while it envisioned a *mythos* of the land and its people in a still largely peasant country by configuring indigenous radicalisms and extant folk forms, it drew equally on a hundred-year-long, critical and creative dialogue in India on the *processes of modernity*. It was thus in a position to engage with Western radicalisms and to deploy advanced strategies of political persuasion. IPTA also became the fulcrum for new literature and new cinema, such as that of the great Marxist filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, who gave a passionate turn to the politics of realist cinema (different in style and ideology from his more famous, more sedate peer, Satyajit Ray). Riding the last wave of India's anti-imperialist struggles, IPTA lasted beyond independence (1947) and through the 1950s, though on a diminished scale. In cultural lore it became the originary moment of 'true' radicalism in the Indian arts as it cut across nationalist/communist and postcolonial/statist worldviews. Though the nationalist and communist movements were not always in consonance, they followed a rubric of radical change, and IPTA made a direct *political* intervention, combining the fervour of both and situating the working people at the fulcrum of India's liberation struggle.

There is another level at which Indian artists, as honorary members of the national elite in a postcolonial state, function. Occupying a relatively secure space in civil society, they do engage with the question of social and cultural transformation, but their voice is heard within a fairly discreet public sphere. It is useful here to refer to the concept of 'passive revolution', advanced by Gramsci and brought to bear on our understanding of the modalities of change in pre- and specifically post-independence India by Partha Chatterjee. Because the rubric of revolution becomes somewhat ironic by the use of the epithet, 'passive', Indian cultural practitioners foreground the term 'progressive'. This is a term taken over from leftist discourse and made more accommodating to a liberal disposition; it is, however, distinguished from the standard, Western notion of liberalism in that

a peculiarly charged, though somewhat abstracted ideal of a people's sovereignty is assumed to emerge in the aftermath of decolonisation.

All through the national movement and up until the recent past, Indian artists represented, both euphorically and critically, the imagined community of the nation and the state. The new national state that came into its own under Jawaharlal Nehru looked to the intelligentsia, the intellectual and artist community, to stage an honourable transition from the feudal to a modern, democratic, secular and moderate version of socialist society. Correspondingly, the cultural position of post-independence Indian artists has been largely 'reformist' in relation to tradition and indigenist/communitarian formations. As members of the intelligentsia, artists can be seen to function not only within the terms of this new body-politic, but in tune with the state's embodiment of an emancipatory agenda. They have 'trusted' state initiatives in establishing its claims of a democratic and secular polity via constitutional norms and good governance. They have found forms of critical affiliation, devised genres, styles and figural types, as well as aesthetic strategies for the purpose of addressing the *national*.[5] Indeed, for a period, artists in India can be seen to play a substantial mediatory role in the very site of those cultural institutions deemed progressive by the postcolonial state – and only occasionally has the project of modernisation and the historical teleology set up on its premise been opened out for critical consideration. *Thus a peculiar coincidence occurs between the state's constitutional promise of democratic secularism and the secularising logic of aesthetic modernism.*

The declarative stance of artists as modern, secular, progressive members of the national elite has led to the valorisation of artists as 'universal' moderns and, as such, citizen-subjects with an enhanced sovereignty. Significantly, these artists have exercised their special liberties in order to subvert religion, gender norms and class in a language both eccentric and acute – as befits alternative embodiments of subjectivity in the modernist mode.[6] Indian artists, highly 'accredited' members of the Indian Republic, have wielded power as bearers of the *national imaginary* with, through and also, at times, outside the sanctioning institutions of the state. By way of introducing alternative readings, I argue further that several of these artists recognise the changing contours of Indian democracy and, faced with

5 For example, two major post-independence artists – Maqbool Fida Husain and K.G. Subramanyan – can be said to have forged a painting vocabulary corresponding to what the Indian state, the intelligentsia and an enlightened public would designate as national, modern, secular consciousness.

6 As an example I refer to the painter Francis Newton Souza (1924–2002), Goan-Catholic turned modernist, mysogynist, universal antagonist – an *enfant terrible* of Indian art; and to Bhupen Khakhar (1934–2003), master subversionist who produced a remarkably unique iconography for gay sexuality. I also refer to feminist articulations by artists using a wide range of materials and strategies: for example, painters Arpita Singh and Nilima Sheikh; installation/video artists and photographers Nalini Malani, Rummana Hussain, Navjot Altaf, Sheela Gowda, Pushpamala N., Dayanita Singh, Anita Dube, Sheba Chhachhi, Sonia Khurana, Tejal Shah and Shilpa Gupta. Together this output marks, quite literally, the full stretch of vanguard art practice in India.

assertive aspects of state power, take political dissent beyond the protocol of civil society. Particularly since the late 1970s – thirty years after independence – the more political among these artists have faced the historicist bind of the nation-state and found the problematic of a plural culture, as handled by the centrist government and its state bureaucracy, inadequate. They have sought allegories or otherwise deconstructed signs of the national whereby they can be both inside the nation and outside the state in their interpretative rendering of the political.[7]

Consider some specific instances during the Indian Emergency declared by the supposedly left-liberal government of Indira Gandhi in 1975–77. As the state cracked down on all opposition and suspended the democratic process to combat what it called a situation of nationwide anarchy, a considerable number of Indian artists tested their courage and challenged the state's injunctions.[8] On another plane, since 1992 there has been a sustained opposition to the ascendant right-wing parties (the Bhartiya Janata Pary (BJP) that led a ruling coalition, National Democratic Alliance (NDA), between 1998–2004). How artists responded when rightwing ideology and anti-secular/proto-fascist forces engineered riots and conducted a virtual massacre of the Muslims will be discussed later. Here I seek to establish that modern cultural history will see Indian artists not only as supporting the more progressive values of a democratic polity, but as positioning themselves in the public sphere to engage moderately but significantly with urgencies of the political moment.

Beyond this left-liberal response is the more intrepid position that rejects the (self-attributed) placement of the artist as member of the national elite, and demands that radical social intervention be predicated on a position that is exactly its opposite – the *subaltern* position. Two such contexts need to be established. There has been an explosive development in literature from the 1960s with group formations and collective movements taking on a forthrightly antagonistic role. Foregrounding their view from a *subaltern* locus, *dalit* writers (the lowest/'untouchable' members of the Hindu caste hierarchy who have assumed the term *dalit*, the oppressed, as a sign of their estrangement *and* defiance) challenge, defy and mock the ideology of the ruling class and caste, the hegemony of the state, and the very legitimacy of the national. There is a generically different *dalit* literature (especially in

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7 I refer here to India's lofty tradition of *auteur*-based, modernist and avant-garde cinema and, when we talk of testing the limits of sovereign-subjectivity, to filmmakers as diverse as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, Mrinal Sen and Adoor Gopalakrishnan.

8 During the Indian Emergency and later, between 1992–2004, when anti-secular/proto-fascist forces engineered riots and virtual genocide of the minorities in different parts of India, visual artists were able to articulate the rupture in the democratic equation between the state and the polity by changing the course of what until then was a largely classical/modernist art scene. Artists – foremost among them Vivan Sundaram, Nalini Malani, Rummana Hussain and Navjot Altaf, followed by younger artists, especially the Mumbai-based Open Circle – incorporated documentary photography and switched over to sculptural and video installations, as well as public art interventions. By boldly changing their language-in-use, they also changed the subject-position of the artist, making it more unstable, more volatile and more radical.

Marathi and Tamil) that places unprecedented pressure on what a culturally validated modernist aesthetic could possibly mean or, rather, fail to mean, in the deeply divided social life, as in the national-political formation of India itself.

Additionally, anti-state Maoist politics came into existence in the late 1960s and created a counter-culture prevailing in metropolitan India: an outright rejection of what was declared by the revolutionists to be hollow promises of the Indian Republic, and therefore a rejection of the constitutional and democratic structures of the nation-state. The Indian Communist Party (CPI) split in 64 and gave birth to CPI (Marxist); split again in 67 to found the CPI (Marxist-Leninist). This last formation, the CPI (ML), is also referred to as the Naxalite movement after the location of Naxalbari in Bengal; here, in 1967, the first call was given for an armed capture of land by, and on behalf of, the deprived and landless peasantry. The CPI and the CPI (M) have participated in the democratic process, held power in the states of Kerela and West Bengal for decades and act, at the present juncture, as major players in the existing politics of India. Meanwhile, the field of operation of the CPI (ML), or the Naxalites, has been the predominantly tribal, peasant and lower-caste regions – the first being Bengal, Kerela and Andhra, then parts of Bihar and adjoining states. At its high point through the 70s it had a committed following in urban India as well. The call for action directed against the class of landlords, but also against India's comprador bourgeoisie, the pro-landlord-capitalist state and the urban middle-classes with their flawed trust in parliamentary democracy, also attracted students and middle-class youth, as well as sections of the intelligentsia. Unlike the classical CPI, with its legion of artist-affiliates (including IPTA) and the CPI (M) (of which I shall soon speak), artists' input in the Naxalite movement has been more locally, though no less radically, configured through vernacular traditions of dissent. Fewer visual artists from the metropolis were involved in the movement, except during the late 80s when a brief and brilliant intervention was made by The Radical Painters and Sculptors Association, largely comprised of young artists from the communist state of Kerela.⁹ However, a broad flank of ultra-left writers and filmmakers, theatre practitioners (and these few artists) have expressed their identification with subaltern movements and strengthened the subjectivities produced therein. The corresponding genre is either expressionist or documentary, and though each has a very different genealogy, they privilege a rhetorical style of address intended to expose the (un)truth of the state's democratic claims.

9 The Radical Painters' and Sculptors' Association (1987–89) was led by the dynamic K.P. Krishnakumar until his suicide in 1989. This brought a tragic closure to the youthful movement that questioned and refused all before them – in art and politics alike. See Anita Dube, *Questions and Dialogue* (exh. cat.), Baroda: The Radical Painters' and Sculptors' Association, 1987, and Shivaji Panikkar, 'Indian Radical painters and Sculptors: Crisis of Political Art in Contemporary India', in Ratan Parimoo (ed.), *Creative Arts in Modern India: Essays in Comparative Criticism Vol.II*, Delhi: Books and Books, 1995. A strongly polemical handling of the issues is to be found in Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 'The Last Decade', in Gulammohammed Sheikh (ed.), *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, Delhi: Tulika, 1997.

By the 1990s the socialist compact, such as it was in the early post-independence decades, was devolving into neo-liberal strategies and leading on to India's induction into global capitalism. This soon became declared state policy. It was accompanied by rightwing ascendancy (not unexpectedly, perhaps, given a world-wide record of such a tendency), with cultural agendas antithetical to the modern, secular claim of the Indian Republic. The artist community tended to view this economic transformation as inevitable; India – as widely believed by a massive, upwardly mobile, middle class – had to accept the logic of the world economy. In fact, object/commodity-orientated visual artists found it more-and-more conducive as the art market expanded manifold and there was an unprecedented acceleration of Indian artists' participation in global art events. But the entire artist community – almost as a whole and across the entire nation – responded with alarm at the turn towards religious sectarianism in the political and cultural arenas. There has been a refusal of Hindutva ('being' Hindu or the Hindu way) and of the retrograde party ideology of the BJP that came into power and formed a ruling coalition between 1998–2004.

A New Collective Agency in the Public Sphere: SAHMAT
SAHMAT (Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust) is an artists' and intellectuals' forum formed in early 1989 in solidarity against the murder, by ruling Congress Party goons, of Safdar Hashmi, a young theatre activist and member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). A charismatic figure, Hashmi's funeral was attended by comrades and others in the thousands, and it became, in its outpouring of grief and rage, an unparalleled rallying point.[10] SAHMAT (henceforth referred to as Sahmat, since the acronym actually means agreement/compact) issued its first call with the slogan 'Artists Alert!'. Mobilising artists, academics, journalists and activists in Delhi and across the entire country, it provided a platform from which to articulate dissent in moments of crisis, when democratic rights of Indian citizens are flouted. Almost in one stroke, Sahmat succeeded in placing the Indian artist at the centre of a cultural juncture where civil society and the national state can be said to have entered an ongoing crisis (a crisis that decidedly dates

Safdar Hashmi with his theatre group, Jana Natya Manch, ca. 1989 Photograph © SAHMAT
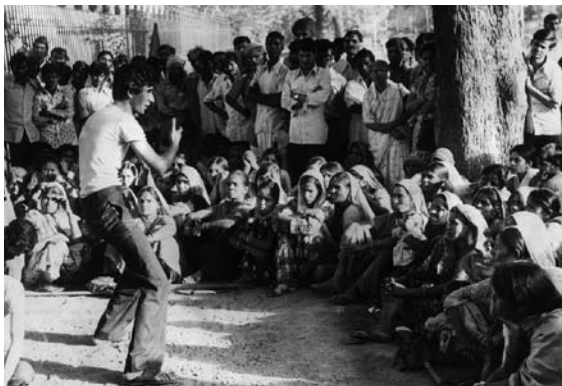
[10] Safdar Hashmi's street-theatre group, *Jana Natya Manch* (Peoples' Theatre Platform), run by his comrade-wife Moloyshree Hashmi and the group's ideologue, Sudhanva Deshande, sees itself inheriting some of its activist energies from IPTA; it also acts as a cultural front of the CPI (M). See, among their other publications, a special issue of their journal: *Nukkad Janam Samvad* on 'People's Art in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice', vol.II/III, nos. 4–8 (Delhi: Jana Natya Manch), July 1999–September 2000.

back to the declaration in 1975 of the Indian Emergency). By energising public debate on issues of art and citizenship, by activating a dialogue on the relevance of the arts within the sub/or proto-bourgeois public sphere in India, Sahmat succeeded in attributing a responsibility to the artist on behalf of an often-recalcitrant state. In that process, Sahmat has faced and won battles against attacks by belligerent parliamentarians as well as state forces compromised by the pressure of a growing rightwing within Indian political culture. Well understood to be broadly aligned with the leftwing, Sahmat on occasion acts like a *de facto* cultural front of the CPI (M); on other occasions it privileges its artists' constituency and defies the party line, thus developing remarkable strategies of commitment and autonomy.

Well known to be especially proactive on issues of minorities, their rights and security within national cultural space and Indian polity at large, Sahmat has functioned:

– within *civil society* as a conciliatory platform;
– *vis-a-vis* the s*tate* through channels of government policy;
– out in the *public sphere*, addressing issues of civil society, of governance and justice;
– directly within the *political arena*, via confrontational debates in the parliament, in the judicial courts and in the media.

Indeed, Sahmat's mediatic success in galvanising opinion in the public sphere has been staggering given that the media was overrun by a right-wing blitz from the 1990s through to 2004. Building opinion through directing media attention to issues of urgent public interest – via signature campaigns, petitions, widely reported press conferences, the staging of public rallies and protest meetings, and artist-designed posters as well as 'direct action' at street level – Sahmat can be said to have proposed a *rhetorical form of public culture.*

Sahmat's emergence in 1989 resulted in, numerically speaking, extraordinary participation by the entire breadth of India's artists, from academy-style painter to classical singer, from alternative filmmaker to community theatre enthusiast, from Communist Party griot to small-town photo-journalist. Sahmat's interventions quickly laid out a new mode of artistic operation in the Indian context, bringing on board waves of voluntary conscripts from the art world, the intelligentsia and 'cultural workers' who embraced Sahmat as a national platform for anti-state and progressive dissent. By the time of its 'Anhad Garje' [meaning 'unborn, boundless, raging sound'] … campaign of 1993 – its quickfire response to the Babri Masjid demolition, when all other elements of civil society and the state seemed paralysed – Sahmat was routinely pulling off tremendous logistical feats on a national scale, straddling events in several different cities (up to 30 at a time) with input and involvement from hundreds, even thousands, of artists. From certain

standpoints, this made Sahmat into the largest-ever voluntary collective of artists coming together to share a single political platform.[11]

To elaborate on some of its activities, soon after Safdar Hashmi's death a National Street Theatre Day was declared by Sahmat; 25,000 street plays based on democratic/leftist issues were believed to have been staged throughout the country on 12 April 1989. From the early 90s, the Hindu rightwing began acting out its agenda for cultural, economic and political majoritarianism, propagating an anti-Muslim (anti-minority) ideology of hate, and resorting to political vandalism (the demolition of the sixteenth-century Babri Mosque in December 92), riots and massacres (Mumbai, 92–93) . In 1991 Sahmat responded with a multiple-arts project *Artists Against Communalism*, which brought together musical performances, lectures, films and street theatre. This travelling project was staged in several cities.[12] After the demolition of the mosque, Sahmat composed, designed, printed and distributed 20,000 protest posters across the country. On 1 January 1993 *Anhad Garje*, a stupendous musical programme, turned into a caravan of classical, folk and popular musicians, traveling from Delhi to six riot-torn cities, including the curfew-strapped cities of Gujarat. They also performed in burning Mumbai and in Lucknow near Ayodhya (where the mosque was razed to the ground). *Anhad Garje* turned the syncretic, *sufi-bhakti* traditions of music from a medieval genre into a contemporary one. Its rare dynamic, the way its subliminal dissent resounded against the vulgar demagogy of *Hindutva* ideology, marked a new stage in the very definition of how, and when, traditional art forms become (re)radicalised; how they acquire political iconicity and a fresh aura.[13] On the eve of Independence Day in 1993, within a year of the Demolition *Muktanaad* (meaning 'free note'), an all-night performance was held on the banks of the river Sarayu in Ayodhya by a similar constellation of musicians, completing this paradoxical, canonical/anti-canonical solidarity. An accompanying exhibition of text and image titled 'Hum Sab Ayodhya' (meaning 'we are all from the syncretic culture of Ayodhya') presented archival/historical resources about the contested site of Ayodhya, underscoring India's plural culture. Printed in an edition of 500 for pedagogic dissemination, this was shown in Faizabad/Ayodhya and in 17 other cities simultaneously.

[11] Arindam Dutta, 'SAHMAT, 1989–2004: Liberal Art Practice against the Liberalised Public Sphere', *Cultural Dynamics*, London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2005, p.199. There are scores of very important publications (and an occasional newsletter) produced by Sahmat that spell out its activities, its ideology and its battles.

[12] The term 'communalism' has a negative meaning in Indian usage; the descriptive term – communal – is turned to mean religious and ethnic sectarianism, and those hostile forms of identity politics that generate inter-community violence.

[13] The mystical strains in Islamic and Hindu religions merge from the twelfth century to generate a culture at once philosophic, popular and syncretic. *Sufi/bhakti*, a performative tradition, continues until the nineteenth century producing remarkably beautiful, radical, enlightened poetry and music. Musicologists/musicians Madan Gopal Singh and Shubha Mudgal, active members of Sahmat, initiated a virtually new movement in Indian performing arts by conceiving and choreographing Sahmat's musical caravans.

It is this kind of interventionist temper that has placed Sahmat in direct relation with the state. This is a complicated relationship, and in many ways a pragmatic one. Sahmat conducts negotiations with state authorities that are sympathetic to its cause, and for that reason it is sometimes called a *para-statist* organisation. But if its confrontational aspects are considered, it becomes a *political player prodding the state to declare its hand.* Sahmat takes a critical/collaborative stance when there is a progressive potential at stake within state ideology, while it is boldly anti-statist at other junctures. Correspondingly, Sahmat has received state funds and permissions to launch its public projects and it has also faced bans (and judicial cases amounting to criminal charges) against particular activities considered politically transgressive. *Muktanad*, the all-night performance on the banks of the holy river in the assaulted city of Ayodhya, had full state support sanctioned by the ruling Congress government. But the historically researched exhibition 'Hum Sab Ayodhy', which illustrated the layered culture of India's civilisational sites to gain a mandate for modern secularism, was vandalised by rightwing goons in the adjoining city and then banned and confiscated in Delhi on ludicrously framed criminal charges. This led Sahmat into a ferocious controversy in the media as well as the parliament where the Congress Party, and even the otherwise sympathetic left parties, succumbed to the virulence of the anti-Sahmat campaigners. This small artist-organisation was forced to face criminal charges of communal offence (attempt to stir religious disaffection). It took a brilliant lawyer, Rajeev Dhavan, until 2001 to fight and win on a triumphant note at the Delhi High Court.

Sahmat believes that its fight on behalf of the secular principles of the Indian Constitution – an affirmative agenda – *can disentangle the undertow of several distorting tendencies within the classic sphere of ideology, that is to say within culture, education, media and the expressive arts.* Just as open-air performances of egalitarian and dissenting strains in classical and folk music (*Anhad Garje, Muktanaad*) have signalled a cultural mandate for secularism, contemporary poetry and street theatre in the rhetorical mode has given a political mandate to popular forms. Sahmat's programmes and events have included what it calls 'Alerts!' whenever there is a perceived threat by national and global forces to the constitutional rights of artists as citizens – in the matter of life, speech and expression. Sahmat has provided a platform for solidarity and support for Salman Rushdie, for the communist theatre director Habib Tanvir and, concertedly for ten years now, for India's most famous, nonagenarian modernist-artist Maqbool Fida Husain, who is now in exile on account of criminal, life-threatening charges framed by Hindutva thugs (and their counterparts amongst Muslim fundamentalists.)[14]

Sahmat has regularly staged thematic visual arts exhibitions that are pedagogic as well as experimental. These all elicit a collective refusal of narrow sectarianism and an opening out to the emancipatory cultural

resource of the *national imaginary*. For instance, in the portable street exhibition 'Images and Words' – a companion piece to the ongoing programmes of 'Artists against Communalism' – artists and writers together addressed the thematic of the secular, and the exhibition traveled to 30 cities in 1991. As already mentioned, in 93 'Hum Sab Ayodhya', replete with a seminal court case based on the *real politik* of the state's farcical censorship laws, became a matter of parliamentary debate. Exhibitions of mail art produced on a shoe-string budget, such as 'Postcards for Gandhi', opened in six cities in 1995, affirming the renewed evaluation of Gandhi's 'truth' in the distorted heart of India's body-politic during the strife-ridden decade. Alongside artists' reconstruction of the figure of Gandhi, Sahmat invited Marxist philosophers and social scientists to reflect on the political relevance of Gandhi, an exercise long-neglected by the Indian left. In 1999 Sahmat published and toured a poster exhibition titled 'Harvest of Hate' that chronicled acts of harassment, moral policing and violence pursued against all norms of a democratic society by the Hindutva brigades.[15]

Ways of Resisting

Of seminal importance is the exhibition 'Ways of Resisting', mounted by Sahmat in Delhi in 2002–03.[16] This was the period when a near-fascistic ideology, at once homogenising and sectarian, reached its peak. Foremost amongst these was the state of Gujarat which, in 2002, instigated a genocide of Muslims on a scale of violence unprecedented in independent India. In the wake of these events – forms of 'ethnic cleansing' conducted by Hindutva forces in the guise of spontaneous religious riots – Sahmat held, as I have

[14] Habib Tanvir (b.1923) is one of India's foremost theatre directors: active since the 1940s with the most radical art movements in northern India (PWA and IPTA), he trained at theatre schools in England (RADA and Bristol Old Vic), returned to India and formed his repertory company Naya Theatre in the late 50s. Pioneering a new relationship between the vernacular and the modern (between actors from rural and urban Indian contexts; between texts from Sanskrit and Renaissance traditions; between social realist, Brechtian and popular forms), his theatre exemplified the most advanced form of democratic parity in the conception of contemporary arts in post-Independence India. Tanvir, an inveterate atheist/iconoclast, is a Muslim and has been heckled and attacked by conservative audiences, usually Hindu groups claiming to be offended by his handling of religion and caste.

The artist Maqbool Fida Husain (b.1915) has been an icon for the national imagination and has moulded perceptions of modern art and visual culture in post-Independence India. Hindu fundamentalists now declare Husain's portrayal of Indian iconography (drawn throughout his long career from the prodigious resource of Hindu mythology) to be offensive to Hindu sentiments. In the past few years he has had dozens of criminal cases pending against him in courts all over India and has been forced into exile.

Tanvir has performed for and been staunchly defended by Sahmat whenever he has faced attacks. Husain, though not especially close to the left or to Sahmat, has received support from Sahmat for the last ten years in the form of press statements, representations to the government, symposia and publications. There is a sustained effort to persuade the public and the very state that has

honoured him with the highest awards to safeguard his life and art.

[15] At a more experimental level Vivan Sundaram (activist-artist and founder-trustee of Sahmat) has curated several exhibitions for Sahmat, such as an international exhibition of mail art, 'Gift for India' (1997), followed (in 2001) by a playful public-art project on the Delhi streets called 'Art on the Move'. In 2004 and 2007 exhibitions on the diverse history of this nation have been curated by another Sahmat activist, the photographer-designer Ram Rahman.

[16] Curated in 2002 by Vivan Sundaram, this large exhibition was comprised of seminal works from the preceding decade. As always with Sahmat, it was organised on a shoe-string budget with contributions from artists and Sahmat sympathisers. Openly critical of the belligerently anti-Sahmat, ruling rightwing government, the exhibition showed

already recounted, many different forms of protest. In the dire circumstances of Gujarat 2002, a succession of meetings were held – direct encounters with the victims of the pogrom who placed their horrific testimonies before the press and public in the capital city of Delhi – for the nation to witness. In continuation with this testimony the exhibition 'Ways of Resisting' placed the violent decade of 1992–2002 as a frame of reference to bring to attention artworks (of 30 or so artists) that articulated questions of self and society in a situation where an already fraught polity was suddenly torn apart.

Several of the issues discussed in the main body of this essay – self, citizenship, alterity, exile – and those I have not discussed – pain, mourning and death – found a language, or at least an enunciative mode, in and through this carefully curated exhibition. A number of art works of this period dealt with the usurpation of religion and mythology, and the demagogic distortion of symbols (traditional and contemporary) by reactionary culturalists; the artists did this to forge an iconography that draws on the tradition yet spells alterity.[17] The aspiration of secular artists working within a transforming ethos of traditional societies is complex: they may be inclined to weave their way through philosophic (mystical) radicalism to reach the destination of political dissent; or they may navigate a return from the other shore – from contemporary disenchantments, to the recognition of loss and thence to the historical task of ethical redress. In this two-way process, the most generative source Indian artists have tapped into, quite predictably perhaps, is the syncretic sufi/bhakti traditions of medieval India that produced a new heterodox spirituality and a dissenting, near-atheist autonomy aiming to dismantle religious institutions and nurture egalitarian, intra-community exchanges. In doing so, contemporary artists (not unlike their medieval counterparts) hold in tension a sensibility for the sacred along with a full play of profanation – what in aesthetics may be called the play of inversions – deemed necessary for every ethical enterprise.

Indeed artists have attempted to do what the Marxist political philosopher Akeel Bilgrami calls the 're-enchantment of the secular' within his exegesis on the 'philosophy' of Gandhi.[18] He considers it necessary that we, in our time, understand Gandhi's insistence on attributing a normative

Surendran Nair
The Unbearable Lightness of Being (Corollary Mythologies), **1998,** oil on canvas, **120×180** cm. The Suresh Photograph © SAHMAT

one hundred-or-so artworks, including both paintings and major installations (examples of which are illustrated here) in a public space run by the State Academy of Fine Arts (Lalit Kala Akademi). It hosted films and discussions and involved large audiences including political leaders in a dialogue with artworks that dared to speak up against the onslaught of fascistic tendencies in the country.

[17] I refer to the artists Gulammohammed Sheikh, Nilima Sheikh and Arpana Cour.
[18] See Akeel Bilgrami, 'Secularism, Nationalism and Modernity', in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998; and Akeel Bilgrami, 'Gandhi, Newton and the Enlightenment', *Social Scientist*, vol.34 nos.5–6, May–June 2006.

concern and irreducible value to nature and human society alike, whereby even rational thought must entail both doubt and its transcendence. If a generosity of spirit brings truth and compassion, faith and irony into social praxis, then it is not so coincidental that the figure of Gandhi should repeatedly figure as norm, icon and enigma in Indian artists' work (as well as in art projects staged by Sahmat, and in the revised discourse at the national level by left intellectuals).[19] Though seemingly literal, such figuration can offer the possibility of facing authoritarian command with an imaginative rendering of our everyday lives.

Several artworks in 'Ways of Resisting' demonstrate that one of the ways of resisting both the violence of social coercion and its reprisal in hate is by conducting the full protocol of mourning.[20] This recalls Gandhian ethics of 'remorse', as it does Western scriptural and psychoanalytical understanding. If politicality comes as much from agonistic reason as it comes from a recognition of affects, artworks make evident that social suffering (as caused by communal carnage in India) requires reparation for the injury acted out, in the case of an artist's practice, in the public eye. To memorialise courageous encounters with coercive regimes is the necessary task of historical recall conducted by artists of all genres at all times. 'Ways of Resisting' had a preponderance of artworks that dealt with traumatic events and constructed memory, mourning and memorials.

Yet another set of works in the exhibition attempted to prise away the question of the citizen-subject from the national, conventional setting of civil society. By considering the question of new subjectivities formed outside in the interstices of the city fabric, these artists adopt confrontational positions pertaining to *dalit* and working-class identities, they also offer provocative stances in relation to gender questions.[21] Such forms of dissent invite punctual interrogation of civic sloth and political crimes; it remains for

Sherab '*When the Gun is Raised, Dialogue Stops...*', *Women's voices from the Kashmir Valley*, installation, 2000 Photograph © Pablo Bartholomew/ SAHMAT

Navjot Altaf
*Links Destroyed
and Rediscovered*,
installation,
1994.
Photograph
© Pablo
Bartholomew/
SAHMAT

critical discourse to inscribe the artwork within the public sphere for a continued activation of their condensed and replete meaning.

The Present Moment

With the centrist, declaredly secular, pro-globalisation Congress Party earning the election mandate in 2004 to form a coalition government (United Progressive Alliance – UPA), what role is Sahmat able to play? Not surprisingly, and indeed appropriately, Sahmat's position runs parallel, though on a relatively minor key, to the role more recently played by Indian left parties when dealing with the alternating rule of the BJP and the Congress Party. The communist parties of course are in direct confrontation with the BJP; they support the present ruling coalition led by the Congress Party from outside the government. The CPI (M), in particular, has a strong presence in three states and in the elected parliament at the centre, so together the communists form a large and articulate pressure group that can offer critical collaboration as well as active resistance to the ruling ideology. It can be argued that Sahmat, too, has launched a holding operation within what has always been defined as a progressive national – now perhaps just a liberal national – space. This involves activities of a more academic nature.

Since 2000–01 Sahmat has extended vigorous support for scientific history writing in a context where debates around the criteria of 'truth', both at the advanced level of scholarship and at the level of textbooks for school children, were distorted by a communal government and its Hindutva ideology. A critical evaluation of the economic policy of not only the BJP, but also of the centrist, Congress-led government – the UPA – has been sustained by economists on the Sahmat platform. Symposia have been held on the policy that the UPA forged in consultation with its left allies in the form of a Common Minimum Programme (CMP), which included large-scale relief measures to ensure minimum wage and welfare provisions for the rural poor; a policy towards which the neo-liberal element within the government and outside it, among the 'captains' of industry and the swelling middle class, show persistent disdain. This ideological critique now forms the fulcrum of the left agenda, and Sahmat, likewise, presses for greater recall of socialist antecedents in matters of economic and social justice while keeping a vigil on the correct rendering of election promises in education and culture. It hopes that by treating the *national as a continued site of struggle*, indeed by drawing on the largest, most inclusive legacy of democratic and anti-sectarian forces, it can engage with the changing discourse on modernisation which now coalesces with agendas of economic liberalisation

that brazenly subsume peoples' rights within the hegemonic universe of global capital. It is necessary to recognise the ideologically over-determined frame of the dream that India's ruling class is so eager to embrace: that of a global (super-) power with its economic and military strategies serving vested interests at home and in the west – emphatically the United States of America. It is precisely what the left alliance and the still substantially Marxist intellectuals in India are able to critique, and Sahmat has become one of the more public platforms available for that purpose.

Does the Sahmat platform need to restructure itself?[22] Sahmat is criticised because earlier expectations of a *narodnik*-style populism, reminiscent of IPTA, were allowed to lapse. It has not become anything like a peoples' movement for an alternative culture hypothesised in terms of an alternative society with 'revolutionary' caste and class politics. Though Sahmat determinedly exceeds the more conciliatory institutions and foreign-funded NGOs negotiating the norms of civil society, which sometimes operate as a ploy of the ruling class in a class-divided society, its own, more rigorous agendas may also be in need of a shake-up. The issues Sahmat tries to address are so fundamental as to be dealt with on several cultural and political sites. It now needs to be asked whether cultural politics in India must rely on the concept of the citizen within the terms of a national state that is itself facing an almost irretrievable contradiction: between democracy and the globalisation ambitions of a centrist government, between affluent India and the hugely turbulent polity with quite other political agendas on the ground. The issue is whether Sahmat's commitment to the modern nation-state and to a leftwing nationalism can command unquestioned allegiance from a variously motivated, utterly volatile populace. The questions asked in theoretical support of these multiple sources of discontent are whether we must invest all energy into the 'rights' discourse

[19] I refer to artists Akbar Padamsee, Surendran Nair and Atul Dodiya.

[20] Reference is to landmark installations by Vivan Sundaram, Rumanna Hussain, Navjot Altaf, N.N. Rimzon, Pushpamala N., Sheba Chhachhi and Tejal Shah, all made in the aftermath of communal riots. Reference is also to a growing body of critical iconography about violence by Arpita Singh, Sudhir Patwardhan, Nalini Malani, Nataraj Sharma, Gargi Raina and Jitish Kallat. Also included in the exhibition were works and documentation of initiatives by artist-resistance groups in Baroda, Mumbai and Bangalore who prepared image-text exhibitions in the midst of communal riots in their cities.

[21] Artists Savi Savarkar, Suranjan Basu, Probir Gupta, Veer Munshi, Altaf Mohamedi, M.J. Enas and Rias Komu, working in different mediums, referred to the persistence of caste, class, ethnic and religious conflict, as did photographers Ram Rahman, Parthiv Shah, Pablo Bartholomew and Prashant Panjiar. Artists Jehangir Jani, Inder Salim and Walter d'Souza referred to gender dilemmas.

[22] Besides the more journalistic attacks, there are of course recurring critical evaluations of Sahmat. The oppositional polemic sustained by the cultural theorist Rustom Bharucha (see his *In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) is to be positioned within the terms of his larger interrogation of

secularism and left politics. Arindam Dutta's critique (*ibid*) is the most remarkably researched and argued text yet written on Sahmat. In an elegant if elegiac form of narration, Dutta marks the peaking of Sahmat's role in a direct adversarial mode against an aggressive rightwing, and he enumerates, regretfully, the reasons that Sahmat seems to have arrived at some form of closure.

characterising civil-society ethics; whether there is not another form of politics that takes citizenship as problematic and interrogates the now unstable categories of nation and state. Even as much as its agendas are cultural, Sahmat may have to pitch its dynamic into an even more fraught public domain of politics, where the terms of discourse and the possibility of praxis are more conjectural and also more risky.

If Sahmat has to wedge itself into the burgeoning neo-liberal economy of India (and its contingent, hugely flourishing art market), endowed with multiple subterfuges that undo class as well as nation and state, it must acknowledge that the historical reality on which a mandated left politics is sustained is not available in its classical form. We need to reconsider Sahmat's artistic practice, considering that a younger, cosmopolitan, artists' constituency rejects the nation-state and nationalism (even when these are offered by progressive forces) on grounds that they must now deal with, participate in and critique the irreversible process of globalisation. By its very positioning, Sahmat has tried to sustain a minimum debate on the changing meaning of artistic radicalism and political commitment. In the process, it has attempted to deploy strategies appropriate for art in the public domain but its projects are mostly framed by known conventions and do not constitute an avant-garde within the terms of the practice itself – neither in language nor in terms of technologies. In fact, art as a social project on site – and such forms as mail art, agit-prop poster campaigns, street expositions, as well as symposia and teach-ins – seems now to rest on a mediated exploration of aesthetics, discourse and activism within the 'norms' of *civil society*, and not of what stands as its dialectical pair: *political society*. This struggle with the contradiction between the radical in art and in politics cuts across the entire twentieth century and Sahmat, it should be said, is not in command of any special aesthetic dispensation on these matters; it is even perhaps a little behind within the Indian context itself. How that context is evolving is another long and still speculative area of exploration that is not within the scope of this essay.[23]

I will, however, close this discussion with one related set of propositions. The Indian documentary and short film (in film/video/digital format) took a new and brave turn at the very time of the Naxalite movement, then

[23] Avant-gardist practices have emerged from other artist-run groups: The Raqs Media Collective, a trio located in the city of Delhi, have developed a theory and practice of documentary/video/new media art to generate extended allegories of subversion and site them punctually in cyber-*mohallas* (neighbourhoods) and cosmopolitan expositions alike. Given their preferred tropes of migration/ displacement and marginality/ surveillance, they function across the trans-cultural zone of global art and bring a unique conceptual-discursive politics into the Indian art scene. Open Circle (Mumbai) is engaged in the activist genre of public art – on the streets of Mumbai protesting/ 'performing' along with people's resistance movements or at sites such as the World Social Forum in Mumbai and other cities of the world. Youthful organisations that are not quite as political, such as Khoj (Delhi), break ground with workshops and residencies hosting eccentric and transgressive artists from all over the world. New initiatives are also now being encouraged in the private sector where all art, even radical art, is subject (of course) to rapid commodification. What Sahmat might do in the face of a rampant art-market boom that draws Indian artists into the vortex is another story altogether!

again during the Emergency, and once more during the 1990s. Indeed one definition of the political 'artist' of our time, at least in India, has become the radical documentarist, and the contradiction in the terms artist and documentarist may actually be the point from where to speak dialectically about the nature of art's radicality. For the moment I will name the best known among the 1980s generation of Indian documentarists, Anand Patwardhan, whose work spans the period mentioned above.[24] His work proves the efficacy of (Brecht-like) pedagogy within the form of the documentary, addressed to large numbers of co-citizens with due rhetorical flamboyance and a pointed politics. It also exemplifies the role that such a figure plays in activating dormant debates on media, communication and censorship within the public sphere and, not least, in questioning state ideology and state policy on art, culture and politics, thus catapulting civil rights politics into direct political address.

Provoked by rightwing politics, documentarists from all over India have set up a platform (Vikalp, 2004) with more than 300 practitioners working to articulate and disseminate a critical relation to the nation and the state. It is also the documentary and independent/experimental video movement that suggests that the mode of critical address may now have to be differently devised. Amar Kanwar, India's most internationally celebrated documentarist today, is widely shown at public screenings and in political forums; he is shown as widely in art spaces including international museums and biennales, for his unique rendering of the moving image in documentary *and* avant-garde forms. Kanwar provides an advanced example of how a new criticality imbricates itself in what are also new subjectivities within the 'abandoned' space of the national – as indeed, now, within the total dominion of global capital.[25]

When the national state, claiming custodianship of its peoples' economic interests, is handicapped and eventually even crippled by global capital, the widespread travail is accompanied by the emergence of fresh affiliations in

[24] For an update on Patwardhan's films, see www.patwardhan.com. For a radical contextualisation of his film practice, see Anand Patwardhan, 'Waves of Revolution and Prisoners of Conscience: The Guerilla Film, Underground and in Exile', MA Thesis, Department of Art History and Communications, McGill University, Autumn 1981. Patwardhan has seen himself, and been seen by film theorists such as Paul Willemen (see Jim Pines and Paul Willeman [eds.], *Questions of Third Cinema*, London: BFI Publishing, 1989) as continuing to contribute to the famous debate initiated by the critics and filmmakers Gettino and Solanas, in a work titled *Towards a Third Cinema*. Other references to Patwardhan include: Sean Cubitt, 'Interview with Anand Patwardhan', *Framework*, vol.30/31, 1986; Robert Crusz and Priyath Liyanage, 'Interview with Anand Patwardhan', *Framework*, vol.38/39, 1992; Miriam Sharma, 'Anand Patwardhan: Social Activist and Dedicated Filmmaker', *Critical Asian Studies,* vol.34 no.2, June 2002.

[25] A selected filmography for Amar Kanwar includes: *A Season Outside*, 1998; Marubhum, 2000; *The Many Faces of Madness*, 2000; *King of Dreams*, 2001; *A Night of Prophecy,* 2002; *To Remember*, 2003; *Somewhere in May*, 2005; and *The Face*, 2005 (the first pair from his ongoing project of four films on Burma. See Amar Kanwar, *Notes for A Night of Prophecy*, Chicago: The Renaissance Society, 2003; Anne Rutherford, '"Not firing arrows"': Multiplicity, Heterogeneity and the Future of Documentary. An interview with Amar Kanwar', *Asian Cinema*, vol.16 no.1, Spring 2005; Ida Kierulf, 'Amar Kanwar – Portraits' (exh. cat.), Oslo: Fotogalleriet, 2005; Marit Paasche, 'Strong Political Filmportraits', *Aftenposten*, October 2005; Jerry Saltz, 'Worlds Apart – A Meditation on Separation: Amar Kanwar Walks the Border Between India and Pakistan', *Village Voice*, February 2004.

the form of affirmative or, more properly, partisan action at the grassroots level. Some of this action is 'documented' in the very process of formation by the filmmakers and videographers who are working independently, or with national and international NGOs. Covering the sub-terrain of a nation's neglected populace, this work looks towards human rights within renewed forms of normative discourse, and establishes the legitimacy of a micro-politics that promotes self-knowledge and empowerment for the subaltern subjects. However, grassroots activism may be quite circumspect and even compromised on account of easy international legitimacy and a corresponding, international-style humanitarian agenda that often substitutes the political for the ethnographic, and radicalism for sentimental forms of idealism. In this respect it is perhaps relevant to keep in focus the counter-reference – of a nationalist/statist engagement – such that Sahmat, now so frequently criticised, insists on maintaining.

The badge of secular artist – citizen artist – usefully defined within the terms of the nation state is now catapulted into a trans-subjective 'free zone' of democratic exchange, which relies on an instant, quick-fire mode of communication at the global scale. Not surprisingly, younger artists tend to identify with these less-'classical' more-expansive realms of indeterminacy, and often adapt a mediatic (expressly new media/cyberspace) version of the avant-garde, thereby sealing the rupture with all institutional associations of the erstwhile political. What the new political might be is being scripted, ironically, in fragments and within intensely discursive enclaves. It looks like it will be some time before it is able to make common cause with the idea and emergence of 'multitudes', that putative 'revolution' of the people who are now on the move as disenfranchised citizens, as migrant labourers in a de-industrialised era, as political refugees.[26] With the widespread conviction that the globe is now deterritoralised, the idea and very cause of this new politics (in India as elsewhere round the globe) is anarchist and virtual at once, and given the actual grip of global capital, it is euphorically pitched into a form of futurism.

[26] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

SELLING THE AIR: NOTES ON ART AND THE DESIRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN TEHRAN

TIRDAD ZOLGHADR

The fact that totalitarian regimes are rarely as totalising as your standard Orwellian nightmare is a point well made by the likes of Slavoj Žižek, Timothy Brennan and others who have described how the totalitarian *mirage* can serve as a cheap justification for pluralism's shortcomings. A similar point is made in Boris Groys's *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*, but here it is not so much the absolutism itself as its complicity with artistic elites that is at stake.[1] The book traces various collusions between the Russian avant-garde and the Politburo; the shared effort to breed a New Man, and the secular eschatology that was to buttress the various strands of top-down kitsch commonly bracketed under 'Stalinism'. The latter, according to Groys, was nothing other than a faithful realisation of militant avant-garde *hubris*. If we take a look at the Islamic Republic of Iran sixty years after Stalin's prime, both the commonalities and differences are useful.

On the one hand, the mix-and-rule dynamics of the regime are pretty obvious, from the hodgepodge ideological identity to the contending paramilitary units to the competing party factions to the flimsy moral restrictions and their even more flimsy enforcement. This helps contextualise my discussion of 'art and the desire for social change' in Tehran, where casting opposition as a matter of being 'anti-regime' would be a little too easy. This might be obvious to some, but in Europe the appetite for 'Resistance' is such that even the most harmless Tehran tropes, be they kids or cockroaches, are routinely cast as dashing political metaphors. As I've argued elsewhere, Bita Fayyazi can sculpt as many crows and Shirana Shahbazi can paint as many Maseratis as each likes but someone will always frame them as ominous, meta-critical messages from the Land of the Referent where Stakes are High and trauma prevails.[2]

[1] Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*, Munich/Vienna: Carl Hander Verlag, 1988.

[2] Tirdad Zolghadr, *Far Near Distance* (exh. cat.), Berlin: Haus der Kulturen, 2004.

On the other hand, you'd be hard pressed to find a screaming Malevich, let alone a Tatlin or Rodchenko in today's semi-totalitarian Tehran. At the risk of doing injustice to the occasional utopian impulses that did indeed exist, particularly among 1970s Marxist poets and writers, I shall refrain from dishing up a spicy genealogy of disregarded visionaries and such. My aim is neither to be genealogically exhaustive nor historically revisionist, but to define a particular case study to discuss what the most productive notion of art and social change might be, a notion which can be over-defined by the mythical polarities of underground bravery versus Guy Debord homages in glossy catalogues.

I'll start by going over a small handful of iconic examples of 1970s singers, poets, filmmakers and photographers, when the Shah's particular variety of uncompromising technocratic faith in a holistic future was at its peak. If one were to seek a single ruling *leitmotif* from the most revered cultural practitioners of the time, it would need to be the elegiac insistence on the desperate, the wretched and the utterly hopeless. Poetess Forough Farrokhzad's celebrated experimental film *The House is Black* (1962) lyrically ponders a leper colony, filmmaker Dariush Mehrjui's award-winning *The Cow* (1969) follows a farmer's harrowing descent into lunacy following the death of his bovine companion, while photographer Kaveh Golestan's taxonomies of the rural underclass from the 1970s are still satisfyingly nerve-racking to behold.

For all their intelligence, wit and outstanding aesthetic value – and for all the stark differences in psychosymbolic form and structure – the sentimentalised voyeurism that pervades these grainy, unflinching, black-and-white close-ups places them closer to the trademark mainstream melancholia of legendary 1970s pop-singer Googoosh and her heart-wrenching odes to the futility of human endeavour than to the Social Realists to which they are routinely and lovingly compared. ('Realism' worthy of the name attempts to locate the causes of the miseries at hand, complicity with the systems of representation that perpetuate them and thus seek agency beyond a vague sense of intellectualised pity.)

Whether this artful miserabilia and the government's fanatical self-flattery formed an uncomplicated cause-and-effect relationship is anyone's guess. A case equally could be made for shared genealogies in aesthetic ideology among both camps, including the blissful dialectics of gore and glory in Shi'i folklore, the wry hyperbolics of the baroque in living-room furniture and everyday rhetoric that cuts across social class in Tehran, the manicheistic pop-spiritualism peppered with Zoroastrian purities, and also the booming ideology of individualism and consumer society, which not only polarised all possible notions of progress, but also fostered new demands for the political commodity and the cultural safari park, be it a leper colony or an Imperial Persia. So it's complicated. To neatly reorganise

the various causes and effects along these and other premises makes any chicken-or-egg rumination look reasonably fruitful by comparison.

Following the 1970s, Iranian films *d'auteur* became internationally acclaimed and took over as a master medium of sorts. Former advertising hack Abbas Kiarostami's engagements with the disaster-struck area of Gilan, for example, in *Where is My Friend's House* (1988), *Life Goes On* (1992) and *Through the Olive Trees* (1994) are renowned for their radical innovations in cinematic narrative, camerawork and directing. But while this trilogy is still prone to the miserabilia typical of pre-revolutionary work, Kiarostami's *Close-Up* (1990) and the more recent *Ten* (2004) are experimental forays into class, urban culture and, for lack of a better term, the politics of representation, and they are both formally accomplished and thematically distinctive.

If ever there was an artist in the unquestioning, zealous service of social change, it is the second protagonist of post-revolutionary arthouse cinema, Mohsen Makhmalbaf. An early supporter of the new regime, Makhmalbaf reportedly worked as an interrogator in the crowded political prisons, but also as a cinema propagandist authoring spectacular condemnations of the Iranian Left as a stupid horde of raving hypocrites. Later films were to deal with his own political trajectory with shrewd reflexivity and docu-fictional brilliance; for example, *A Moment of Innocence* (1996) reconstructs the story of Makhmalbaf stabbing a cop in the 70s and *Salaam Cinema* (1995) unflinchingly reinstates his experience as an interrogator. Here the director plays himself at an open-call mass audition, leading the audience through a series of repulsive film-industry power games that together shape one of the most impressive political allegories I've seen.

Today, these directors are flanked by younger cohorts, including Kiarostami's virtuoso offspring Bahman and Makhmalbaf's phenomenally successful daughter Samira, whose unabashed, internationally celebrated Orientalisms exemplifies a new art of simultaneously 'collaborating' with conflicting Eastern and Western powers-that-be. But the *cinéma d'auteur* is also rivaled by mainstream examples, less self-conscious and more explicit in their demands for personal freedom and political reform. From the gender-savvy social realism of Rakhshan Bani Etemad and (the rather more sappy) Tahmineh Milani, to increasingly politicised teenage romances – beautiful young lovers hounded by evil government agents – to action flicks such as Samam Moghaddam's *Party* (2000), which recounts the attempted assassinations of political reformists, to comedies such as Kamal Tabrizi's *Lizard* (2004), the story of a jailed convict who elopes by disguising himself as a Mullah and pursues a career by preaching theologised gibberish that people lap up without demur. (Tabrizi went on to shoot TV advertisements for the clerical candidate Hashemi Rafsanjani in last year's presidential election.)

Cinema aside, in the early 1980s and the wake of the Iran-Iraq war, the more notoriously dangerous media – such as ceramic sculpture and watercolours – were closely monitored and restricted, lest they bring down the regime in a ball of fire. But today, the Islamic Republic has abandoned its Macluhanist assumption that the medium holds the counter-revolutionary message in itself, and censorship has become a more blurry, contradictory affair. The extent to which censorship has a direct bearing on such matters is hard to tell but, for better or worse, you do now have a clear Tehran approximation of a 'global artworld' in the *Afterall* journal, double-espresso, witty-installation-titles, are-you-coming-to-the-opening sense of the term. With the election of conservative President Ahmadinejad, some of the rules are being tightened again, but not as decisively as I for one had assumed, and the espressos are still getting better by the day. As far as the art is concerned, I'll once again simply mention some of the more conspicuous examples one by one.

With their photographs, installations, ready-mades and found objects, Shirin Aliabadi and Farhad Moshiri have elaborated sharp and often hilarious strategies of appropriation that reconfigure consumer patterns with a sardonic sense of critical reserve. The duo work with advertising trends, tourist renditions of Persian antiquity, nouveau-riche architecture, government-neon aesthetics, movie-star cutlery, *intifada clichés* and other examples of auratic commodification and graphic overkill. The now prevalent notion that artists are metaconsumers of sorts, demonstrating new-and-improved consumer habits by post-production, collection and administration, rather than production *per se*, bears relevance here.

Seeing as, in Tehran, all-out consumer society constitutes a *status quo* that is merely played down and partially contained by the powers that be, the desire for 'change' in Aliabadi and Moshiri's work lies not so much in an appeal for social transformation as in a case for the candid acknowledgment of changes that emerged long ago. It is worth mentioning that many in the art circuit find it hard to pinpoint what exactly, if anything, would change in their lives if there were an all-out revolution all over again. A look at the crassly exploitative McJob market in Iran, the dearth of alternatives to free-market doctrine and the very developments taken up by Aliabadi and Moshiri, this is not merely a question of class bias or an artworld ghetto, but a widespread need for intelligent public appreciation of extensive transformations, for historical pragmatism and political transparency.

Another artist duo, Shahab Fotouhi and Neda Razavipour, pursue comparable concerns by resorting to an iconography and a method less playful and more overtly political in character. The unrealised project *Orange on Grey (Homage to Mark Rothko)*, initiated in 2002, was to consist of a carefully composed alignment of construction workers – by and large a case of crassly exploited Afghani *sans-papiers* – on the floors of a high-rise building that was still under construction. Photographed from afar, the panorama of vivid

orange on concrete grey would have served as a terrific worker's monument on a platform as gigantic as it was oddly makeshift, with the sensational gesture carefully entrenched within questions of instrumentalisation, and a particular understanding of canonical art history.

As it happens, it was ultimately the Kitchen Sink propensities of municipal bureaucrats that caused the project to fail. While Fotouhi was engaging with key decision-makers (who had initially given the go-ahead only to retract it following a reshuffling of municipality staff), he was introduced to then-mayor Ahmadinejad, who did little more than smilingly acknowledge how absolutely interesting the project was. Fotouhi also encountered a bureaucrat who berated the artists' romanticism: 'You think those Afghan construction workers have it real hard don't you. Well. Let me tell you about the corpse washers in the morgues. Or the nurses and the surgeons. Now that would be *red* on grey I can tell you.'

Then again, of course you do encounter explicitly framed artistic desires for social change pure and simple, be it in the documentary approaches to political events, or in old-school collective activism, most remarkably in the form of impromptu, self-organised group exhibitions in abandoned buildings. These at times are high-profile – such as the exhibition 'Blue Kids' in a downtown Bauhaus villa in 2000 where Khosro Hassanzadeh, Bita Fayyazi and Sadeq Tirafkan addressed the spectacular levels of Tehran air pollution – and at other times more discrete, such as an artist-run show on feminism and gay rights in North Tehran, 2003. When it comes to the approaches of activist art, potentially conflicting demands for referential statements and the subtlety of ambiguity become all the more difficult when the artists are confronted with a terrific literary national heritage. Artists should not have to hear the phrase 'what is your message' more than three or four times in their lives. In Tehran, unfortunately, it seems one is regularly confronted with a crushing tradition of metaphor, metonymy and between-the-lines scenarios that are *gauche* enough in a novel, and all but useless in the visual arts.

Rather than just applaud artists with sincere desires for change, perhaps it would also be fitting to acknowledge attempts made to change things for artists, for example, in the sense of organising a durable interface for criticism, curatorial engagement and financial support that goes beyond the hit-and-miss methods prevalent in much of the Third World today. Since Tehran art academies are still categorically criticised for their Jurassic staff and the majority of Iranian critics have yet to accept video as a medium – in addition to the fact that curators are literally non-existent – much of the know-how is generated by internet auto-didactics. Hence the relevance of collaborative endeavors that interlink various partners over longer, eco-systemic time spans, such as the artist-run Azad Gallery – with its reputation for enterprising curating, not only in political terms – being the first space to host a video-art exhibition. Another example is artist Amirali Ghassemi's

Parking Gallery, which regularly hosts uncommon events in a petite garage, including exhibitions and even catwalks, such as Nina Ghaffari's sensational 'Spring/Summer Collection 2006', which immersed the typically sceptical art crowd in *fashionista* bling.

To return to the speculations at the beginning of this text, given that an artist's desire for change is not defined by a governmental agenda but does share a historical common ground, it would be reductive to cast, say, the 1970s *Proletkult* as a mere reaction to the Chanel fascism of the Shah, and equally naive to assume that they were unrelated. So on the one hand it may be safe to assume that the government's painstakingly aestheticised sense of elitist benefaction, its hyperbolic sense of dramaturgy and Hausmannian visions of a technocratic *Gesamtkunstwerk* is one of the reasons why an unambiguous, confident drive for 'social change' doesn't exactly sound sexy to Tehran artists just now. On the other hand it would be useful to define the shared backdrop, especially in the light of the said development of consumer society, of which the budding artworld espresso culture is an integral part, and which would require a study more elaborate than this essay to pin down. Allow me to conclude with a small genealogy exemplifying governmental notions of the Nation-State-as-Genre that may hint at possible overlaps. In sum, both before and after the revolution, the Tehran practitioners most prolifically and passionately working for attitudes to become form, in the shape of drastic social change that is gracefully composed and beautiful to behold – a revolution to end all revolutions – are the sibyl despots, the over-inspired urban planners, the prophet administrators themselves.

A most emblematic example preceding the revolution is the Persepolis performance commemorating 2500 years of Empire in 1971, re-introducing Iran as a modern superpower by proclaiming that Iran had entered 'The Year 2500', with a ceremony as camp as it was meticulous in scenography thanks to avant-garde collaborators such as theatre director Peter Brook. One must also mention urban masterplans such as Ekbatan, a callously elegant Alphaville of glass and concrete for 80,000 inhabitants, borne of a spirit of social engineering that makes Corbusier look like a tree hugger by comparison. Over the 1990s, by contrast, Tehran mayor Gholamhussein 'The Cowboy' Karbastschi launched campaigns to decorate storefronts in gaudy colours – not unlike mayor/artist Edi Rama's Tirana – and invited garbage collectors to gala dinners in luxury hotels. Karbastschi also sold illegal building permits to uptown high-rise developers, a strategy widely referred to as 'selling the air', to finance art and culture infrastructures in working-class neighbourhoods. His pet housing-project Navvab is a downtown Potemkin metropolis with facades of pastel peach and purple, hiding the older parts of town from a strip of highway, which will form the gateway into the city from Khomeini Airport.

The famous Islamic Republic propaganda billboards – the 'art of persuasion' eloquently discussed in Peter Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi's *Staging a Revolution* – are so aggressively decorative and radically inclined towards surface that they become almost self-referential, offering an unlikely blend of political portraiture, religious kitsch, Russian Constructivism and heavy metal, which some may describe as 'painting as *objet trouvé*'.[3] In other words, those who shake their heads at the absurdity of the mass-standardised motifs in the propaganda repertoire are missing the point. To appreciate the extent to which it is the very *cliché* of propaganda that is celebrated here, rather than a functional quest for persuasion *per se*, one must look to the dizzyingly elaborate military parades that consist of complex configurations of marching soldiers who, if seen from above, form moving images of doves, guns, swords and stars of David, stomping pictogrammes telling passionate tales of sound and fury. The parades, though occasionally screened on television, are enjoyed mostly by the highest echelons of the political and military elite.[4] As it happens, many of the above billboards on the streets of Tehran have been removed, and the empty spaces are subject to citywide art competitions. The winning proposals sport an approach more amicable and less macho, but just as self-referential and disengaged as the propaganda they're replacing. Hopefully, one day, they'll commission a parade.

3 Peter Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution*, London: Booth-Clibborn, 2000.

4 I first saw documentation of a parade of this kind thanks to the artist Christoph Büchel, a master archivist of military propaganda across the globe.

LINE DESCRIBING A CURB ASYMPTOTES ABOUT VALIE EXPORT, THE NEW URBANISM AND CONTEMPORARY ART

MARINA VISHMIDT

In charting the permutations of artistic interventions in urban space over the last few decades, it is useful to analyse how these interventions have responded not simply to shifts in the critical and material coordinates of art production that could be tenuously classified as 'art-immanent', but to the momentous changes in the organisation of the city, social movements and the re-structuring of global capital.[1] The inscription of artistic production and, more broadly, 'culture' into narratives of urban transformation as an *imprimatur* for flexibility, innovation, non-conformism, exclusive consumption as lifestyle and as heritage has been extensively documented. The confluence of art markets and real-estate speculation to perpetuate economic development, inimical not only to artists but to the majority of urban residents who sustain the service economy that drives such visions of urban renewal, has also been widely discussed, as well as the parallel phenomenon of art practices variously determined as 'socially engaged', 'in the community' or 'relational' receiving public and private subsidies to mediate the contradictions of 'culture-led' development to those affected.[2] However, rather than eliding these processes with art 'as such' in a reductionist idealism that forecloses any possibility for rupture or antagonism, I will examine a specific project as a switching station for reflections on art and the city. Through the analysis of VALIE EXPORT's *Body Configurations, 1972–1976*, a series of modified photographs, I will consider the political production of subjectivity, the visibility of the body in the occupation of public space, the dialectic of radical politics (new social movements) and Aktionist art in 1970s Vienna, which itself appropriated social reality at street level and then as institutional space, taking the

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[1] For reasons of limited expertise and space, the history in question will primarily be one that developed in Western Europe, although neither the neoliberal template of urban re-structuring, nor the role of culture in it, has been confined to this part of the world – dictated, as it is, by the macro-economic and ideological referents of 'globalisation'.

[2] A few references would include: Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (eds.), *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, London: Blackwell, 2002; Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics,* Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1996; and the indispensable London Particular website: www.thelondonparticular.org

personal as political and architectural.3 I will pursue these strands into their contemporary articulations to evoke a counter-genealogy of art and urban change.

Configurations

The *Body Configurations* series presents VALIE EXPORT and an actress Susanne Widl physically mimicking the contours of streets and street-furniture in Vienna – a woman lying on the pavement bending her body around the edge of a curb; a woman draped over the banister of a monumental staircase, etc.4

VALIE EXPORT
Body Configuration Round Into, 1982
Body Configuration with Red Hand, 1972 See also
Body Configuration Encirclement 1976, (back cover)

Photographs with red watercolour drawing Courtesy Charim Galerie, Vienna; © VALIE EXPORT

The series bears the subtitle *Visible Externalisation of Internal States: The Body Arranging Itself Within its Environment*. The photograph is taken, and a black or red line or figure is applied to the surface of the print. The shapes and colour of the mark seem to layer another order of signification over the action – red and black are colours associated with communist and anarchist symbols, while the figures themselves are frequently diagrammatic and do not strive to echo the physical posture assumed, lending them easier to read as instances of planar geometry, or vectoral syntagma of an 'internal state'. Sometimes, as in *Body Configuration with Red Hand* (1972), the inscription and gesture are collapsed – VALIE EXPORT is shown pressing the palm of her hand against a wall beside an outsized red hand already painted there; it is not possible to determine whether it is a found piece of militant graffiti, one applied by VALIE EXPORT herself, or if it materialised on the wall during the printing process.

This indecipherability signals VALIE EXPORT's abiding interest in the body as a sign in a differential network of power relations, countering any body politics premised on a humanist or spiritual authenticity: a body that deliberately swerves from the protocols of behaviour in a public street may decode the protocols, and is at once over-coded by a flurry of others.5

Art and Social Change

The body as sign is the mutual imbrication of flesh and signifier; far from a discursive abstraction, it is an embodied contradiction in narratives of culture, gender and labour. The red hand itself acts as a lurid mark of the perennial oscillation between the performative and revolutionary gesture, the street and the museum as a public space, and the sovereign individual (artist, consumer, passer-by, protester) presupposed by any and each of these scenarios.

As much as the actions proclaim an intensification of subjectivity in codified public behaviour in urban space through the dislocation of nature/culture membranes (humanising the city), VALIE EXPORT is just as interested in the process of objectifying the human – the de-subjectivation of the city dweller and the mutation of the human entity into an extension of the urban fabric, as one piece entitled *The Human as Ornament* starkly declares. Such a line of investigation arguably has ramifications beyond VALIE EXPORT's overt linguistic and feminist concerns (how the woman functions as a sign in an over-determined patriarchal symbolic economy – fighting nature, she tries to blend in with culture but cannot 'possess' herself as subject; she can only display herself as a sign of power relations), invoking related modernist discourse and its breakdown. A few touchstones could be Loos's 'ornament as crime', Le Corbusier's 'machine for living' and the transgressive rituals of the male Aktionists that were premised on alternative uses of the body in public space (VALIE EXPORT penned a 'Manifesto for Female Aktionism'), a nearly symmetrical riposte to every 'clean' variant of modernist Utopia.

Cuts

The shattering of self-possessed sovereignty augured by suddenly lying down along a flight of stone steps is inexorably re-knit by the art monograph, but there is something more.[6] The 'body configurations', in their double schema of action and inscription, enact a conflicted mode of engagement with social reality, emblematically positioned at street level.

[3] The full title of the series is *Korperkönfigurationen, 1972–1976*. Abbreviated titles of individual pieces include *Einkreisung* (Encirclement), *Starre Identität* (Rigid Identity) and *Konfiguration mit Rote Hand* (Configuration with Red Hand).

[4] The photographs in which Susanne Widl appears are studies for VALIE EXPORT's 1977 feature-film *Unsichtbare Gegner* (Invisible Adversaries). This film was a site for VALIE EXPORT to explore the sculptural, geometric and psychic possibilities of the 'configurations' in the moving image and within a semi-narrative construction.

[5] A contemporary eye may associate visuals of prone positions in urban space with the homeless population, but it should be noted that the presence of homeless people in 1970s Vienna was probably negligible compared to that in many Western cities today. The force of the activity resides less in an imaginary identification with those who have nowhere but the street to lie down, than in an aggressive vulnerability that first violates extant codes of polite civic behaviour, especially for a woman, and then turning that into its negative, an aesthetic gesture.

[6] 'In depicting my annihilation – or reproducibility – I simultaneously preserve my existence.' VALIE EXPORT, quoted in Christina von Braun, 'Why Show Something That Can Be Seen?', *Split:Reality* – VALIE EXPORT, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna: Springer, 1997, p.201. VALIE EXPORT is likely not referring to her existence within the art system in this statement, however, but to a conceptual strategy guiding her work with performance and media technologies as a feminist artist.

More precisely, they are propositions about the city, and its production of subjectivity as a bio political question.[7] A rationalised city, projected by any of the dominant variations of urban planning, and once designated by Situationists as 'urbanism' and, more recently, as the 'new urbanism', is a concentration of subjectivity: the subjectivity of capital. Social reproduction is controlled by way of commodification or disappearance according to a logic as obvious as it is disavowed. The 'body configurations' try to impair the functionality of this urban subjecthood, its techniques of placement, stratification, mobility, optimisation and, in Vienna, the emblems of heritage and imperial civilisation. They re-configure this well-regulated space by making a corporeal and affective claim to the territory that refutes the terms of urban alienation by materialising it, a form of sympathetic magic yielding antidotes through mimicry. The social space is annexed through emulation. Emulating a curb is over-identification, a key Brechtian principle of friction between action and perception. The friction is corrosive to the parameters of thinking, feeling and moving in urban space, and how these become naturalised in a process of instrumental amnesia replicated by architecture and infrastructure.[8] Some of VALIE EXPORT's chosen sites in Vienna are nondescript (curbs), while others are avatars of a distended grandeur (flowing pediments of imperial kitsch sculpture). Meanwhile, the correspondence between the sovereign subject and the architecture of sovereignty is clearly marked on the surface of the photograph itself by the line tracing the success of the emulation and the equivalence established between individual subject/urban-subject by the corporeal adjustment to the street feature. At the same time, the line marks the absurdity of the equivalence. The lines do merge but remain as asymptotes – they diverge to make a space where other potentials can germinate.

The solitary individual hollowing out the symbolic economy of the city that surrounds her with a bid to morph into its buildings, monuments and dead spaces signals a contestation of the atomised individual re-assembled at the level of the consumer, the sole subjectivity permissible for the inhabitant of a city that ceaselessly reproduces the subjectivity of the market.

7 I am here utilising 'biopolitical' specifically in its connotation of life to be administered potentially as a quantity and actually productive of exchange value in capitalist relations. The immediate reference is Paolo Virno's text 'Recording the Present: Essay on Historical Time' at www. generation-online.org/p/fpvirno11. htm: 'Here, the practical importance assumed by potentiality as potentiality in the capitalist relations of production, its inseparability from immediate corporeal existence, is the exclusive foundation of the biopolitical point of view.… It remains clear that life, taken as the generic *substratum* of potentiality, is an amorphous life, reduced to a few essential *metahistoric* traits. Biopolitics is a particular and derivative aspect of the inscription of metahistory in the field of empirical phenomena; an inscription, we know, that *historically* distinguishes capitalism.'

8 Here I am referring to the concept of the 'second nature' of industrial civilisation (Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 1966). There is also a vivid rehearsal of the Surrealist precept of 'salutary alienation between humans and their environment', noted by Walter Benjamin in his 'A Short History of Photography' as politically generative. Benjamin sites the activation of unfamiliar relations that he would later elaborate in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', which would also serve as a key principle in the *Arcades* project, and was present as early as 'The Origin of German Tragic Drama'. See 'A Short History of Photography', quoted in Roswitha Mueller's book on VALIE EXPORT, *Fragments of the Imagination*, Indiana University Press, 1994, p.123.

VALIE EXPORT's process also evokes Gordon Matta-Clark's interventions into the fabric of the built environment, though instead of cutting into buildings, she makes her incision into the oppressiveness of the city, established and controlled by impersonal forces at the level of affect and somatic response. These two approaches, however divergent in other ways, can here be considered as interventions into the symbolic economy of an urban landscape. Matta-Clark and VALIE EXPORT are both concerned with fracturing an image of domination, be it the image of a built environment as permanent and natural as capitalism, or the facade of acceptable interaction in/with public space. If VALIE EXPORT reminds us that 'the FRACTURES OF THE IMAGES and the FRACTURES IN THE IMAGES [are] transformations', Matta-Clark's 'cuts' pinpoint the 'central void, the gap which, among other things, could be between the self and the American capitalist system', which Dan Graham compares to the 'actions of the Paris Situationists during May 68 – public intrusions or "cuts" to the seamless urban fabric'.[9] These practices can also be articulated in terms of the politics of the era in question. The early to mid-1970s was the time of the denouement of universalising radicalism. The autonomy of particularity – for example feminist, queer, Black Power, post-colonial and student movements – was dominant while total social critique premised on the historical agency of the working class was deemed either obsolescent, ineffective or oppressive. Meanwhile, the Red Army Faction sought to recuperate this totalising critique, but from a fragmented and mystified standpoint whose programmatic agenda had no basis in social movements. With this in mind, VALIE EXPORT's actions in the city seem to crystallise this shift in political culture, and then diagnose the intimate way that power is reproduced within social relations, as a single body confronts a massified, impersonal structure of domination, evoking the ascendant 'personal is political' mode of organising and channelling antagonism. The individual confronts the alterity of domination and subjugation and recognises it in herself – only by inhabiting the contradiction between subjectivity thus moulded, and the will to be otherwise, can the friction be unleashed. The mark on the photograph rehearses this double movement again: it frames the gesture for an observer, indicates a surveillance that can be variously mapped to the cultural, professional or the secret police – or the self-archiving of the artist. At the same time, VALIE EXPORT's gesture is not yet one of pre-empting representation through irony and the use of the 'purloined image', as would be *de rigueur* a few years later. She maintains that there is value, conceptual

9 All quotes are from Sabine Breitweiser (ed.), *White Cube/Black Box: Video/Installation/Film*, Vienna: E.A. Generali Foundation, 1996; VALIE EXPORT, writing in 'Medial Anagrams' (trans. Camilla R. Nielsen), p.105; Gordon Matta-Clark interview quoted in Corinne Diseren, 'Gordon Matta-Clark: Opening Up Views Through the Invisible', p.146; Dan Graham, 'Gordon Matta-Clark', p.230.

or political, in a frontal challenge mounted by subjectivity to the armature of objective domination, even if those categories are productively blurred by the positing of the city as the subject and the woman as the object, reversing the form and eliciting the content of urbanist discourses.[10]

VALIE EXPORT positions the artist, specifically the female artist, as agent of an oppositional praxis in urban space. Hers is a reticent city of imperial majesty and anonymous concrete fixtures, unperturbed by the embraces of wayward performance artists. This is still the city as conceptualised by the French Situationists, an amalgam of palimpsests of expediency and profit with no place for the free and irregular, devised to neutralise all possibilities of social invention or political unrest – and thus eminently provocative of such subversion. To counter the dominant codes of this 'urbanism' in creative social production is to re-purpose (*détourn*) them, reformulate them, in 'derives' or in secret counter-cartographies – the daily practice of antagonism that wears down the habituation of the spectacle.[11] What happens when the spatial discourses that inform contemporary urbanism introject these critiques?

Affective Urbanism

If the upshot of the preceding accounts of artistic intervention in the physical and symbolic registers of the city was a conceptual occupation linked, at times obliquely, to broader emancipatory agendas, we now need to consider a city saturated with such conceptual gestures, albeit normalised and fully integrated into the circuits of globalised production. More concisely, the critical gesture of problematising the production of subjectivity in rationalised, mechanistic and profit-driven urban space is now, broadly and of course with unequivocal local specificity, indispensable to a mainstream consensus of urban re-development predicated on the celebration of difference, individual and communal self-determination within the precincts of consumer choice. The claims of radical subjectivity upon urban space have been accounted for by the flexibility of the market; the political content that

[10] 'Beyond the Purloined Image' was a group exhibition curated in 1983 by Mary Kelly at the Riverside Studios in London. Considered one of the early focal expositions of 'postmodernism' in an exhibition setting, the show articulated Kelly's psychoanalytic feminist concerns with an emerging appropriation aesthetic directed at dominant media imagery and the subjectivities produced thereby. My information about this exhibition derives largely from the review in Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds.), *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970–1985*, London: Pandora Press, 1987.

[11] The Situationist definition of 'urbanism', which is being invoked here, is countered by their own praxis of a 'new unitary urbanism' (with Constant and his New Babylon as one of the attempts): 'the crisis of urbanism is all the more concretely a social and political one, even though today no force born of traditional politics is any longer capable of dealing with it. Medico-sociological banalities on the "pathology of housing projects", the emotional isolation of people who must live in them, or the development of certain extreme reactions of denial, chiefly in young people, simply betray the fact that modern capitalism, the bureaucratic consumer society, *is here and there beginning to shape its own environment*. This society, with its new towns, is building the sites that accurately represent it, combining the conditions most suitable for its proper functioning, while at the same time translating into spatial terms, in the clear language of the organisation of everyday life, its fundamental principle of alienation and constraint. It is likewise here that the new aspects of its crisis will be manifested with the greatest clarity.' 'Editorial Notes: Critique of Urbanism', *Internationale Situationniste* no.6, August 1961, pp.3–11.

once inhered in this claim is displaced into the spectacle of representative politics and/or the activist subcultures that present them with an inverted mirror, at least in the UK. Meanwhile, 'post-public' art is caught in a permanent bind of thematising the fascinating contradictions of its critique, if it addresses these transformations at all.[12] One variant of this is the opportunistic naivety of a great deal of the work that has been promoted by the discourse of 'relational aesthetics' and the persistence of its less sophisticated 'other' – the many self-conscious attempts to vitiate the culinary pluralism of the art market gathered under the rubric of 'socially engaged' practice. The contentious nature of both these designations ensure that they are frequently evaded by work that strives for irreducible complexity, but often succumbs to the constraints of this endless rehearsal of ambiguity.

It must be emphasised that the foregoing account of 'affective urbanism' – the discipline of city planning that has accommodated Situationist calls for centrality of desire to social relations in the city as a spur to innovations in marketing and control – does not attempt to draw attention to how it has re-defined public space as a space of regulated, commodified flows in distinction to a social-democratic arcadia of yesteryear's public sphere, nor does it ruefully celebrate its success in eliminating contestation and foreclosing alternatives. If the radical claim of subjectivity to transform relations of social production in the city, to exceed and corrode the normative routines of exploitation and complicity in the experience of living in the city – as disclosed in VALIE EXPORT's and Matta-Clark's work – has any content, it's not one that can be appropriated. The 'experience economy' driving the re-invention of global cities as sites for knowledge, culture and wealth-transfer, and generating billions of 'surplus' populations coerced into 'self-valorisation' at the pain of death is only interested in experiences that can be articulated as commodities indistinguishable from the continuum of daily life.[13] Social change as envisioned by self-organised

[12] 'Post-public' is a reference both to the re-consideration of the modalities of art production in the public realm and its relationship to local communities as chronicled in Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002; Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New-Genre Public Art*, Seattle, WA; Bay Press 1995; and the recent Claire Doherty (ed.), *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situations*, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2005. The 'public art' these developments refer to may be considered as riposte to the variously caricatured artefacts of 'plop art' – the abject dinosaurs supposedly eclipsed by the contemporary

tendencies of more environmental, recessed, dispersed and site-sensitive work in the provisionally open zones and sealed locales of what is euphemistically termed 'public space'. Both the dinosaurs and the design-solution-inspired approach to public art may be polemically grouped under 'aesthetics, which the Situationists characterised, along with urban planning, as "a rather neglected branch of criminology"' (quoted in R. Deutsche, 'Uneven Development', *Evictions, op. cit.*) Enterprises such as the Designing Out Crime Association www.doca.org.uk/intro.asp (motto: 'Context is Everything') clarify this hypothesis further.

[13] See Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, London and New York: Verso, 2006. Also 'Naked Cities – Struggles in the Global Slums', *Mute*, vol.2 no.3, 2006. Although meriting a longer excursus than possible here, the articulation of artistic practices as serving to beautify or pleasurably estrange the furniture of daily life, as opposed to an understanding of such practices as optimally disruptive or incongruous within that order, can be related to Jacques Rancière's discussion of 'police' as the maintenance of things in their places in distinction from 'politics', which would be a challenge to current arrangements and the common sense that sustains them.

political and cultural elements around the bio politics of city life cannot be appropriated on these terms because it does not abide by the same logic, although it exists in the same world. Therefore there is a possibility, and not by any means a *fait accompli*, for aesthetics to practice immanent (practical) criticism by elaborating constituent practices that do not partake in this logic. Such a conjecture has to retain its problematic and tentative status, since this logic of commodity and spectacle permeates oppositional as well as cultural phenomena that could be described as 'ironic-affirmative', and it has often been observed that it is not possible to 'live differently within capitalism'. What can be deemed specific and potential in art as an experimental form of social production, however, is its appeal to the contingencies of shared experience which is not reliant on the identity formations and sectarian alliances of the current husks of representational politics, and a pointer to the location of politics in this experience of 'de-politicisation'.[14] Such an oblique standpoint can be inventive in producing a thought of the politicisation of daily life, the invention of forms of antagonism rather than reaction, and the encounter with what Jean-Luc Nancy calls 'unrelation' as the politically-potential community. The departure point of twentieth-century avant-gardes at their best has been that the perceptual and cognitive shocks proper to revolutionary art had no purchase on reality without a concomitant disruption of the social and economic structures within which the stagnant forms of subjectivity are reproduced. They paradoxically strove to re-appropriate art into communal life, which the prevalence of capital relations had displaced, in this way laying the ground for the emergence of artistic avant-gardes. However, in the contemporary Western political topos, where art production and discourse have become the default bastions of a utopia wiped from the political map, it is still possible to look to unrealised historical models and contemporary praxis to gauge the specific modality of art in positing other notions of time, social relationships and political/economic arrangements – in this instance with a focus in the culturally driven 'experience economy' of latter-day capitalist urbanism.

Common Places

One means of combating the invidious effects of the position of artist as 'lone genius', then and now, is the collective mode of production, whether as a means to evacuate the celebrity/commodity axis of artistic personality or to enunciate the virtues of an older 'craft'-based subsumption of expression into skill and use value. Art history and the current situation both afford us plenty of instances of these, wherever the emphasis may lie. But it should

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14 'It is the moment when everyday experience turns against the everyday, trying to attack it and change it, the moment when everyday experience becomes its own radical critique.' See Guy Debord, 'Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life' (1981) in K. Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1989, pp.68–75.

be noted that there is no intrinsic politics to a collective form of production, whether it seeks to de-legitimise art or individualism as dominant ideologies. The anonymity of the 'collective name' can be a very deft tactic, as illustrated in the 'Luther Blissett', 'Wu Ming' and 'Karen Elliot' phenomena of displaced intervention. The collective mode of art production may bracket the mystifications of privileged subjectivity, but it cannot undermine that privileged subjectivity enshrined in art as a special sphere in the capitalist division of labour. The overcoming of an art/life distinction within that special sphere is still art, and that distinction is interrogated by a privileged consciousness that will find its plaudits in the same circuits of legitimation and power that give it a platform on which to perform homeopathy, be it institutional critique or a critique directed elsewhere.

Perhaps the present moment gives us a compelling set of circumstances to recognise the avant-gardist desideratum of the 'overcoming' for the red herring (without thereby adopting the Hegelian casuistry of the Situationists' 'suppression of art through realisation of art = the supercession of art in a post-revolutionary society', although this is still a compelling idea) that it is susceptible to endless re-iterations of utopian nostalgia. One means to start this is by re-visiting the operative motifs of 'individual' and 'community' in order to formulate a more precise approach to analysing the confluence of art and social movements in the city today. The work of Gilbert Simondon and Jean-Luc Nancy has something to contribute in this regard. In Simondon's theory of individual and collective individuation, the individual is never a primary cause or a self-sufficient unit, but the partial outcome of an incomplete process generated by the 'pre-individual' field that left its residue in every individual, and fuels further individuation and differentiation. Thus individuality is always provisional, a trans-individuality that is founded on relation and the collective as the basis, and perpetual drive, of identity formation.[15] This finds a line of resonance in the writings of Jean-Luc Nancy around concepts of community and singularity. Singularity is both a provisional product of and a precondition for a community that is not based on any avowed grounds of identification such as nation, religion, principles, etc., the problematic of a 'common' exposure to the banality, inequality and separation organising daily existence. In the 'spacing inherent to relation itself', there is a 'non-relation' that reinvents the practice of community as a 'being-together' that thematises differences and lapses in communication as the ontological source of community – co-existence without identifications except the 'common' of separation and

[15] Gilbert Simondon is very influential in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Paolo Virno, among many others. For a more extensive discussion of Simondon and 'trans-individuality' please see Paolo Virno, 'Reading Gilbert Simondon: Transindividuality, Technical Activity and Reification' in *Radical Philosophy*, no.136, March/April 2006, pp.33–44

the impossibility of proximity and 'organic' community – the 'non-relation' where politics begins.[16] Informed by these approaches, it could be apposite to reflect on a contemporary instance which transposes VALIE EXPORT's (and Matta-Clark's) 'exploded views' of the production of subjectivity and conflict in urban terrain into what have been called 'constituent practices' which contest, in a relatively anonymous collective way, the insidious redefinition of experience in the 'experiential city' of capital as accumulation and leisure for those who can afford it.[17] Vacating such forms of subjectivation, which seem to proliferate desire interminably only to return it to the same uni-dimensional axiomatic of capital every time, is the task of any political practice that calls on the production of other affects and sensibilities to turn daily life against itself. Practices that retain an anomic and mediated character in an everyday life structured by the exigencies of survival can emerge as other ways of dealing with time, exchange and sociability. As conditions change, in crisis or in opportunity, these can become 'constituent' or 'prefigurative' practices.[18]

Such 'constituent practices' are in a position to traverse art and community activism without their proposing that art can improve lives ('social engagement') or that mediation of knowledge in a research-based practice implies political consequences ('field work'). Operating at one remove, at least, from daily life, an opening is created in art through which to 'project ourselves mentally outside of the world as it is given to us. In this way it invents, concretely, futures other than the one inscribed in 'the order of things', calling into question the categorical use value of the art/life distinction as a political 'strategy of tension'.[19] Recalling Bertolt Brecht

[16] See The Inoperative *Community, Being Singular Plural* and 'The Question of the Common and the Responsibility of the Universal' in Chto delat?, iss. 9 (interview between Artem Magun and Oxana Timo-feeva with Jean-Luc Nancy at www.chtodelat.org/index php?option=com_content&task=view &id=198&Itemid=123) for a more nuanced exposition of Nancy's thinking in these areas: 'The responsibility of the universal is the responsibility of this equality – of the common (banal) – of the equality that we need to think, given all the necessary disparities of places, roles, etc. Egalitarianism is a flagrant abstraction, but its concretisation has yet to be thought through: how to think a differential equality, if I dare say so…'

[17] Paolo Virno and Antonio Negri are among the 'post-Operaist' theorists who employ this term. 'Constituent practices' are the modalities of collective struggle for ways of life that exit from or render obsolete capital's control and exploitation, and 'constitute' a different mode of governance and social production. These 'constituent practices' can of course be realised with variable impact depending on the political and economic balance of forces between the 'constituent' groups and individuals, the 'constituted' power of capital and state. See also, for a related discussion, Paolo Virno's concept of 'conservative violence' in *Grammar of the Multitude*, Los Angeles/New York: Semiotexte, 2004, pp.42–43. The ancient 'right of resistance' entails not defending oneself from coercion purely and simply, but defending already enshrined rights and practices in a community from encroachment by another sovereign power; 'conservative violence' is protecting what already exists, thus is not concerned with seizure of power but with developing and protecting already existing practices, plurality of experiences, and forms of organisation that evacuate the economy of representation.

[18] I am alluding here to the use of the terms in Sheila Rowbotham, Hilary Wainwright and Lynne Segal, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Merlin Press, 1979. 'Prefigurative practices' would be social, organisational and ethical forms that try to concretely implement their horizon of struggle for a more just future society in the present moment.

[19] Loïc Wacquant, 'Critical Thought as Solvent of Doxa', from http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0806/wacquant/en

and Theodor Adorno, art practice can only problematise 'untruth', it cannot redeem it; however, a rigorous and a concrete problematising of untruth may turn out to be catalytic. This, in its turn, can be compared to the 'spacing' of Nancy's 'non-relation' that may engender community out of contingency, in spite of everything. One recent instance that comes to mind is the practice of the Hamburg-based group Park Fiction.

If we can survey the 1970s' collisions between art and urbanism in the work of VALIE EXPORT and Gordon Matta-Clark as premised on exacerbating gaps (between the built environment and its human remainder, in the work of VALIE EXPORT, or directly in the architectural waste product of capital's cyclical homogeneity) to make space for critique and counter-narrative, Park Fiction's activities aim to put a spanner in the works of consensus management and soft control, which characterise not just the administrative turn in contemporary politics, but the encroachment of these techniques into the interstices of social reproduction. Defusing dissent and maximising efficiency, alternatives are systematically discredited and eliminated. In this sense, the conflict is ever-more immanent to the terms of anonymous quotidian existence – since it is no longer, if it ever was, an effective bulwark against capitalist rationalisation, as well as to the terrain of culture, which is the bargaining chip of this rationalisation in so many scenarios of urban regeneration.

Park Fiction
Picnic with rabbit on the Teagarden Island, 2004
Photograph
© Christoph Schäfer; courtesy the Park Fiction Archive for Independent Urbanism

Park Fiction is a group of local people, initially drawn together through a scene of artists and musicians, who coalesced to halt gentrification in their low-income neighbourhood of Hamburg, known as St. Pauli.[20] Their focus was on some local waste-ground being eyed by the authorities and by commercial companies as prime real-estate for waterfront office/shopping re-development. The groups and individuals who loosely coordinated as Park Fiction decided the land should be turned into a park. They intervened directly in the planning process, joined local mobilisations to hold on to this amenity (which, as often happens, was neglected until under threat), and helped to form experimental collectivities to anticipate what would happen in the park, often using absurdist, caustic and populist imaginary. The memory of the eviction battle of the massive Hafenstrasse squat nearby also helped radicalise the campaign.

[20] The Park Fiction project started in 1998. According to a friend once resident in Hamburg, the documentation of the project comes to a halt with the culmination of its 'art' phase and the reading room installation at Documenta XI in 2002.

Park Fiction's 'strategy of tension' carries a few implications for the prospects of contemporary art practice, levering its conceptual specificity as art into socio-political critique. One implicator might be a broad rejection of representation as an aesthetic strategy that is congruent with political ends, another, the rejection of a notion of an art that can be 'political', however transfigured and heavily ironic. Melancholy-nostalgia-utopia are near-interchangeable units on the signifying chain of pragmatism, and all occlude a reappraisal of art's relationship to politics as a praxis. The rejection of representation as an aesthetic strategy is presupposed by a more fundamental skepticism of representation as a viable democratic politic. In either case, we have witnessed an abeyance of content in those propositions, such as it ever was, and their return with a vengeance in spectacular and reified forms. The aestheticisation of politics concomitant with fascism is nothing but the dominance of these spectacular forms over a moribund or distracted populace (or the export of the aesthetic to vilified others as military onslaught), as is much in evidence these days.

In Park Fiction's case, art and self-organised community activism converged in the alienation from representational strategies, focusing instead on the development of new forms of subjectivity in grassroots militancy on the one hand, and on the deployment of the 'game' idea on the other. The 'planning process as a game' is one of the salient themes in the Park Fiction experience, a signal of an irreverent but shrewd articulation of the lack of consideration for denizens of run-down areas who live on a monopoly board as far as city planners and investors are concerned. Park Fiction provides the confidence to challenge them at their own game by elaborating alternative plans for a lived space and instigating a dynamic counter-movement that attracts press attention and the support of people outside the area. Different 'fictions' of the park vied in an asymmetrical conflict, where the odds may be shifted by unforeseen factors – the mobilisation of the mainly poor, unemployed and migrant community of St. Pauli could also be an 'unforeseen factor'. Here the strategy of representation can be productively contrasted with 'modeling'. The 'planning process as a game', along with the range of activities described above, both play the game (engaging with media, bureaucracy, government bodies; outwardly abiding by the rules) and refuses to play the game (local people's desires and needs shape the project at every turn, and the 'rules' are of interest only insofar as they promote their efforts). In effect, the Park Fiction experience modelled social change in its challenge-from-below to an unaccountable and corrupt regeneration agenda. Using the paradigms of 'game' and 'art' to mediate its objectives and to multiply its fronts of engagement, it both neutralised its threat, in the eyes of the powers that be, and sharpened its means. The mode of circulation offered by the art institutions was deployed as another platform on which to enact the debate, there it made its tactics avilable to other groups faced with similar

circumstances, or engaged in similar campaigns, as well as engaging with theorists, curators and other artists, without positing the exclusivity of any of these determinants. This latter strategy helped impart a legitimacy to the campaign that clearly had some decisive impact with the local authorities. Shortly after the appearance of the Park Fiction Archive for Independent Experimental Urbanism at Documenta XI in 2002, developers and officials backed down, after four years of sustained opposition, and gave the go-ahead for Park Fiction, local residents and assorted professionals to 'install' a new park in St. Pauli.[21] It opened to the public three years later.

Last Considerations

Taking all the foregoing into account, the question of whether and how art can constitute a praxis to derail the neoliberal alliance between culture and the enclosure/degradation of public resources in the city remains aporetic. If cultural actors by and large operate at some distance from their own inscription into these narratives, and operate with a set of choices not always available to the 'community' at issue in public art and regeneration, a certain amount of deviation is possible, with Park Fiction as a potential case study. However, without the social movements that would amplify these interventions, they can only continue to be ephemeral or 'acupunctural', relying for their legitimation on the cultural economies they aim to sideline or subvert. 'Experimental urbanism' requires the city to be repossessed, not simply reimagined. Actual widespread refusal and reorganisation of urban life is the horizon that VALIE EXPORT, Matta-Clark, the Situationists and Park Fiction prefigure. But such endeavours do not solely undertake to mount an effective critique of the poverty of social relations through artistic means. They become more-and-more responsible for resisting the disciplinary role of their own subversion in the dominant politics, or 'police' in Jacques Rancière's terms. If art, culture, or more ontologically, 'creativity', is instrumentalised as the preferred means of combatting the social exclusion that pro-business policies incessantly reproduce, then 're-imagining' becomes the province of developers and bold lifestyle visionaries, who ensure that the production of difference equates to the reproduction of the same: profit. A rupture in this 'distribution of the sensible' – as formulated by Rancière in his alignment of aesthetics and politics as forms of theatre, where forms of participation and action other than the ones currently available are dramatised – two distinct types of cut in 'appearances' – is unarguably needed, but if applied to politically-minded art praxis in

[21] For more introduction on Park Fiction, see 'The City is Unwritten: Urban Experiences and Thoughts Seen Through Park Fiction' at www.inthefield.info/unwritten.pdf Park Fiction member Christoph Schäfer's 'The Gothic Style Lives in the Legs of the Cowboys' is a sly reflection on the horizon of post-institutional critique and was published as part of Transform's 'Do You Remember Institutional Critique?' at http://transform.eipcp. net/p/e/transf/ correspondence/1147284572 There is much more material available online in German, not least on Park Fiction's website, www.parkfiction.org

capitalism, it can seem like an endless and sporadically enjoyable traversal of a performative contradiction. Such a rupture hedges its utopian bets in a bid to avoid ultimate complicity, while enthralled by oppositional crevices in the past and the occluded present. This is not to exclude the possibility of such a cut, or to suggest that performative contradictions do not breed antagonisms in the spaces of non-relation that they enact. Perhaps one route could be the pragmatic embrace of Adorno's lucid but melancholic appraisal of art as a 'restricted competence'. To see its production as a value chain among all the others, pre-eminently so, and yet with very specific capacities to evacuate those values. It may still be possible to consider things in this light, a light that retains all the political utility of art as 'radical futility', without thereby adopting the messianic role for art that Adorno spurned in Walter Benjamin's writing on technological media but finished by assigning to modernist art in his own schema – and without losing the capacity to tell instrumentality from instrumentalisation. Moreover, the contradictions, complicities and internal limits of art production as it exists in the global financial and institutional terrain (taken on a polemical 'meta'-level with no account for plurality and no heed for pluralism) can be switched into conflictual elements in the right set of contingencies. These are the potentialities of a thinking and doing otherwise, which may yield more suggestive effects than those afforded by the cynicism of an intuitive or despairing correlation between art and politics which can only ever rehearse the formalism dispensed with by the original, 'avant-garde' referent.

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A number of different versions of the texts reproduced here can be found within the archives and publications listed in the notes and bibliography sections of this book. Informative notes by the authors and translators accompany many of these texts. For the purposes of this book we have reprinted selected extracts in as close a style to their original form as possible. Occasionally minor amendments have been made by the editors to establish consistency in style and offer clarification. We gratefully acknowledge all of the authors, publishers and archivists who kindly granted us permission to reproduce material from their archives and publications.

Gustave Courbet
On 12 April 1871, the Paris Commune authorised Gustave Courbet, as 'president of the Painters', to 'reestablish the museums of the city of Paris'. Placed at the head of the *Commission artistique pour la sauvegarde des musées nationaux*, Courbet is remembered as having saved the Louvre collection from the widespread destruction that followed the siege of the Commune. It was, however, his speculation on 'the reorganisation of art and its material interests' in the light of the ideals of the Commune, and particularly his proposal to place art education in the hands of the students and the galleries in the hands of the artists, that most clearly and radically linked the rethinking of the ideological construction of the sphere of art with a change in the wider social and political conditions of art production and distribution.

   With the defeat of the Commune, Courbet was tried for the destruction of a monument in Place de la Vendôme which had commemorated Napoleon I's victory at Austerlitz. The Commune had called the Vendôme column 'a barbaric monument, a symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, a negation of international law, a permanent insult on the part of the victors to the vanquished' and decreed its demolition. Courbet, who had publicly suggested the relocation, replacement or destruction of the column on more than one occasion, was held responsible and served six months in prison. He died in exile in Switzerland five years later. (The quotations here are from Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu (ed. and trans.), *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, University of Chicago Press, 1992.)

William Morris and *Commonweal*
A medievalist who rejected industrial production, William Morris is known as Britain's foremost proponent of the Arts and Crafts style. Morris abandoned religion for art while at college in the 1850s, and his political beliefs continued to develop alongside his working methods. He joined the Democratic Federation, the first Marxist political party in England, in 1883, but left it soon afterwards. Along with Eleanor Marx, Walter Crane and Ernest Belfort Bax among others, he founded the Socialist League in 1884. The League's manifesto stated that it was 'a body advocating the

principles of Revolutionary International Socialism… We have already shown that the workers, although they produce all the wealth of society, have no control over its production or distribution: the *people*, who are the only really organic part of society, are treated as a mere appendage to capital – as a part of its machinery. This must be altered from the foundation: the land, the capital, the machinery, factories, workshops, stores, means of transit, mines, banking, all means of production and distribution of wealth must be declared and treated as the common property of all.' The League's journal, the *Commonweal*, sold a few thousand copies weekly for over a decade. Morris and Crane were regular contributors; Morris's body of writing of this period, from *The Decorative Arts* (1877) to *The Socialist Ideal: Art* (1891) represents perhaps the first concerted efforts to produce a Marxist theory of art. As an activist, he was fined for 'delivering an address thus encouraging a crowd' in Marylebone, London, in July 1886, and was part of the 'free speech' demonstration of 13 November 1887 in Trafalgar Square – 'Bloody Sunday' – that was routed by a regiment of troops. (Morris produced a pamphlet, illustrated by Walter Crane, mourning the death of protester Alfred Linnell at a subsequent demonstration).

Walter Crane
Walter Crane, designer and illustrator, was born in Liverpool in 1845. He was the first President of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888, and contributed writing and designs to many publications associated with the emerging British labour movement. Walter Crane's drawing *Stop the War* appeared in *The War Against War*, a periodical published by the Stop The War Committee. The Committee was founded in 1899 by William Thomas Stead to focus opposition to the Second Boer War.

   Louise Michel was active during the Paris Commune as an ambulance driver and militia member and was subsequently deported to the French penal colony of New Caledonia. On her return to France she was again arrested several times and spent four years in exile in London; she founded a free school in Fitzroy Square, in 1891, for the children of political refugees. Walter Crane illustrated the prospectus. The school was closed by the authorities two years later.

   The Workers' Maypole was published in 1894 in *Justice*, the weekly journal of the Democratic Federation (later the Social Democratic Federation).

John Reed and The Paterson Strike Pageant
John Reed was an American journalist, essayist and poet. In 1913 he joined the staff of *The Masses*, a well-known socialist journal in New York in the years before WWI. Reed was arrested for speaking in support of striking silk-mill workers in Paterson, New Jersey, and later that same year he was involved in organising the Pageant of the Paterson Strike at Madison Square Garden. In the words

of US art historian Linda Nochlin: 'On the evening of June 7th, 1913, an important incident in the history of radical self-consciousness and in the history of public art in this country took place. In the old Madison Square Garden, in New York City, before an estimated audience of 15,000, beneath bright red electric lights spelling out 'I.W.W.' in 10-foot-high letters above the building, a cast of about 1,500 striking silk workers – mainly Italian, Jewish and Polish immigrants – reenacted the major incidents of the strike then taking place in Paterson, N.J., under the aegis of organisers Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca, Patrick Quinlan and Big Bill Haywood, dedicated leaders of the so-called 'Wobblies' – the International Workers of the World. The Paterson Strike Pageant itself had come into being mainly through the efforts of the young John Reed, who was later to gain fame for his firsthand account of the Russian Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World*.' (Linda Nochlin, 'The Paterson Strike Pageant of 1913', *Art in America*, New York, May/June.)

Richard Huelsenbeck

Richard Huelsenbeck was active as a WWI German exile in the founding of the Dada movement in Zurich. He moved back to Berlin after the war and was part of a group that allied Dadaist principles to the ideals of the abortive German revolution of November 1918. Huelsenbeck always saw Dada as something other than an art movement. '[Tristan] Tzara, in Paris, eliminated from Dadaism its revolutionary and creative element and attempted to compete with other artistic movements… Dada is perpetual, revolutionary "pathos" aimed at rationalistic bourgeois art. In itself it is not an artistic movement. … Tzara did not invent Dadaism, nor did he really understand it.' (Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Dada Lives', 1936, quoted in Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture*, London: Unpopular Books, 1988.)

Otto Dix, Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann and George Grosz among others took part in the First International Dada Exhibition (*Erste International Dada-Messe*) at Otto Burchard's gallery on Lützow Ufer in Berlin, the last public exhibition of the Berlin Dadaists, in 1920.

Komfut

Osip Brik and Boris Kushner announced the creation of Komfut, a group of *Kommunisty-futuristy* (Communist-Futurists) with which Vladimir Mayakovsky was also associated, in the journal *Iskusstvo kommuny* (Art of the Commune) on 2 February 1919. Komfut and *Iskusstvo kommuny* were dedicated to developing a political Futurism, aiming to persuade the Communist Party to abandon what they saw as its reactionary cultural policy. However, Party acceptance was not the ultimate goal, according to one of the editors of *Iskusstvo kommuny*, Nikolai Punin: 'Only the young, affiliated with the so-called "Futurist" movement, know, and know very well, what they want, and have presented the whole extent of the problem of proletarian art, and naturally, no one else can solve it. … Recently we have come to hear more than once: "Futurism" aspires to be a state art … we do not need the state. It is not necessary, firstly because we are fighting for a socialist future which the state does not know, secondly because we possess "the adamant spirit of perpetual revolt".' (Nikolai

Punin, 'Futurizm – gosudarstvennoe iskusstvo' ('Futurism – a state art'), *Iskusstvo kommuny*, no.4, 29 December 1918; translated in Christina Lodder, 'The Press for a New Art in Russia 1917–1921', in Virginia Marquardt (ed.), *Art and Journals on the Political Front 1918–1940*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997.)

Aleksandr Rodchenko

Russian Constructivist Aleksandr Rodchenko was born in 1891 in St. Petersburg and died in 1956. His design for a Workers' Club was presented at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris, 1925.

Varavara Stepanova

An influential theorist and teacher Varvara Stepanova was one of the main proponents of Constructivist practice and a co-founder, with Aleksandr Rodchenko and Alexei Gan, of the First Working Group of Constructivists. In her early twenties, at the time of the Russian Revolution, Stepanova produced many poster and agit-prop designs and was one of the organisers of the seminal 1921 exhibition '5×5=25'. Later she became a professor at Vkhutemas (an art and technical college in Moscow created after the revolution by the merging of the schools of fine and applied arts) and a designer for the First State Textile Factory.

INKHUK was the abbreviated title of the Institut Khudozhestvennoy Kultury, or the Institute of Artistic Culture. Its role was to examine the theoretical imperatives of art and provide ideological guidance for artists and students. Kandinsky was appointed Director in May 1920, and devised an initial programme to analyse the relation between art and spirit or psyche. This was rejected by other members of the Institute, who argued for a more objective approach, and Kandinsky was ousted in 1921. The committee proceeded to define and implement a broadly Constructivist programme. Branches of INKHUK were opened in Petrograd, under Tatlin, and Vitebsk, under Malevich, but the Institute was abolished in 1923.

William Pickens and *The Messenger*

William Pickens was a journalist, essayist and an organiser for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He became a militant advocate of full citizenship for African Americans. *The Messenger* was launched in Harlem, New York, in 1917 by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen as a journal of Black radicalism and socialism. An early editorial from *The Messenger*, entitled 'The Cause and Remedy for Race Riots', suggested that 'Revolution must come. By that we mean a complete change in the organisation of society. Just as absence of industrial democracy is productive of riots and race clashes, so the introduction of industrial democracy will be the longest step toward removing that cause. When no profits are to be made from race friction, no one will longer be interested in stirring up race prejudice. The quickest way to stop a thing or to destroy an institution is to destroy the profitableness of that institution. The capitalist system must go and its going must be hastened by the workers themselves.'

In her introduction to a recent anthology of articles from *The Messenger*, Sondra Kathryn Wilson suggests that

the journal's 'spirit of rebellion helped to engender the Harlem Renaissance'. (S.K. Wilson (ed.), *The Messenger Reader*, New York: The Modern Library, 2000). *The Messenger* ceased publication in 1928.

Theo van Doesburg
Dutch artist, designer and poet Theo van Doesburg (born in Utrecht in 1883) was important in making links between various elements of the politicised European avant-garde after WWI. A founder of the movement (and journal) De Stijl, van Doesburg also published Dadaist writings under the pseudonym I.K. Bonset. He formed, with El Lissitzky and Hans Richter, the International Faction of Constructivists (I.F.d.K.) at the Congress of International Progressive Artists held in Düsseldorf in May 1922. At the Congress, the Union of International Progressive Artists called for a 'permanent, universal, international exhibition of art everywhere in the world'. The I.F.d.K responded 'We reject the present conception of an exhibition: a warehouse stuffed with unrelated objects, all for sale. Today we stand between a society that does not need us and one that does not yet exist'. (Stephen Bann (ed.), *The Tradition of Constructivism*, New York: Viking, 1974.)

Mieczysław Szczuka
Mieczysław Szczuka was a member, with Katarzyna Kobro, Henryk Stazewski and Teresa Zarnowerowna and others, of the Polish Constructivist group Blok founded by Władysław Strzemiński in Lodz in 1924. His was also an editor of the associated journal of the same name published in Warsaw. An early editorial printed in the journal defines Constructivism as, among other things, 'the inseparability of the problems of art and the problems of society' (*Blok*, no.6–7, Warsaw, 1924, translated by John Bowlt in Stephen Bann (ed.), The Tradition of Constructivism, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974). Szczuka was a filmmaker, photographer, designer and architectural theorist. As a graphic designer he produced material for the Polish Communist Party, though he never became a Party member. The group Blok split in 1926 over Szczuka's disdain for the 'consolation' of 'art for its own sake', which he called 'the defining lie of the capitalist world'. Szczuka died in 1927, at the age of 29.

The John Reed Clubs
The John Reed Clubs, with their slogan 'Art is a class weapon', were formed by the US Communist Party in the late 1920s and early 1930s to organise writers and artists along Soviet ideological lines. Realist 'proletarian' literature was promoted by 'little magazines' published by the local Clubs. These included *Left Front* (Chicago), *Midland Left* (Indianapolis) and the early *Partisan Review* (New York). Many members were uncomfortable with increasingly Stalinist Communist Party strictures but, before their opposition became outspoken, Comintern (Communist International) policy changed direction and the John Reed Clubs were voted out of existence at the 1935 American Writers' Congress. The left-wing journal *New Masses*, in which this manifesto first appeared, was published in the US from 1926 to 1948, with the ambition to 'strike its roots strongly into American reality'.

La Révolution Surréaliste
La Révolution Surréaliste was published in Paris from 1924 to 1929; it was edited by Pierre Naville and Benjamin Péret and later by André Breton. Collages and accounts of dreams were presented alongside manifestos and provocations which rejected established politics in favour of an ideal of total liberation and an 'absolute revision' in values. Many of the collectively signed Surrealist group texts from this period, including the two reproduced here, are thought to be primarily the work of Breton. 'Revolution Now and Forever!' was co-signed by the editors of the French Marxist journal Clarté, and marks the Surrealists' first explicit embrace of a tangible political programme.

Oswald de Andrade
Cannibalist Manifesto by Oswald de Andrade was the founding text of *Antropofagismo*, the Cannibalist Movement. This Brazilian avant-garde group was founded in São Paolo in 1928 and the manifesto was printed in its journal, the *Revista de Antropofagia*. Andrade dated the founding of Brazil as the year 1556 when the Portuguese missionary Bishop Sardinha was eaten by the indigenous Caetés people; he proposed this encounter as a model for future interaction with colonial culture. On the occasion of the Surrealist poet Benjamin Péret's arrival in São Paolo, Andrade acknowledged the influence of Surrealism with the words 'The final despair of these Christianised peoples had never been so inspiring.' (*Diário de São Paolo*, 17 March, 1929, translated in *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, no.51, Fall 1995).

Notes on the translation: The Tupi are one of the indigenous peoples of South America decimated by Portuguese colonisation. They originally inhabited the Amazon region and practised cannibal rituals. The Gracchi were Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, martyrs to the cause of social reform in Rome, in the 2nd century B.C. Their mother was Cornelia. *Saudade* is a Portuguese word that expresses a melancholy but hopeful longing. Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon was a French explorer who attempted to establish a colony in the area of modern Rio de Janeiro in 1855. Father Antônio Vieira was a Portuguese Jesuit missionary in Brazil in the seventeenth century. *'Catiti Catiti, Imara Notiá, Notiá Imara, Ipejú'* is a quotation from 'O Selvagem' ('The Savages', 1876) by José Vieira Couto de Magalhães that could be translated as 'the new moon blows in every man's remembrances of me', though it is not translated in Andrade's Portuguese text. The Jabuti is a species of tortoise common in Brazil. Guaraci and Jaci are the Tupi gods of the sun and the moon. *Pindorama* is the Tupi word for Brazil. Don João VI governed as the Portuguese Prince of Brazil from 1792 to 1816, and was later the King of Portugal from 1816 to 1826.

Kurt Tucholsky, John Heartfield and *Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles*
Kurt Tucholsky was a novelist and journalist in the years of the Weimar Republic. John Heartfield was a Berlin Dadaist and a pioneer of photo-montage as an agit-prop tool. Their book *Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles* was a relentless satirical attack on all sectors of German society, though principally on the military, the bourgeoisie, the government and the police. Controversial in Germany when it first appeared in 1929, by 1933 it was among those publications marked for burning by the Nazi regime. The book's

precisely calculated juxtapositions of image and text were intended to show 'systematically: this is how you are being whipped, this is how you are being educated, this is how you are being treated, this is how you are being punished'. Tucholsky believed that photographs 'made tendentious by their arrangement and their captions' were 'an immensely dangerous weapon'. Nonetheless, he lamented the contrast between the strength of the hostile critical response to his work, and its impotence as a political tool. 'I am slowly becoming a megalomaniac as I read how I have ruined Germany,' he wrote, 'but for twenty years I have been bothered by one thing: that I have not succeeded in getting a single policeman dismissed from his post.' (Letters and articles by Kurt Tucholsky quoted in Harry Zohn's afterword to the English edition of *Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles* (trans. Anne Halley), Amherst: UMP, 1972).

KOSTUFRA and *Bauhaus: The Students' Voice*
Bauhaus: The Students' Voice was the journal of the Bauhaus students' communist group, KOSTUFRA. Some 16 issues were published between 1930 and 1931. The Bauhaus was founded in Germany in 1919 as a school for a new art in a spirit of utopian optimism. As Oskar Schlemmer wrote in a flyer promoting the first Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar in 1923, 'The *Staatliches Bauhaus*, founded after the catastrophe of the war, in the chaos of the revolution, and in the era of the flowering of an emotion-laden, explosive art, becomes the rallying-point of all those who, with belief in the future and with sky-storming enthusiasm, wish to build the "cathedral of socialism".' Founding Director Walter Gropius had believed that 'Art and state are irreconcilable concepts … The creative spirit … refuses to be limited by the laws of the state' (Walter Gropius, 'Reply to Arbeitsrat für Kunst Questionnaire', 1919, in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–1990*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). Realpolitik caught up with the school, however, and particularly with the second director, the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer. Meyer, a committed egalitarian pragmatist rather than a utopian visionary, had emphasised the social applications of functional architecture and industrial design and proposed, among other things, an alliance with Vkhutemas in Moscow. He was sceptical of the artistic direction of the Bauhaus, and in his first speech to the students as director he had asked 'Will our work be directed inwards or outwards? Shall we turn our attention to the needs of humanity, and collaborate in building a new way of life, or shall we become an island …?' (Gillian Naylor, *The Bauhaus*, London: Studio Vista, 1968.)

The controversy over his sacking and replacement by Mies van der Rohe was commented upon by KOSTUFRA in the third issue of *Bauhaus: The Students' Voice*. A near complete set of issues of *The Students' Voice* is held at the Bauhaus Archive, Berlin.

Notes on the translation: *Rote hilfe* is Red Aid, an international social service organisation connected to the Communist International, founded in 1922 to function as a political Red Cross. The *Prellerhaus* was a Bauhaus student dormitory and studio building. *Laubenganghäuser* are balconies; the implication here is that Gropius designed houses with private balconies as opposed to the 'public access' balconies of Meyer. The *Rheinlandrummel* possibly refers to the late eighteenth century French occupation of the Rheinland.

Felicia Browne
Felicia Browne was a member of the Artists International Association, an organisation founded in London in 1933 to oppose 'imperialist war on the Soviet Union, Fascism, and Colonial Oppression'. Practical measures suggested in the AIA's first statement of aims included producing posters, illustrations, cartoons and banners; spreading propaganda via exhibitions, the press, lectures and meetings; working with the Workers' School; taking part in strikes and producing newspapers. These methods represented a desire to take political action as artists, but also to find methods that went beyond simply producing pictures. Browne had a strong sense of the limitations of her art practice in relation to her political commitment; she was killed in action in August 1936, having given up painting and sculpture to fight for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. The extract included here is from a letter she wrote shortly before her death; it was reproduced in the introduction to the catalogue of the AIA's 25th anniversary exhibition in 1958. See Lynda Morris and Robert Radford (eds.), *AIA: The Story of the Artists' International Association*, Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1983.

British Surrealist Group and *We Ask Your Attention*
The British Surrealist Group published this broadsheet to mark the occasion of the AIA's 1937 exhibition, held in Grosvenor Square, London. Signed by many of the most prominent British artists of the time, it accuses the British government of effectively supporting Fascism through its policy of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War. On May Day 1938, the AIA and the Surrealists took part in a large and broad-based anti-Fascist demonstration that paraded across London. The artists James Cant, F.E. McWilliam, Roland Penrose and Julian Trevellyan marched in masks modelled on the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, while making Nazi salutes. The 'Internationale' played through loudspeakers that were attached to the top of an accompanying car along with a skeleton in a giant birdcage, while a large horse's head mounted on an ice-cream seller's tricycle followed behind. (Lynda Morris and Robert Radford (eds.), *AIA: The Story of the Artists' International Association*, 1933–53, Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1983, pp.48–49)

László Moholy-Nagy and *Vision in Motion*
The Hungarian artist Moholy-Nagy joined the staff of the Bauhaus in 1923. He resigned in 1928, when Gropius stepped down as director; in his letter of resignation, he expressed concern with the direction of the Bauhaus programme: 'We are now in danger of becoming what we as revolutionaries opposed: a vocational training school which evaluates only the final achievement and overlooks the development of the whole man.' (Stephen Bann (ed.), *The Tradition of Constructivism*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974.) Moholy-Nagy left Germany soon afterwards, Moholy-Nagy was looking not only for a place to settle but a sympathetic setting in which to continue developing his Constructivist-inflected vision of integrated technical art education. Somewhat unsuccessful in London, where the Royal College of Art refused to employ him, he accepted an invitation to open a corporate-sponsored New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937. This lasted only a year, though it reopened in 1939 as the School of Design with

a volunteer teaching staff (For more information, see Han Wingler, *Bauhaus in America: Repercussion and Further Development*, Berlin: Bauhaus Archive, 1972). The book *Vision in Motion*, completed shortly before Moholy-Nagy's death in 1946, shows a notable shift away from the uncompromising functionalist rhetoric of his earlier writing. In the light of his American experience, and his disquiet with the pragmatism of the later Dessau Bauhaus, he moves towards a defence of an ideal of art as responsive to human need, rather than to capital or ideology.

Georges Maciunas and *Fluxus Manifesto*
In July 1961, Georges Maciunas and Almus Salcius opened the AG Gallery on Madison Avenue in New York, where the first Fluxus events took place. For Maciunas, the attack on the constitution of art was politically inspired, and was hoped to have consequences both within the formal art world and beyond it. An extensive bibliography on the Fluxus movement can be found online at http://www.artpool.hu/Fluxusbibliography/default.html.

The Situationist International
A group of artists, writers and theorists formally constituted The Situationist International in 1957. Primarily based in Paris, but with a membership in other western European countries and the US, the SI published a journal, the *Internationale Situationniste*, from 1958 until 1969. The SI formally disbanded in 1972, but by this point numerous splits and expulsions had reduced the membership to a handful, with Guy Debord the only remaining founding member. Nonetheless, the group's ideas remain controversial and influential, particularly regarding the question of the relationship between artistic aesthetics and political action. A comprehensive archive of English language versions of Situationist texts can be found online at www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/ and at the Bureau of Public Secrets website, http://www.bopsecrets.org/.

Black Mask
The Black Mask group, founded in New York in 1966 by Ben Morea and Dan Georgiakis, was a short-lived group of art-activists that gave rise to the more direct-action oriented organisation Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker in May 1968. The Garbage action took place in 1968 and was the subject of a short film by the New York-based Newsreel collective of independent film-makers. For further information, see Stewart Home (ed.), *Black Mask and Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker*, London: Unpopular Books, 1993.

Sture Johannesson and *Psychedelic Manifesto*
Sture Johannesson is a photographer and print-maker and was an active member of the self-styled underground in 1960s Sweden. An advocate of psychedelic drugs and anarchist political values, he produced a series of iconic posters in the late 1960s and his activities often brought him into conflict with the local authorities. A planned exhibition at Lunds Konsthall was cancelled when the Board of the Konsthall took exception to the poster for the show, which featured a naked, pink, pipe-smoking woman and the slogan 'Revolution means revolutionary consciousness'. Johannesson made an explicit connection between the criminalisation of psychedelics and a radical

political awareness. The poster reproduced on p.136 was made in response to a call for proposals for public artworks to adorn the Royal Palace in Stockholm; Johannesson's suggestion was to place a giant neon sign on the roof that read 'The Kingdom is Within You'. Sture and Ann-Charlotte Johannesson founded Galleri Cannabis in Ann-Charlotte's weaving studio in Malmö, Sweden in 1965.

Albert Hunt and *Hopes for Great Happenings*
Albert Hunt taught at the Regional College of Art in Bradford, England between 1965 and 1973. In 1965, the College had failed to gain approval to run a Diploma course in Art and Design; this left Hunt free to devise his own syllabus. He developed an open-ended class in which the students improvised happenings and events that explored their own social and political situations and interests. These experiments led to the formation of the Bradford Art College Theatre Group, which produced larger scale public manifestations. The most ambitious of these included *The Russian Revolution in Bradford* (1967), a day-long performance of the events of the October Revolution of 1917 overlaid on the everyday life of the town, and the stage plays *The Passion of Adolf Hitler* and *John Ford's Cuban Missile Crisis* (Bradford Art College Theatre Group, *John Ford's Cuban Missile Crisis*, London: Eyre Methuen 1972).

R.G. Davis and *Guerrilla Theatre*
Ronald G. Davis founded a theatre group in San Francisco in 1959 that became the San Francisco Mime Troupe soon afterwards (motto: 'Engagement, commitment, and fresh air'). The Mime Troupe combined Brechtian principles with Italian *commedia dell'arte* ('Why *commedia*? The intrinsic nature of *commedia* is its working-class viewpoint. Its origins are the alleys and corners of the marketplace'). The Mime Troupe's performances developed in parallel with the counter-culture of the time, and soon they were giving free outdoor shows of plays they had written themselves, staging political benefits, and debating the relative merits of artistic aesthetics and agit-prop confrontation. Their permit to perform *Il Candelaio* (adapted by SFMT member Peter Berg from Giordano Bruno's 1582 original) was revoked once the San Francisco Park Commission saw the play; the police attended the subsequent performance on 7 August 1965. Davis responded with a dramatic introduction, '*Signor, Signora, Signorini / Madame, Monsieur, Mademoiselle* / Ladieeeees and Gentlemen / *Il Troupo di Mimo di San Francisc*o / Presents for your enjoyment this afternoon / AN ARREST!!!' He then jumped into the arms of a waiting policeman and was promptly taken away.

Davis formalised this emerging practice in two essays on 'Guerrilla Theatre' (in 1965 and 67) and one on 'Cultural Revolution' (1968), though he later revised his position, writing that the SFMT 'treated our audiences to an ad-agency-like bombardment, by telling the "truth", protesting the "outrages" and showing examples of purity as if our "product" could be sold like cigarettes …'. Davis left the Mime Troupe in 1970, later becoming the Director of Epic West, a Berkeley cultural centre devoted to the works of Brecht. As of 2007, the Mime Troupe continue to perform in San Francisco. (The quotations here are from R.G. Davis, *The San Francisco Mime Troupe: The First Ten years*, Palo Alto: Ramparts Press 1975).

The Diggers
The San Francisco Diggers were a loose group of
performers and activists founded by several former
San Francisco Mime Troupe members, including Emmett
Grogan, Billy Murcott and Peter Berg, in 1966. Beginning
their activities with the distribution of anonymous printed
broadsides, they developed a well-organised underground
society, centred around the Haight-Ashbury community,
that aimed to operate as far as possible without
reproducing capitalist social relationships.

In the preface to his Phd thesis *The Haight Ashbury
Diggers and the Cultural Politics of Utopia* 1965–68
(University of Michigan 1997, UMI Microform 9813931, p.2),
Michael Doyle writes that the Diggers 'rejected
mass organisation itself because it inevitably imposed
hierarchical power relations … Their model envisaged
small-scale, independent bands of "life-actors" with more
informal, contingent, interchangeable leadership and
an "open" membership posture. … Power need only
be assumed by *enacting* it.'

The Diggers dispersed at the end of the 1960s into
a network of variously utopian, revolutionary and artistic
groups, some of whom continued to describe themselves
as members of the larger and more abstract Free Family.
A comprehensive history of the Diggers, and archive of
their writing, is maintained by Eric Noble and accessible
online at www.diggers.org.

Experience 68
Against the background of a self-described politicised
artistic avant-garde in Argentina in the 1960s, the events
surrounding the exhibition 'Experiencias 68' at the
Di Tella Institute in Buenos Aires became the trigger for
a coordinated withdrawal and a rethinking of the terms
of cultural engagement on the part of a group of Argentine
artists. Pablo Suarez declined to take part in the
exhibition, sending instead a letter outlining the reasons
for his refusal. Roberto Jacoby presented a text that
included the words: 'The work of art is also finished
because life and the earth itself are beginning to be art.
For this reason there is everywhere a necessary battle,
bloody and beautiful, for the creation of a new world.
And the avant-garde must go on affirming history, affirming
the just, heroic violence of this fight.' The exhibition was
closed by the authorities because another exhibit – which
invited the public to write graffiti on the walls of a toilet –
had led to the writing of slogans critical of the military
dictatorship of General Ongania. The participating artists
destroyed their work in protest at the closure and
distributed a text explaining the reasons for their actions.
Another group of artists hijacked a talk by the exhibition's
curator, Jorge Romero Brest, and delivered their own
address: '… We believe that art implies an active
confrontation with reality – active because it aspires to
transform it. We believe, in consequence, that art should
constantly question the structures of official culture. …
Death to all bourgeois institutions. Long live the art of
the revolution.'

A conference of committed artists followed, in Rosario
in 1968, with the aim of formulating a new practice and
programme of action. Alliances were made with political
organisations, unions, workers' parties, and students, and a
project developed that focused on the documentation and

publicisation of the exploitation and harsh living conditions
of sugar plantation workers in the province of Tucumán.
An exhibition was mounted in Rosario and in Buenos
Aires, where it was closed by the police. The Declaration
of the Argentine Artists' Committee reproduced here was
made on the occasion of the exhibition's closure. The
translations presented here were made by Harry
Polkinhorn, for Clemente Padin's *Art and People: Latin
American Art in Our Time*, published online in 1997 at
http://www.concentric.net/~lndb/padin/lcpkint.htm.

Atelier Populaire
The Atelier Populaire was founded in May 1968 by
students at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, to produce
posters in support of the student uprisings and university
occupations of the time, and the factory occupations
and strikes that followed. An eyewitness account of the
May 1968 conflicts and a discussion of the politics of the
movement can be found in Daniel and Gabriel Cohen-
Bendit's book *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing
Alternative*, Oakland: AK Press 2001.

Emory Douglas
The Black Panther Party for Self Defense (later known
simply as the Black Panther Party) was founded in
Oakland in 1967 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton
with a radical ten-point programme for the rights and
advancement of the African American community of
the US, framed in international socialist terms. Emory
Douglas took the role of the BPP's Minister of Culture
and oversaw the production of the party's newspaper
from its beginnings in 1967 through to the late 1970s.
At its peak, the paper had a weekly circulation of
400,000. Douglas's imagery did not glamorise the hoped
for revolution but portrayed a process in action, showing
Black Americans as local actors in an international
insurrection. Trained as a commercial artist, Douglas
understood the power of advertising and believed it
should be used to attack the capitalist system rather
than to serve it.

Hans Haacke
Painter, sculptor and conceptual artist Hans Haacke
was born in Cologne in 1936. Since the late 1960s, his
work has been primarily concerned with the political
and economic systems of the art world; his planned
1971 solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in
New York was cancelled, allegedly because it would have
foregrounded the corporate connections of the Museum's
trustees. Haacke also participated in certain protest
actions of the Art Workers' Coalition. Critic and curator
Jack Burnham was born in 1931. He wrote *Beyond Modern
Sculpture* (New York: Gaziller, 1968), and curated the
exhibition 'Software' at the Jewish Museum in New York
in 1970.

The Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG)
The Guerrilla Art Action Group, founded by Jon
Hendricks and Jean Toche and later augmented by several
other members, organised a series of high-profile protest
actions in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
Opposition to the Vietnam War was combined with a
wider attack on the exclusive nature of the established

institutions of art. Often in alliance with other groups, such as the Art Workers' Coalition, the GAAG used tactics including guerrilla theatre, agit-prop exhibitions, poster distribution, sit-ins and occupations at the major New York museums to publicly criticise the links between the formal art world, the military state, and corporate interests.

Cildo Meireles
Meireles's *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* were an extension of ideas of Conceptual art, or the 'happening', into a wider public realm. Meireles printed slogans (for example, 'Yankees Go Home', or 'Quem Matou Herzog' ('Who Killed Herzog?'), in reference to the suspicious death in a Brazilian prison of the journalist Wladimir Herzog) onto banknotes or returnable Coca-Cola bottles, and put them back into circulation.

Radical Software
Radical Software was a journal founded in 1969 by Beryl Korot, Phyllis Gershuny and Ira Schneider and published by the New York video collective Raindance. It became the focus of what its founders described as the alternative television movement, a network of video collectives, artists and activists with the ambition to use the emerging technology of video in the service of the creation of new social relationships. 'They imagined a world in which the contest of ideas and values could take place freely and openly, outside of the existing institutional framework and in active opposition to the worldview constructed and maintained by broadcast commercial TV. They proposed not only a re-ordered power structure, but also a new information order in which the very idea of hierarchical power structure might be transformed or even eliminated.' A complete archive of the 11 editions of *Radical Software*, plus David Ross's introductory essay from which this quotation is taken, is maintained online by Davidson Gigliotti at www.radicalsoftware.org.

The Kabouters
The Kabouters (the name means 'gnomes' in Dutch) were a group of Dutch artist-activists with anarchist leanings, founded by former members of the Provos; the Provos were a group of counter-cultural provocateurs and marijuana aficionados formed in 1965 and disbanded in 1967, who became most famous for distributing free 'white bicycles' around Amsterdam, though their actions and their programme went far beyond this and were an influence on the San Francisco Diggers, among others. *The Proclamation of the Orange Free State* was distributed as an issue of the Kabouters' poster-journal and, despite the unconventional nature of their goals, the Kabouters campaigned successfully as a formal political party; five of their members, including Provo co-founder Roel van Duijn, were elected to the Amsterdam City Council in June 1970.

Call to the Artists of Latin America
This manifesto was published following a meeting on Latin American figurative art held at the Casa de las Americas, La Havana, 27 May 1972 where it was signed by 34 artists and art critics. It took the form of a poster intended to be placed in any exhibition of Latin American art throughout the continent.

VALIE EXPORT
Austrian performance artist VALIE EXPORT published this manifesto in 1972. VALIE EXPORT's work is further discussed by Marina Vishmidt in her commissioned essay.

Brigadas Ramona Parra
The Brigadas Ramona Parra (Ramona Parra Brigades) began as groups of street artists and political mural painters formed by the youth wing of the Chilean Communist Party in 1967, and were most active between 1967 and 1973. They supported the 1970 'Popular Unity' government of Salvador Allende until its overthrow in a 1973 *coup d'etat*. The text presented here is translated from the BRP's own journal, *La Revista BRP*; the BRP are still officially in existence, and maintain a website at www.colectivobrp.cl.
   On 20 October 1973, a group of Latin American and American artists recreated a Ramona Parra Brigade mural from the Rio Mapocho, Santiago in SoHo, New York to 'condemn the junta's repression of the arts and draw attention to the atrocities taking place in Chile'. The BRP murals had been 'systematically destroyed and painted over during the first weeks of the military regime' (Lucy Lippard, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change*, New York: E.P. Dutton 1984, p.45).
   'During the Allende campaign of 1969–70, painted walls emerged as an essential communication link between the Left and the masses. … When the Ramona Parra Brigades of the Communist Party began to draw political symbols to complement the verbal messages, a new style began to evolve, and when Allende was elected this new style flourished on every available surface throughout the country. …
   A common imagery and a vocabulary derived from Cubism developed into complex, organically evolved metaphor. Whole walls were transformed into a series of intertwined symbols … A fist became a flag became a dove became hair became a face, and so on. …
   The gap between art and life, between art and people, was being closed. That process has stopped now.
   The junta has begun an "ideological struggle to try to wipe out the effects of three years of left-wing government on the consciousness of the working class and the very poor". …'(Eva Cockroft, 'The Death of a Mural Movement', *Art in America*, January/February 1974, pp.35–37)

The Third World Filmmakers Meeting
The Third World Filmmakers Meeting took place in Algiers on 5–14 December 1973.

Solvognen
Solvognen are a radical street theatre group associated with the 'freetown' of Christiania in Copenhagen. Their 1970s actions – well-publicised in Denmark but little known outside – included the organisation of the Father Christmas Army, a group of around 150 performers all dressed as Father Christmas whose week-long street festival of altruism and entertainment culminated in anti-capitalist protests and a factory occupation; and a performance resisting a celebration of the American Bicentennial held at Rebild in Denmark.

Augusto Boal
Theatre director Augusto Boal was exiled in 1971 by the Brazilian military government for the political nature of his cultural activism. He published his best-known work, *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, while working in Argentina in 1973.

Zoran Popović
Serbian artist Zoran Popović originally produced the text 'For Self-Management Art' as a poster for the Student Cultural Centre Gallery in Belgrade in 1975. His manifesto was clearly primarily directed at the cultural bureaucracy of the Yugoslav state, but Popović was, at the time, working in an international context – his film *Struggle in New York* (1976) was made in collaboration with members of the group Art & Language – and his text might be read as having a wider application.

Sture Johannesson and *The Sword is Mightier than the Swede?*
This is Sture Johannesson's account of the events surrounding the closure of the exhibition 'On Germany – In Time', which was to have been held at Kulturhuset in Stockholm in 1976. Throughout his career, Johannesson has been concerned with the gap between the social democratic rhetoric of artistic freedom put forward by the Swedish state, and the reality of state censorship which set political limits on that freedom. Johannesson's homepage can currently be found at www.sturejohannesson.com.

Bonnie Sherk and *The Farm*
Bonnie Sherk was a successful performance artist on the Californian art scene when she became the prime mover behind the *Crossroads Community*, also known as *The Farm*, a community project in San Francisco that she conceived of as a 'life-scale environmental performance-sculpture'. Several acres of land underneath the Army Street freeway interchange in San Francisco were taken over and turned into a community garden, while a former dairy building became a farmhouse that doubled as a schoolroom and performance art space. *The Farm*'s community convinced the non-profit Trust for Public Land to buy the site they occupied and donate it to the city, but the city government, while accepting the land, opposed *The Farm*'s existence. Following a legal battle that lasted several years, the surviving shadow of the project's utopian aspirations currently takes the form of an anodyne landscaped park, a few allotments, and a block of commercial live/work studios. Bonnie Sherk continues to work on community projects under the name A Living Library, and maintains a website at www.alivinglibrary.org.

Jaudon & Kozloff
This article was originally published in issue 4 of the New York-based quarterly journal *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* in 1978. The theme of the issue was 'Women's Traditional Arts: The Politics of Aesthetics'. *Heresies* was founded in 1977 and produced by a collective that included Patsy Beckert, Joan Braderman, Mary Beth Edelson, Harmony Hammond, Elizabeth Hess, Joyce Kozloff, Arlene Ladden, Lucy Lippard, Mary Miss, Marty Pottenger, Miriam Shapiro, Joan Snyder, Elke Solomon, Pat Steir, May Stevens, Michelle Stuart, Susana Torre, Elizabeth Weatherford, Sally Webster and Nina Yankowitz.

Adrian Piper
Adrian Piper is a Conceptual artist, performer and writer on philosophy. 'Ideology, Confrontation and Political Self-Awareness' is an essay whose reflexive form links it to Conceptual art and whose focus on the personal as political connects it to the development of the feminist critique of language and ideology. Piper has said that 'I like to think that I'm attacking the problem of xenophobia from two directions simultaneously: from the direction of interpersonal and immediate experience in my artwork, and from the direction of the very broad underpinnings of xenophobia in my philosophy work'. (Interview with Maurice Berger, in Grant Kester (ed.), *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.)

Piper's performance art practice of the 1970s often involved interventions in public space, or confrontational approaches to the relationship between performer and audience in more conventional settings. The publication of this essay came shortly before the second of Piper's two self-imposed periods of 'hibernation' from the art world.

The Docklands Photo-Murals
The Docklands Community Poster Project was founded in 1981 by Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn in response to the concerns of East London communities over an extensive proposed re-development programme. The newly elected Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher designated the land surrounding the working docks, from St Katherine's Dock east of Tower Bridge downriver to the Royal Docks, as an Urban Development Corporation. This effectively removed local control from an area crossing five London boroughs, with the aim of transferring it into private ownership. However, this land, now known as the London Docklands, not only incorporated docks and warehouses, but was also home and workplace to 56,000 people. Historically, up to this time the communities of East London had been poor but politically active. They were not against development, they just wanted it to also meet their own needs. A struggle ensued…

The artists, who had previously been working closely with local trade unions around health issues, were approached to produce a poster alerting local people to what was to come. Following a period of consultation with tenants and action groups, however, it soon became clear that the proposed poster was not enough. Posters were indeed wanted, but 'large ones' to match the scale of the proposals – also design work to help with individual campaigns, documentation of the area before it changed and a record of each battle as it was fought. In addition, there was a need for easily accessible information that examined key issues such as housing and specific development sites in more depth. (This summary is taken from the archive of the Docklands Community Poster Project, online at www.cspace.org.uk/cspace/archive/docklands/dock_arch.htm).

Peter Kennard
Peter Kennard studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London in the 1960s, but gave up painting in favour of producing photomontages inspired by the German Dadaist John Heartfield. His work has appeared in many publications, from *The Economist* to the *Workers Press*

(the journal of the Socialist Labour League) and many of the images he produced for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament were widely used and often reinterpreted by grassroots campaigners. Peter Kennard's homepage can be found at www.peterkennard.com.

Laibach
The rock group Laibach, founded in 1980, form part of Neue Slowenische Kunst, a political art collective formed in Yugoslavia in 1984 which also includes the artists' group IRWIN and the theatre group originally known as the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater. Laibach's strategic and often uncomfortable embrace of totalitarian rhetoric and imagery stops just short of open parody and the groups successful recording career includes several hits. NSK are currently presenting themselves as an independent micronation under the slogan 'Art is fanaticism that demands diplomacy'. They maintain a website at www.nskstate.com.

Orange Alternative
Inspired by the Provos and the Kabouters, Polish student activist and art history graduate Waldemar Frydrych wrote a 'Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism' in 1981 and began painting obscure graffiti, featuring badly-drawn gnomes, at places on the walls of buildings in Wroclaw where anti-government slogans had been erased. By 1983, Frydrych's interventions and ideas had become the kernel of the Orange Alternative, a movement that attempted to circumvent the Polish communist state's ban on unsanctioned political activity by organising around implausible events. The flyers translated here are representative of the 1980s actions of the Orange Alternative, with their insistence on the 'non-political' nature of the events coupled with calculatedly absurd propositions for action. By 1989, Orange Alternative actions were held across Poland, and were attracting thousands of participants. The website of the Orange Alternative, which includes a history of the movement, can be found at www.pomaranczowa_alternatywa. republika.pl.

Desiderio Navarro
In 1989, at the height of the censorship crisis (during which several shows had been closed down, or never permitted to open because of political content which was deemed to be offensive, counter-revolutionary or irredeemably ambiguous), dozens of artists got together to organise one more exhibition. All the works would be abstract – 'an art without problems'. In fact, some in the group argued for not only abstraction but geometric abstraction – 'because it is asemantic, and could therefore make even more plain the hostile interpretive delirium'. For various reasons this formal display of withdrawal was itself withdrawn, and in frustration and also as a 'final "conceptualist" attempt to save (and "deconstruct", at the same time) the original conceptual gesture of the exhibition of abstract-art-in-protest', Cuban art critic Desiderio Navarro published an exhibition 'text' in which the body of the text was also withdrawn, leaving only the footnotes. A false header indicated that the exhibition had in fact taken place – a final withdrawal from the withdrawal of the withdrawal of the political critique which had been silenced.

The 'Retroabstraction' project was a watershed moment. A few months later, in September 1989, and after the censorship of the 'Castillo de la Fuerza' project (a cycle of exhibitions that was intended to reopen the dialogue between artists and Power) Cuban art simply 'dedicated itself to baseball.' Fed up with the wave of censorships and veiled prohibitions, artists and critics organised a big baseball game according to the proposition: 'if we can't make art, we will play ball'. The dynamic of withdrawal was played out (as it were), in all of its cynical, aggressive, sarcastic, mocking, delegitimizing intertextuality. Taking no chances, State Security arranged to have a game of their own going on in the next field over. (This summary taken from unpublished notes for a talk by Rachel Weiss entitled 'Some Notes on Withdrawal'. Weiss is a Professor in the Department of Arts Administration and Policy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. For more background to Navarro's text, see Weiss's article 'After the Storm in Cuba: A Case of Withdrawal', *Social Identities*, vol.13 no.2, March 2007, pp.183–199). It should be noted that certain references in Navarro's text are to fictitious articles. The references in note 3 reflect 'hardline' Cuban Communist Party viewpoints but are imagined. The argument in note 4 is real, but attributed to a fictitious author. Likewise, the reviews cited in note 5. Note 8 is a reference to Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1983).

Border Arts Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo
The Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo was founded in 1984 by David Avalos, Victor Ochoa, Isaac Artenstein, Jude Eberhart, Sara-Jo Berman, Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Michael Schnorr as the 'active visual arm' of the Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park, San Diego, California. As a changing collective of artists, the BAW/TAF has produced or participated in a great many events, including panel discussions, clandestine illegal border crossings, mural painting, video production, education programmes and street protests. In the words of Coco Fusco, the BAW/TAF 'wanted to bring the border down, explore the area as a zone of intercultural exchange, point to human rights violations, and theorise a border sensibility using the notion of the deterritorialized undocumented Mexican as a trope.' (See http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0108/msg00102.html)

Gran Fury
Gran Fury were an artists' collective producing agit-prop around issues in the AIDS crisis. They were formed in early 1988 in New York and worked continuously until 1994. The original recording of this talk, along with the rest of the Gran Fury archive, is held at the New York Public Library.

Rebellion on Level p
The park demanded by the Hafenrandverein opened in 2005. The Park Fiction project is further discussed by Marina Vishmidt in her commissioned essay.

RevArte and Popotla
RevArte (RevolutionArte), an art collective based in San Diego and Tijuana, collaborated with the community of Popotla to protest the effect on the small fishing village of Twentieth Century Fox's 'specially designed studio in

Popotla, a tiny coastal fishing village just south of Tijuana in Baja California. Some called it a Hollywood *maquiladora*, a description usually applied to US factories located in Mexico to take advantage of low operating costs.' (*Wired*, 8 July 1998, www.wired.com)

Tiqqun
A pdf of the original text in French, *Comment Faire* is available online at http://infokiosques.net/spip. php?article127, various translations into English can also be found at http://info.interactivist.net

Ip Gim
The Feminist Art Collective Ip Gim are based in Seoul, South Korea. The text translated here was released after the disruption of their public art exhibition and performance event at the Jongmyo Confucian shrine in Seoul. The shrine is a memorial to the medieval Joseon dynasty that remains symbolic of the conservative values of traditional Confucian social organisation.

Colectivo Situaciones
Colectivo Situaciones is a group of 'militant researchers' formed in Buenos Aires in the late 1990s. Their homepage can be found at www.situaciones.org.

Ricardo Dominguez/Critical Art Ensemble/Electronic Disturbance Theatre
Ricardo Dominguez is a former member of Critical Art Ensemble (1987–1994) and a cofounder of the Electronic Disturbance Theatre, who pioneered the practical development of what Dominguez calls 'electronic civil disobedience'. CAE's books *The Electronic Disturbance* (1994), *Electronic Civil Disobedience* (1996) and *Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media* (2004) are published by Autonomedia and available online at www. critical-art.net/books/index.html. Ricardo Dominguez's homepage can be found at http://www.thing.net/~rdom/.

Hito Steyerl
Hito Steyerl is a filmmaker and theorist based in Berlin. Her film works include *Germany and Identity* (1994), *November* (2004) and *Lovely Andrea* (2007).

Raqs Media Collective
Raqs Media Collective was formed in 1992 by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. Raqs describe themselves as a collective of media practitioners that works in art, new media, film-making, photography, media theory, research, writing, criticism and curation.
   Raqs Media Collective was the co-initiator of Sarai: The New Media Initiative, www.sarai.net, founded in 2001, a programme of interdisciplinary research and practice on media, city space and urban culture at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Members of the collective are resident at the Sarai Media Lab, Delhi, where they work on projects interpreting the city and urban experience; make cross-media works; collaborate on the development of software; design and conduct workshops; administer discussion lists; edit publications; write, research and coordinate several research projects and public activities of Sarai.

Brian Holmes
Brian Holmes is an art and cultural critic based in Paris. He is the author of *Hieroglyphs of the Future* (Zagreb: WHW, 2002) and *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms* (New York: Autonomedia, 2007) and contributes to the journals and online platforms *Nettime*, *Transform*, *Multitudes*, *Springerin*, and *Brumaria*. His recent work can be found at http://brianholmes.wordpress.com.

Jeon Yongseok/Flying City
The South Korean artists' group Flying City were founded in 2001 by Jeon Yongseok, Jang Jongkwan and Kim Gisoo as a research organisation dedicated to creating an urbanist history and critique of the development of Seoul. Their website can be found at www.flyingcity.kr.

Anthony Davies, Stephan Dillemuth, Jakob Jakobsen and *There is No Alternative: THE FUTURE IS SELF-ORGANISED*
Anthony Davies is a London-based writer, organiser and independent researcher. Stephan Dillemuth is a Munich-based artist who runs the website Society of Control, www.societyofcontrol.com. Jakob Jakobsen is a co-founder of the Copenhagen Free University, www. copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk. Their collective text, *There is No Alternative: THE FUTURE IS SELF-ORGANISED*, is a manifesto for independent cultural organisation that draws on anarchist principles, written in reaction to the increasing alliance between corporate capital and state art institutions in the European art world, and in recognition of an existing counter-movement away from the formal art world that has characterised a new field of oppositional cultural practice.

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