

Art as a Thinking Process

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Art as a Thinking Process

Visual
Forms of
Knowledge
Production

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Foreword

How Do We Teach Art?

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This book draws its origins from a conference held at the Iuav University of Venice within the Graduate Degree Program in Visual Arts.¹ Since its inception, the degree program has rapidly grown and is now approaching a difficult adolescence, for which the European financial crisis does not provide any support. Should its activities cease, it will nevertheless be remembered as the first program of its kind in an Italian university—that is, centered on a rotating system of master teachers, short-term activity-based workshops led by artists and curators, and a strong emphasis on theory (from sociology to semiotics, from aesthetics to economics, and so forth). From the start, the concept driving this program has been that the visual arts must be considered a field of knowledge and that an artwork should be considered, first and foremost, a thinking process.² Consequently, those who wish to work within this field deserve an education based on more than solely the achievement of specific skills. As simplistic as such a statement may seem, it is neither obvious nor should it be taken for granted.

The following essays—for which I thank all those who kindly contributed—may be considered part of the discussion concerning an unresolved point that rests on the persistent and widespread sense of distance from visual aspects of culture. Until now, and particularly within intellectual circles, images have been suspect: from Plato's ideas to the iconoclastic attitudes of a specific segment of Christian theology to to much of Jewish and Islamic tradition.

Thus, the contempt for the visual arts as a field of study has been breeding since the birth of the first universities over one thousand years ago. Across Europe and America, the rise and fall of many Bauhaus-inspired schools—beginning with Walter Gropius's own model—is just one more

piece of evidence of this long-lasting suspicion. The gap between art academies and universities still exists—at least in the European system—and is deeply rooted: it seems as though visual arts instruction is confined to places for educating the *homo faber* rather than the *homo sapiens*, according to the tacit premise of a distance between making and thinking. A study of the motives and political implications of such a persistent attitude could prove to be highly interesting.

And we could take our Venetian course as a case study, having caused such a variety of unsettling reactions, not just among Italian art academies, but also within the Iuav University itself. It is important to note that the course of architecture, which has always been the main core of the small-scale Iuav University, was itself the fruit of a rebellion led by the architecture professors teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts of Venice. Thus, it has been a sort of victory—albeit a difficult one to deal with—also aimed at showing that the production of images and communication is characterized by well structured cultural implications. It will always be difficult to bring philosophers, historians, designers, and architects to accept that arts and crafts can blur the borders between disciplines, even when this does not entail artists simply playing with terracotta or colored glass. Incidentally, soon after the full acceptance of the course, Venice witnessed the birth of more than one structure for art education, often linked to the world of production—once again insisting on the technical aspect of the discipline, returning the focus to “making” as opposed to “planning” and “thinking.”

However, the difficult reception we have faced in Venice is neither solely an Italian nor a European phenomenon, but rather a political one with a strong basis in the history of ideas. Predictable were our hard times, as we were

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simply following suit of those art academies that had tried to provide a kind of education in which different disciplines overlap and lead to the construction of sense rather than to decoration or mere expression of the self. But let us begin from another point of view. Is an art education program really worthwhile? And, if so, how should it be articulated?

Perhaps a school for artists serves no purpose at all. Many of the most interesting painters and sculptors, such as Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne, did not want to or manage to attend one. Training can be based on assumptions so rigid as to not be of help to those who intend to introduce new worlds. On the other hand, innovation rarely occurs without a rebellion against rules, and there is no better place to learn rules than school. Perhaps we need art schools precisely so that what is learned there will be betrayed by the best students. Some of the most significant moments that changed the course of twentieth-century art history, from the Munich Art Academy to the Bauhaus, from Black Mountain College in North Carolina to the Ulm School of Design, and not to mention the New School for Social Research in New York, sprang from educational settings in which a number of pupils surpassed their teachers. The younger generations of artists have been trained at centers such as the Düsseldorf Art Academy, the Städelschule in Frankfurt, UCLA, CalArts, the Art Institute of Chicago, Goldsmiths College, and other art schools. The Academy of Fine Arts was once the obvious place for studying sculpture, painting, decoration, and other techniques sanctioned by time, such as illustration and engraving. Research was not part of the background required of graduates. Nonetheless, since Leonardo da Vinci's time, artists have zealously sustained their work as "a mental matter." Despite the fact that their places of training have always been relegated to the worlds of decoration, beauty, and manual skills, they have argued against the enduring belief that their deity is only Mercury, the god of making, feeling and communicating, claiming instead that it also is Saturn, the god of thought and knowledge.³ Current practices now manifest a multimedia character so that the value of a work is not tied to the type of medium used, but to the conceptual device with which it is deployed. Any insistence on teaching technical skills is thus inappropriate, regardless of whether it concerns drawing or computer competence. Nevertheless, this does not mean that artistic activity does not require capabilities. Paradoxically, it needs so many that a school is unable to teach them all.

And it is high time we seriously reconsider the overwhelming attention paid

to the readymade and to the dematerialization of the work of art. No matter how relevant Arthur Danto's contribution to art theory has been, we must recognize that Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* are not readymades, as the critic has stated each time he has touched upon the argument. And we must acknowledge that even those Conceptual artists who fervently advocated detachment from the execution of the work—from Art and Language to Lawrence Weiner and so on—never truly gave up making and/or controlling the objects they were showing as art. Rather, what seems to hold true is a continuous movement from practice to thinking and back again.

An art project often requires the ability to paint, photograph, film, edit, or set up an environmental piece oriented toward the field of architecture or even to the history of landscape. At times, an artist must be able to influence the spectators' moods, requiring notions of psychology and a smattering of sociology. One must be familiar with what has already been done—that is, with what has been implemented, according to Harold Rosenberg's definition, as the "tradition of the new." As we have already noted, an art school should teach both the rule and the way to overturn it. And it should also teach how to fail and how to overcome the ensuing damage to self-esteem: "Fail Again, Fail Better" is the title of Roland Jones's enlightening essay on the methods of artistic teaching.⁴

Nonetheless, the questions of which methods to teach and which methods to use in teaching art are still striking. The statute of the work of art has been problematized, making it difficult to insert into an educational program. Moreover, the role of theory has become increasingly important in terms of what it means to be an author, the relations that exist with other disciplines, and what is meant by "knowledge" in this specific field,⁵ which nevertheless continues to include doing and thus the imprecision of any practice with respect to the certainty of technology.

Therefore, it is no accident that a century after the greatest revolution in artistic practice, the matter of teaching art is increasingly discussed in symposia and books.⁶ And we must bear in mind that many of the best known critics, curators, and artists have devoted much of their time to schools, as though fully giving themselves over to the intellectual *milieu*, abandoning the promotional mechanisms that distinguish a career based on competition and strategy, and on organizational and fundraising skills.⁷ In this context, the activity of exhibition venues associated with art schools has emerged

as never before, the latter having proven themselves to be centers detached from the need for approval of an art world bound to commoditization.

Thus said, it cannot be stressed enough that bringing the visual arts within the field of universities and PhDs—though with great freedom and a deeply critical approach—has increasingly assumed a strong political character. Studying has also been recognized by many artists and curators as a way to escape an art system perceived as linking cultural value primarily to monetary value. Without denying the role of the collector, art market laws have become mind-boggling. Furthermore, a desire for some respite also derives from the endless overlapping dynamics of shows, museums, magazines, auctions, and all the other gatekeepers on the roadmap of success. The whole mechanism has become a somewhat suffocating and self-referential system of power from which the school may represent a break. It is no longer that dust-filled site decried by the avant-gardes as a ghost of the past. Rather, it has gradually become—at least in the better cases—a place for refreshing forms of hypothetical thought. There is some evidence pointing to the appearance of the origins of this new vision of the art school shortly after the international commercial success of Pop art. This itself could be the subject of a specific study.

In point of fact, critics such as Ute Meta Bauer, Boris Groys, Daniel Birnbaum, Jens Hoffmann, and Hou Hanru have found refuge there. And the careers of many artists, from Joseph Kosuth to Jannis Kounellis and Rebecca Horn, have matured toward teaching without ever truly separating this practice from that of “producing.” Long before his Kassel intervention, Joseph Beuys had decided to lend his performances a predominantly educational flavor; and since the 1980s, Adrian Piper’s *Funk Lessons*, Thomas Hirschhorn’s never-ending lectures, and the pedagogical nature of the activities of Tim Rollins and Kids of Survival have thrived on the border between artwork and art school. Other artists, such as Michelangelo Pistoletto and Olafur Eliasson, have decided to transform their living and work spaces into schools, or, as in the case of Marina Abramović, have taken on the responsibility of creating a brand-new school: the less they are legitimized by the diploma they can issue, the more radical they are. From the viewpoint of an increasingly coercive system, the function of the school, at least in part, is to rid itself of its own shackles.

In my personal experience, I have witnessed how some artists value the classroom as a space for political activism—Rene Gabri, Lewis Baltz, Marjetica

Potrč, and Antoni Muntadas among them. Others, such as Giulio Paolini and Ilya Kabakov, appear to work in a very traditional way, while actually protesting against a capitalistic *laissez faire* society, according to which art is more a commodity than a discipline. Schools may be experimental in method, but by definition they are places for the passing on of tradition, whether it be that which emerged from the twentieth century or others dating further back. Today's centers of artistic training are not distinguished by any desire to provoke or astonish: as Harold Rosenberg observed, the categories of artistic practices followed today were amply defined before 1912.⁸ We can only try to perform the task of conveying knowledge as honestly and as best we can. In the words of Robert Storr, another critic who chose to teach, "genius lacks nothings that it needs."⁹ But genius is rare and thus "the purpose of art schools is to provide students with the things they know they lack and the ways of finding the things they don't know they lack."¹⁰ It would be pointless to ask an art student what he or she does or does not lack—this is to be discovered on one's own—though the idea is to provide a base of common knowledge in order to avoid continuous reinventions of the wheel through the retracing of the experiences of others.

In our claim that teaching the arts is a worthwhile activity, we are aided by the fact that design appears alongside the so-called fine arts at nearly all of the most advanced educational institutions. This implies that the best solutions for practical problems may be found by examining the tradition of useless forms: those votive or totemic in nature, or those that are the symbolic recognition of a culturally cohesive community. The history of forms, whether intended for contemporary life or not, outlines a "shape of time"—according to George Kubler's famous definition¹¹—and never before this accelerated century has one needed the help of tools to follow the biggest changes.

And we should never forget that an art school is a school of doubt: one teaches a subject that cannot be defined, since art is both an endless challenge and an asymptote. The vicissitudes of the concepts of art and the practices that it has adopted over centuries have changed so much that each historical period has redefined the term *a posteriori*, in the wake of what artists have already accomplished.

On this point, we can quote Nigel Warburton, who asks us not to waste time on definitions but to deal directly with the works.¹² Regardless of what

it may be, art is a slippery entity that aims to upend anyone who tries to pigeonhole it into a taxonomy or inflexible category, a sector in which there is no room for a pacifying episteme. In asserting that art may be a thinking process, we are also questioning the meaning and widening the means of the world “thinking.”

Yet, the problems related to what an art school should be and the tricky points of assembling one cannot be so quickly expunged. We can read the analyses of some of these issues in a long series of profound contributions—for which I reiterate my thanks to all of those who kindly donated their thoughts. First of all, it may be useful to begin with a certain doubt about the meaning of the words “art” and “thinking.” As Sarat Maharaj states, they are “blanket, abstract categories. We need to be wary of treating them as hard and fast givens, as fixed, immutable entities.” Starting from such a premise, we can move through the other essays with the understanding that we are in a field of opened controversies.

Carol Becker of Columbia University points out that the arts are often seen as “soft skills,” maybe too involved with emotions to be taken seriously in education. But what lies behind these skills, soft or not? From the psychological point of view, Paolo Legrenzi and Alessandra Jacomuzzi have shown that random and deterministic processes interact in the creation of a work of art: one should be able to select the first and dominate the second. Paolo Garbolino’s text tells us that, even if the methodology of scientific knowledge has insisted on the importance of theory, we are now witnessing a “practical turn in philosophy of science” that gives the dignity of a way to full knowledge back to *techné* (based on experience and opposed to *episteme*, and thus related to the methodologies of the arts). The importance of learning by doing and making has been investigated by John Dewey and proposed again in Mary Jane Jacob’s essay. Jacob also suggests the Japanese notion of *Ba*—born in the context of economy and management—for definition of the dialectical, progressive, continual, dynamic, and shared space that art can create. Thus, it becomes a powerful “transforming agent.” And this brings us back to the beginning of this text, to the (probably meaningless) polarization of *homo faber* and *homo sapiens*. As Richard Sennet attempts to demonstrate in his essay, it is overly simplistic to insist on such a division. The political relevance of art and imagination is the core of Franco Berardi’s intervention, with its special focus on the role of the imagination, while Suzana Milevska expresses a woman’s point of view. From a perspec-

tive spanning Theodor W. Adorno's warnings to the monitions of Michel Foucault and Guy Debord, we should be wary of the independence from the recent mythology concerning the "creative industries" and their direct applicability—as Jeremiah Day's essay underlines—in city- or nation-branding. Hito Steyerl stresses the importance of "occupying" the art schools, treating them as halls of freedom and not as places of "boring production of knowledge." Many of the contributors, from John Aiken to Simon Njami and Mika Hannula, manifest a similar apprehension of the art school as a space for a kind of controlled orthodoxy. Within this framework, it comes as no surprise that those who have been dealing for years with PhDs dedicated to artists—that is, with a noticeable space for practice with respect to theory- and history-based doctoral degrees—have tried to hone in on the meaning of "research" when applied to the visual arts. Some contributors, such as Jan Kaila and Henk Slager, have clearly warned against the risk of quantifying quality—a process implicit in the calculation of credits. We can imagine that the arts can help us "develop an awareness of what technology determines as our future," as Ute Meta Bauer says in describing one of the aims of Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT), the program she has been directing at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. Yet, we are inclined to use the term "research" without an explicit understanding or redefinition of it: and thus we may find ourselves following the path of a modernistic idea of progress or even a pseudo-scientific approach. As Hong-john Lin claims, in scientific practices this notion implies the reproducibility of experiments, whereas in the field of art, this is neither always possible nor desirable. And then, argues Gertrud Sandqvist, reminding us of the fascinating story of the Swedish artist Hilma af Klint, sometimes art brings us a "secret knowledge." This perspective evokes the need to look at art also, and perhaps generally, from an anthropological point of view.

In fact, art is a difficult subject to subjugate, and art education is such a difficult field to cultivate that a frequent criticism of both—which has also been brought to the point of censorship and threats—is highly predictable, today as it was long ago. Art is not a reassuring tool. It brings about anxiety and a sense of loss. It asks us not to rely on our certainties. It wants us to rethink the world. And subsequently, art education also must continuously understand and redefine itself. Investigating the reasons for the attempts at keeping cultural dignity out of this field—from Western to Asian forms of reviling images and their means of communication—does not have to do simply with the peculiar story of a single school. In the end, it can tell us

something about our heritage, about our future, and about the way we will have to deal with imminent changes in culture. An art school may very well be considered a place in which changes are welcome, accepted, and elaborated. And this may very well be a reason why it can seem dangerous and be discredited as useless.

- 1 The structure of the school and the results of its ten years of activities have been described in Chiara Vecchiarelli and Angela Vettese, *Visual Arts at IUAV, Venezia: 2001–2011* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2011).
- 2 Marino Folin (the former rector), Marco De Michelis (the first dean of the Faculty of Design and Arts), Walter Le Moli, Sergio Polano and Germano Celant (who both subsequently decided to abandon the adventure), and myself.
- 3 The reference is to Raymond Klibansky, Fritz Saxl, and Erwin Panofsky, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of National Philosophy, Religion and Art* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964).
- 4 Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *Art Schools (Propositions for the 21st Century)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 151–64.
- 5 Jan Kaila, “The Artist As a Producer of Knowledge,” in *The Artist’s Knowledge 2: Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts*, eds. Jan Kaila and Anna Herlin (Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts, 2008), 6–9.
- 6 Among others, see Mary Jane Jacob and Jacquelyn Baas, eds., *Learning Mind: Experience into Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Brad Buckley and John Conomos, eds., *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009); Paul O’Neal and Mick Wilson, eds., *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, 2010); Felicity Allen, ed., *Education* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).
- 7 Ute Meta Bauer, “Zones of Activities,” in *Learning Mind: Experience into Art*, eds. Mary Jane Jacob and Jacquelyn Baas, op. cit., 137.
- 8 Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audience* (New York: Horizon Press, 1964), 20.
- 9 Madoff, *Art Schools*, 54–65, 65.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).
- 12 Nigel Warburton, *The Art Question* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Undermining Orthodoxies

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Within the context of a debate about “Art as a Thinking Process,” hosted by an institution celebrating ten years of innovative and effective inquiry into how a school of visual art can engage with and develop visual forms of knowledge production, it seems appropriate to look at some of the precedents pioneered by British art schools over the last fifty years. This period is important because the major changes initiated in the early 1960s addressed the concept of art education becoming part of a higher education agenda rather than maintaining a further education focus. The art school evolved from a forum for learning particular processes and techniques to one where the development of ideas and concepts took precedence. Art education became more aligned with what was happening at the cutting edge of contemporary art and design and embraced new technologies as they became available. Art schools developed their curricula and grew in size and number during a period of time that witnessed major social, cultural, and political upheavals. These upheavals in turn had a profound effect on how the art schools contributed to the creative industries and on the formal requirements of higher education. These developments revealed strengths and problems as art schools shifted from vocational status to full integration into university research cultures and methodologies.

The subject of this paper charts some of the significant developments that occurred during this period of change, when perceived orthodoxies were questioned and replaced and new orders were established, all of which have had an enormous impact on how the art school can maintain and assert the importance of visual forms of knowledge production. Most of the British art

schools were, until relatively recently, outside the university system, either linked to technical institutions or existing independently and supported by local authority funding. The absorption of the independent art school into first the polytechnic system and more recently the university system has been one of the most significant changes that has occurred since the restructuring of art school education in the 1960s.

A few British art schools, including the Slade School of Fine Art (in Reading and Newcastle), were established at their inception within a university structure. For example, the Slade School of Fine Art, where I am a professor, was founded in 1871 within University College London (UCL) as a school where fine art would be considered a subject worthy of study in its own right. UCL was a multi-faculty liberal arts university that, uniquely for the period, was not tied to the few existing institutional frameworks (such as those operating at Oxford and Cambridge) and had a radical and pioneering agenda of accepting students on their abilities regardless of gender, creed, nationality, or race. UCL was established by its founders, including the philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham, to undermine and question longstanding orthodoxies in teaching, research, and society.

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As an example of his unorthodox approach to institutional engagement, Jeremy Bentham, determined to continue his involvement with UCL, provided a lasting legacy in the form of an auto-icon dressed in his own clothes and accompanied by his mummified head, to be located in a prominent location within the university. When Marcel Broodthaers moved to London in 1973, he made a number of short films, including the pioneering *Figures in Wax (Jeremy Bentham)* (1974), in which he was filmed in conversation with Bentham's auto-icon in the cloisters of UCL. Within the context of art education in Britain at the time, this work by Broodthaers confirmed the

John
Aiken

breakaway from technique-based forms of knowledge production to conceptualizing art as a thinking process.

Creative endeavor and purpose can and have served to undermine prevalent orthodoxies and to generate new energies and substances consistently throughout the twentieth century, and are equally important today as they were in the past. The opposite is also true, as when prevalent orthodoxies can function to undermine creative energy in order to maintain the status quo and perpetuate existing power structures within the academy and the sociopolitical primacy of the time. In art, the changes that occurred, whether initiated by artists, critics, curators, or theoreticians, resulted from framing art as a thinking process. Sometimes these changes were initiated by one or more of these groups, but generally the most powerful of these—whether they are called movements, attitudes, groups, or styles—drift or propel themselves into some kind of harmonious thinking, albeit often appearing to manifest itself in a discordant fashion, the cult of the individual always having the potential to disrupt the general agreement of the many and consequently functioning as an irritant that enables self-reflection rather than dogma. Of course, as general agreement becomes more widespread, new ideas and ways of doing things gradually or speedily become the orthodoxy of the day, defended with as much vigor and sophistication of argument as the orthodoxy they replace.

The art world is a paradox in that it requires its clearly defined and patriarchal methodologies and procedures but also needs to engage with the raw and unorthodox energy of new ideas and turn a process of undermining the status quo into something quantifiable or tangible within a range of existing frameworks. Art schools are no exception to this inevitable and often very exciting cycle. I entered art school at an interesting time: in 1968. Across Europe and America, protest movements were voicing their concerns about the war in Vietnam, about civil rights, and about the “dead hand” of authority that was inhibiting, restricting, or repressing developments in universities, art schools, and art institutions. It was a period of change that grew out of frustration and in some cases desperation and managed to simultaneously polarize situations and also form bridges and coalitions between disparate factions and constituencies.

My awareness of protest was formulated through media coverage of the civil rights movement in the United States, which gave courage to communities in

my own country of Northern Ireland to challenge the inequalities present in the political structure of the time. In parallel with social and political unrest, a growing awareness of the new art being made in the United States and Europe—exciting, generative, and open compared with the relative conformity of what was available through art history books in libraries and limited provincial galleries and museums in my country—was liberating. Magazines such as *Studio International*, pioneering texts by Germano Celant on Arte Povera, and catalogues for seminal exhibitions, such as Harald Szeeman's *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* in 1969, opened up new positions and opportunities to frame art in different contexts.

British art school education went through an enormous change in the 1960s. The government of the day made a conscious political, pedagogical, and pragmatic decision to change the direction and emphasis of art education from a National Diploma that concentrated on technical competencies and the acquisition of skills (in the narrow sense) to an equivalent degree that developed a more holistic notion of art, design, and contemporary thought. One of my predecessors at the Slade, Sir William Coldstream, was commissioned to draft a report in 1960, and, based on the recommendations of this report, the British art school system was radically overhauled in 1963. A new degree-equivalent qualification was established that highlighted the integration of theory and practice, in contrast with the vocational emphasis of the National Diploma in Design.

The National Diploma in Design was offered by several hundred art schools, each serving local rather than national needs. The new Diploma in Art and Design was offered in a well-resourced and accountable core of only forty schools across Britain.

Existing vocational courses were perceived as narrowly specialized and in danger of obsolescence in a rapidly changing economy and society, and there was a need for something more flexible—an education in art and design methods and problem solving rather than training in particular skills and techniques. Complementary studies were introduced and illustrated the gulf that existed between art history based on a notion of connoisseurship and the newly employed (first-generation) university-trained art historians, theoreticians, and curators. Since the curator and critic Roger Fry was appointed to teach at the Slade in the early part of the twentieth century, the school has had an established chair in history of art, held by important figures including

Tancred Borenius, Rudolf Wittkower, and Ernst Gombrich, but history of art as a distinct discipline within the university system was only generally established in the 1960s in Britain.

In 2011, and for the first time since the 1970s, the Slade School was occupied by students in protests against cuts in education and the introduction of high fees for university students. This occupation was in solidarity with student unrest across all disciplines rather than because of perceived problems with the Slade as an institution. By contrast, in 1968 Hornsey School of Art in north London made national and, surprisingly, international headlines for a student occupation. That occupation, in combination with media coverage of student riots in Paris and civil rights demonstrations in Ireland, created massive media attention and exposed flaws in the newly established structure of courses and methods of delivery.

The situation at Hornsey was complicated and multilayered but revolved around structure rather than content. The occupation proposed that courses should be fitted to students rather than the other way around—that they should not be classes but rather creative groupings embracing both students and staff in common projects.

The physical and conceptual barriers around departments would be dissolved in the free flow of creative activity. This notion presumes (probably generally correctly) that the concept of specialized departments or subject areas had by definition a narrow agenda and a specific focus on a limited range of technical processes. Evidence in the art world both at the time and since, particularly in the expanded field of sculpture, showed how innovative artists generated new definitions and models in the 1960s and early 1970s. Many of those artists who embraced new media and new ways of positioning themselves in an international milieu of contemporary art emerged from sculpture departments, especially from the new diploma course at Saint Martins College of Arts, which produced artists such as Richard Long, Gilbert & George, and many others. Ambitious students encountered successful young artists employed on a part-time and visiting basis and a backlash occurred against the norms of what was acceptable for exhibition. New work embraced conceptual thinking, performance and installation, collaborative projects, and links to theater, music, dance, architecture, and the environment.

The art school in the 1960s and 1970s was often perceived to be one of the most effective and dynamic parts of the contemporary art world in Britain, especially as gallery and museum opportunities were relatively underdeveloped by comparison with centers in the United States and Europe. The art school created an effective forum for debate and exchange of new ideas that extended beyond previously defined subject areas. The location at which one taught not only enabled a dynamic opportunity to discuss ideas but also conferred status as a contemporary artist whose ideas and ways of thinking were in demand, and a very effective program of visiting artists and lecturers was established nationally. As the 1970s moved into the 1980s and funding was cut back, this emphasis shifted to status additionally being defined by the galleries or museums with which one worked, and by a developing market and concepts around curatorial practice. A much stronger awareness of critical theory developed, and an understanding of how to position work within a critical context became an increasingly important part of debate in art schools. In parallel with these developments, or even as a result of them, many of the most successful young artists began to remove themselves from art school teaching to engage 100 percent with the emerging commercial markets and increasing exhibition opportunities.

A significant proportion of students who entered higher education in the 1960s were from social backgrounds in which few, if any, people in their respective families had previously studied at a university level. Social agendas and Marxist theory played a prominent part in discussion at the time. There was a belief that an artist's task was to render service to the common good. Kim Howells, one of the leaders of the Hornsey revolution, denounced "art works as commodities for the bourgeois elite." It is therefore ironic that he should go on to become the Minister for Culture in Tony Blair's first government and infamously leave a note at a Turner Prize exhibition saying that the work exhibited was "cold mechanical conceptual bullshit and what art needed was some real revolutionaries to blow them out of the water." Nick Raynsford, who was also a Minister in the Blair government, studied sculpture at art school at around the same time as the Hornsey occupation. To have two former art students who studied in the late 1960s/early 1970s in cabinet posts simultaneously must be rare or even unique, but demonstrates the important role social and political agendas played in higher education at the time during which they studied.

There was a desire to make work matter in a personal rather than in a mainstream sense, and Richard Wollheim wrote about the Hornsey occupation in his book *Should Art be Respectable?*: “I personally cannot believe that in art schools things will be the same again, that what was said and thought in those weeks (of occupation) will not radically affect the system.”¹ He, along with other prominent artists and thinkers, was not convinced that art schools in general should become part of a polytechnic or university system. Ironically, Margaret Thatcher’s government did fulfill Wollheim’s prediction, not in the way he anticipated, but through a series of cuts and rationalizations of the art school system that has continued uninterrupted ever since.

The Slade, and indeed all of those art schools that were already embedded in long-established universities, was in a situation in which it had more opportunity for interdisciplinary crossover than newer art schools. As things moved forward and new realities in terms of funding cuts became the norm, a curious reversal took place: the comprehensive, heavy, post-industrial equipment that had been installed in art schools became redundant or uneconomic to sustain. New ideas quickly began to question the need to produce heavily crafted work supported by skilled technicians recruited from industry—and a new generation of artist-fabricators was born.

The Slade began restructuring in relation to this. Art as a thinking process required a number of different approaches to all aspects of the school. Support was needed in specific but also flexible ways. The relationships between the university and the Slade were also redefined. History and theory of art were reestablished at the Slade in 1994, first with Michael Newman and subsequently with Norman Bryson. The MPhil/PhD was formally established in the early 1990s and this expansion into a new focus on history and theory corresponded with expansion and redefinition of the studio and technical facilities. Facilities that previously had fulfilled wish lists and aspirations were now unable to mirror technical developments in the commercial sector.

Increasingly, artists outsourced technically demanding fabrication. Production methods moved into areas that embraced technological innovations, processes, and facilities that were linked to current commercial practice rather than to the industrial past, from space technology to shop fitting and from furniture manufacture to high-end traditional artisanship. The artist had the idea, someone else managed the project, and a team of specialist

fabricators crafted it for its final destination—the museum, the private collection, or the growing area of public art. Students aspired to produce work in this way for a relatively short but intensely anxious period of time in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when high-cost production in made objects and large-scale color printed photo works simply were priced beyond most art students' means. When students stopped chasing the tail of this particular tiger, a new reality took shape that enabled the kind of thinking that British artists are good at, summed up in this paraphrasing of artist Richard Wentworth: "getting by and making do." This involved looking at ways to be innovative, thinking laterally, being inventive, and creating a personal or group dynamic that does not look toward the highly priced artefact (in terms of the unsustainable ratio of the costs of manufacture to the realistic commercial value of a work by an artist at an early stage in his or her career).

Students returned to searching out paradoxical situations that related to ideas rather than to financial resources, and were not restricted by what appeared to be the prescribed norm, particularly as it became either increasingly unobtainable or the overwhelming motivation for the work. This liberation from a particular aspect of a market-orientated orthodoxy made art schools interesting again and inevitably generated an expanded engagement with emerging curators, gallerists, and a new generation of young collectors. The newfound freedom from unfulfilled aspiration and often barely understood theory that had been adopted with almost religious zealotry created a more relaxed, more vibrant, and new generation of artists who experimented without constraint and most importantly without fear of failure or concerns about whether they were doing the right or the wrong things.

Ironically, this new freedom of action or liberation from previous real or imagined orthodoxies coincided with major constraints on how art schools operated and were resourced, assessed, and academicized in the late 1990s. These included the Bologna Agreement, inflation of qualifications, research assessment exercises, teaching quality assurance, the introduction of fees, a massive increase in the number of students in BA and MA programs, and a proliferation back to several hundred institutions instead of a core of forty degree-status schools, many offering doctoral study without any significant research structure in place. The art schools, with different rates of success, nevertheless began to promote themselves in terms of research-minded institutions dealing with contemporary issues in flexible and open ways.

Of course this met with a certain amount of resistance from within as it upset aspects of what some staff saw as the level of institutional engagement that they were prepared to countenance, particularly with respect to how their own practices as artists related to established academic procedures. But it did meet the growing desire among students to be part of the bigger academic picture and provided access to research in the wider university community. The studio became less a concept of personal, private space and more related to a semi-public laboratory. Many students thrived in this environment and a significant number have become very successful artists as a result.

Institutionally, however, the mechanism for measuring success became more generalized and less specific to the subject. Accountability was linked more forcefully to funding, there was an increasing academization of procedures and mechanisms, and the needs of an individual discipline had to be assessed within the overarching concept of the subject nationally and within the strategic plans of the parent university. Bureaucracy for those involved in teaching grew exponentially and increasing pressure threatened to shift the priority hierarchy of the engagement of the lecturer in art schools from artist/academic/manager to the reverse: manager/academic/artist. The subject matter in many institutions became in danger of being seen as secondary to the means of delivering the education. In my opinion this development has continued remorselessly and is now seriously undermining the ability of the art school to forefront the areas of activity that enable visual art to fully engage with knowledge production.

Art schools are under pressure to be part of harmonized schemes in terms of timetables, modularity, facilities, methodologies, and funding. The very aspects that enabled individual artists to flourish and individual colleges to generate exciting groups of distinctive students are being harmonized and homogenized into the corporate plans of universities and the political expedience of governments, rather than into the needs of and aspirations toward the development of the subject.

Ironically, despite this rather pessimistic view of the current state of British art schools, the work being produced by students and emerging artists is very strong and exciting, the area in which they operate is more varied and internationally focused than previously, and if opportunity does not exist, they create it. Art is, I believe, in a healthy and interesting period of development,

and the art schools need to ensure that they are central to this period of growth and must resist becoming tangential or marginalized.

On my way to the conference that is the topic of this book, at the Munich airport, upon boarding the plane I was given a copy of the *Wall Street Journal*, the only English-language newspaper available. Inevitably it had a number of articles on the opening of the 54th Venice Biennale and included profiles of Miuccia Prada and Bice Curiger, both of whom were teenagers in the 1960s. The journalistic sound bites were interesting. Prada said, to paraphrase, that for her the thinking behind art is always more important than the aesthetic.

The article profiling Bice Curiger quotes Larry Gagosian, saying that Curiger has a “calm, distilled, long view of what is important and that should be just about right for the current climate.” Iwan Wirth goes on to describe her as “determined” and “unafraid to do things her own way.” He states, “In our field which is perhaps too often enamored with hot new things, trends or the easy sell, Bice stands apart as very thoughtful, original and deep.”²

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Some of these statements could equally be applied to the successful art school today: “determined and unafraid to do things its own way,” a place where words such as “thoughtful, original and deep” can be applied to the academy and provide critical content that underpins research-minded attitudes, which enable and respond to speculative thought and action, and question the accepted methodologies of the studio, the workshop, and established critical theory.

Who can say what the ideal environment should be? Beginning with the major restructuring of the art school system in Britain in the 1960s, many developments have been tested and different systems adopted over the last fifty years. A single model is no longer acceptable or viable. However, the paradoxical academy can be defined through a need to be simultaneously acutely focused and entirely flexible. It must reassert the importance and complexity of the subject over the procedures and mechanisms for academic delivery within harmonized schemes. Art is a thinking process and visual forms of knowledge production are vitally important to society on multiple levels. The work produced and decisions made within the art schools have, should, and can make a profound and important contribution to this ongoing debate.

- 1 Richard Wollheim, "Should Art be a Respectable Occupation," *Sunday Times Magazine*, September 8, 1968, 22.
- 2 Goran Mijuk, "Art's Tranquil Voice," *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304520804576347493181141786.html>.

Regeneration

In an era in which even “fictivization” has become a pragmatic financial tool, it is our duty to start considering more seriously how art—as a thinking and creating process—might help us to reconstruct our own identities, as well as to reinforce those social values and humanistic notions so dear to those who have always believed in a non-oppressive society. This means a society that does not impose a single model, but that is able to provide us with principles and aims that are greatly respected on both a domestic and an international level. Sometimes art schools and educational artistic platforms are the right places where the possibility to put in motion a visual and social knowledge can occur on a practical basis that primarily proceeds from a lively experience of existence—an experience that permits one *to wonder* and to begin the activity of thinking, without being possessed of a resentment of reality itself that too often leads humans to fabricate a “fictitious” ideological world.

By linking practice to art education platforms, I have often dedicated my research to understanding the logics of power, history, and freedom, for I believe they are of fundamental importance for the present coevolution of artistic and cultural activities alongside education. These interlinked fields are part and parcel of basic human needs, insofar as they are crucial elements at every single step of creative and cognitive human development. As Hannah Arendt stated, art and culture are the factors that represent the foundational glue of the web of human relations,¹ which, particularly through memory, are able to endow dignity and honor to public life. These spheres are a *public social issue*, and that is also why—as a cultural practitioner, and not an academic one—my core interest is in building cultural production mechanisms linked to these spheres. This may be done by exploring the ideas and possibilities of a practice not based on “exhibitions or

event-making,” but rather a research-based approach carried out in the field of sociocultural and political studies, in which “doing, learning, and building” (to relate to Mary Jane Jacob’s contribution to this book) are perceived primarily as collaborative processes of knowledge creation and sharing. Linking and bringing together artists, intellectuals, and professional figures from different fields to address questions that might not be directly linked to the canonical frame of contemporary art has always been of crucial importance in the process of *making and imagining* contemporary visual forms of art and culture that are linked to specific contingencies and issues.

The specific condition of the current worldwide sociocultural crisis has been described in various quarters. The state of emergency declared through these concerns has become a sort of “permanent wakeup call” (its repetitiveness sometimes making it come across as too rhetorical, especially in the arts context), and the core demand for a “collective call to justice” runs the risk of being misperceived by the general public as a mere “call for recognition” or for “artistic legitimization” within a broader sociopolitical horizon that is undergoing a period of great duress. Calls for the legitimization of artistic educational platforms that are particular, potential, and marginal are under siege and are entrapped in the ongoing debate around survival, at least in Europe. But although we acknowledge the danger of this rhetoric, we may still say that a call for the reconfiguration and reformation of society must be considered a political statement: a call for regeneration. That said, expressing it is no longer enough, and it is probably not the best approach here to promote a violent assault on banks. Therefore, the question of how to sensitize ourselves and of how to act (and not to react) in order to bring about change is becoming crucially relevant, especially now that we have the chance to deploy and develop artistic formats from scratch.

Mara
Ambrožič

The metamorphosis of our society, as the French philosopher Edgar Morin suggests, has to come via the reformation and transformation of the politics of daily living, both locally and internationally.² It has to come through new hope for the public health service, considered one of the fundamental human rights. And it is right to believe in a workable counterpart to the financial crisis, to the hyper-bureaucratization of public and private structures, to the domination of the quantitative over the qualitative, to mindless competition between individuals, to the degeneration of the idea of solidarity, and to the increasing phenomenon of loneliness. The general lack of empathy, sympathy, and compassion, translated into a degenerative indifference toward each other, is after all the key *malaise* affecting our society.

As part of my everyday commitment to the sociocultural context of Venice, these are some of the issues that I have tried to address over recent years, in an approach that has shifted from theory to practice and vice versa, while at the same time trying to deploy a critical reflection on what knowledge production/creation is and who benefits from it.

Placing a concrete emphasis—rather than on the mere production and presentation of works—on relationships with the urban context, on the mediation of art and the circulation of ideas that it generates, was the driving force behind a four-year project that I set up with the Fondazione di Venezia along with the support of numerous institutions, including the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa and the Faculty of Arts and Design of the Iuav University. The model developed was a residence format for international artists, designed as a small-scale prototype, a “pilot project,” to allow the various parties to analyze, measure, and evaluate each and every experimental element in great detail as the program unfolded. Without aiming to achieve the impossible, throughout the project the attempt was made to understand better how *positive* change may be brought about, change that opens up space for profitable reflections, analyzing differences, and rethinking the imbalances that endanger the very concept of humanity in the constant quest for capital, status, visibility, and reputation.

Hence, thinking of a residence model as if it were a creative training model, in which various subjects come together to collaborate with the aim of organizing the “knowing and doing” elements, in which each of the parties involved may contribute to the development of a dialogue aimed at the description of the present, lay at the heart of the “Art Enclosures” project, which between

2008 and 2011 managed to link up a great variety of subjects with different interests: politics, the urban context, the arts, and the operators/organizers/promoters of the local community involved. Over those four years, strong relationships were built that also promoted the development of the *Fondazione di Venezia*, as well as of the city of Venice as a whole, but above all, of the artists from one of the richest and most exciting parts of the world: Africa. The program—one-of-a-kind in Italy, and indeed one among very few in Europe—developed around the contributions of eight promising artists from seven African countries, each with their own particularities: Tanzania (Evarist Fabian Chicawe), the Republic of South Africa (Jabulani Maseko and Tamlyn Young), Angola (Kiluanji Kia Henda), Zimbabwe (Mambakwedza Mutasa), Nigeria (Victoria Samuel Udondian), Kenya (Samuel Ghitui), and Zambia (Victor Mutelekesha). Along the way, a series of activities were defined on the basis of the preoccupations and poetic leanings of each individual artist (through workshops, meetings, public debates, etc.) while at the same time, the main core of the project—from the second edition onward—began to focus ever more on the local sphere and its own conflicts and potential.

This called for grassroots-level work on face-to-face interactions with a range of different people and associations (high schools; Iuav University; the School of Graphic Art; the Venice City Council and other public bodies; arts institutions of every kind; local artists; students and intellectuals; immigration centers; refugees; charity organizations; experts of various historical, scientific, and artistic disciplines; and various craftsmen) with regard to the topics and needs that arose from the material examined. The program, given its structure and articulation, set out to make a small-scale adaptation of those artistic platforms of experimental training, in which—through a trans-disciplinary approach—the attempt is made to set up a specific context of the “catalyzing figures” (artists, poets, musicians, and professors) capable of inventing and activating new visions of a reality of which countless details tend to slip unnoticed past the common gaze, influenced not only by the stereotypes broadly promoted in the mass media, but also by a widespread amnesia with regard to civil and human rights.

Slowly, over the course of the project, thanks to this opportunity to observe surroundings through the harsh gaze of the artists, we managed to address several of the pressing issues directly connected to the local Venetian context, such as immigration, the exploitation of non-European citizens, social exclusion, racism, business interests at all costs, the isolation and “invisibility” of

immigrants, the tourist flow, the human condition, history, and representation and how it is spoken about in Western cultures. The project continually tried to make a “good impact” on the local context, and to foster the spread of that “knowledge” that was being created through artistic intervention. It was also for this reason that the end-of-residence exhibitions (four in total, the first three held in the venues of the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, and the last at the Casa dei Tre Oci on Giudecca Island) were designed to guide the public’s attention toward key circumstances and topics: from the staggering mismatch between the quantity of raw materials in Africa and the GDP of the developed nations that have “access” to them; from the endless bureaucratic procedures needed in order to obtain a residence permit to the wandering from one public structure to another in search of assistance for immigrants; from the questioning of the last sixty years of history to the spread of information otherwise difficult to come across with regard to contemporary African culture; from the impact of “liberal shock therapy” on the younger generations to the advent of trans-medial and interactive languages; and so on. It was the artists themselves, with their approaches and their ideas, who opened the way toward a more committed curatorial approach, one which was then able to give full support to the proposals and ideas that they were calling for: the sense of internal renewal and challenges, with they themselves putting forward potential solutions through a creative process that could best be summed up in the exhibitions and the encounters open to the general public. During the residence period, the artists—and this goes for all of them—had the chance to produce a number of works (thirty-five projects completed in total, all then presented in the *Art Enclosures* publication³), to find themselves in an intellectual, methodological, and material context that offered support to their poetic development and to their experimentation with expressive means, which in their own national context would not have been available.

The selection of the artists took place on the basis of their curricula, a critical study of each of their portfolios, and their potential for interaction with the local Venetian context, which they each had to outline in the form of a brief project proposal, accompanied by an artist’s statement. For each edition, the selection panel (which underwent changes among its members) thus evaluated the documentation for each individual artist on a case-by-case basis with great care, and with an eye to picking up on the potential of each of the candidates selected to bring about micro-changes both as concerns their own artistic practices and with regard to the local context.

Undoubtedly, the value of the artistic projects that came to the light thanks to the type of support and the methodological approach developed over the course of the four years extended to various layers and levels of society, involving and strengthening bonds between people, and creating a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding of the cultural differences intrinsic to each individual. We might say that over the years, it was a form of training in multiculturalism that was put to the test, one that has little or nothing to do with its postmodern paradigm, which—in the contentious words of Hazel Carby: “excludes the concept of dominant and subordinate cultures—either indigenous or migrant—and fails to recognize that the existence of racism relates to the possession and exercise of politico-economic control and authority and also to forms of resistance to the power of dominant social groups.”⁴

Training, or rather retraining, in a form of sophisticated multiculturalism was one of the main aims set for the project during the creation process, and this may also be seen in the artistic operations carried out by the participants, who often worked alongside professionals from other disciplines—scholars, artists, and students from Iuav University, who were invited to take part and make an active contribution to the creation of projects, and who in turn were enriched by the new perspectives, visions, and ideas that came to the fore during this process.

Thus, regenerating may mean the acceptance of becoming sophisticatedly multicultural, of generational change, of triggering learning processes not aimed exclusively at self-defense, self-justification, and/or rejection, but also at welcoming and absorbing cultural diversity, deploying our own trans-disciplinary skills, seeking the appropriate means and tools with which to face a real challenge: a direct confrontation with histories and cultures—especially those overlooked by educational curricula revolving around the Western world—that are close to us and fundamentally important, yet that we still tend to perceive as far removed from our way of thinking. We have to start planning our regeneration little by little, on a daily basis, both on the micro and the planetary levels, because it cannot just take place on a theoretical level, or on the basis of a bureaucratic plan, but rather it may only be achieved through the practice of self-discipline before a world on the verge of dire poverty on a cultural, social, and a political level.

If we still want to believe that art is a knowledge creation process, we must first make sure that art and the art community have the “facilities,” the tools and the means to imagine, respond to, reform, and structurally refine the perspectives of those who will succeed us. Thus it is only right, today more than ever, to question educational models and the experimental formats to adopt, which must not and cannot be the same for all, but which must undoubtedly provide the three key premises on which any healthy cultural policy is based: the context for open critical discussion, the methodology, and the means. Without these, we know from experience that often it is the smallest and most original projects that get interrupted or blocked right from the outset—those that might otherwise have the strength and potential to impact sociocultural mechanisms, which make it possible to find and generate certain equilibria—to invent new solutions, thanks also to the injection of new energy (and thus also new people) capable of demonstrating that things may also run a different course, that they may enter a regenerating dimension, one accompanying the demands of members of the new generations who are trying to make their voices heard; to provide answers to the current situation, since they can see the mistakes made in the past and are willing to work to improve the future, but who all too often do not know who to turn to in order to see their dreams taken seriously. If there is a purpose to the artistic process that leads to the generation of new forms of visual knowledge, then it is as well to remember that the attitude “‘I know very well, but...’ [I don’t really believe it]” in psychoanalysis, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, is known as a fetishist split.⁵ Such a split is a clear indication of the material force of ideology that makes us refuse what we see and know; instead, this attitude must make way for a new experimental horizon, one not bound up in canonical historical, geopolitical, and socio-cultural divisions, but rather one projected toward a dimension in which the hope for change is not just a desire, but above all a right that it is worth standing up for.

We have now even reached the stage where in relevant artistic projects/exhibitions like *DOCUMENTA(13)* (and the *Public Smog Petition* to include the Earth’s atmosphere in the UNESCO World Heritage List: the quintessence of a curatorial statement, putting the issue before governments from all over the world) are questioning the role of contemporary art and culture as fields where the articulation of a clear defense of “earth and its citizens” should occur. There are generations of people who over the past ten years have come out of “experimental artistic platforms and trans-disciplinary art

programs” addressing simple, fundamental issues such as the right to exist, page after page, e-flux after e-flux, video after video, conference after symposium, time and time again. Maybe it’s *time* to listen to them before they get absorbed in the margins of what, to paraphrase Hito Steyerl’s contribution in this book, we might call a “cultural occupation” field, where their (*our*) voices will not be heard. Maybe at least it is time to start questioning the role and function of solidarity and self-discipline on a daily basis. Or, even to say, in Cornel West’s words:

The time has come for critics and artists of the new cultural politics of difference to cast their nets widely, flex their muscles broadly, and thereby refuse to limit their visions, analyses, and praxis to their particular terrains [...]. We have now reached a new stage in the perennial struggle for freedom and dignity. And while the First World *intelligentsia* adopts retrospective and conservative outlooks that defend the crisis-ridden present, we promote a prospective and prophetic vision with a sense of possibility and potential, especially for those who bear the social costs of the present. We look to the past for strength, not solace; we look at the present and see people perishing, not profits mounting; we look toward the future and look to make it different and better.⁶

And while working and willing to make it better, we shall all keep in mind that regeneration and emancipation, as we might have learned at school, can only come after proper education.

- 1 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 181–188.
- 2 See Edgar Morin and Stéphane Hessel, *Le chemin de l’espérance* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), 24–34.
- 3 See *Art Enclosures: Residencies for International Artists in Venice* (Venice: Marsilio Editore, 2012).
- 4 Hazel Carby, “Multi-culture,” *Screen*, no. 34 (Spring 1980): 64–65.
- 5 See Slavoj Žižek, “How to Read Lacan,” *Lacandotcom*, <http://www.lacan.com/zizraphael.htm>.
- 6 Cornel West, “The New Cultural Politics of Difference,” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 36.

Re ACT: Research- Based Artistic Practice at MIT's Program in Art, Culture, and Technology

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The Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) of the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT) was founded by György Kepes, who was the initial faculty of the New Bauhaus and the Illinois Institute of Technology (ITT), before coming to MIT in 1946. The CAVS is one of the descendents of the New Bauhaus and the Institute of Design in Chicago—two consecutive schools with László Moholy-Nagy as founding director that continued what had been started by the Bauhaus movement in Germany before World War II. György Kepes, a Hungarian artist, was a compatriot as well as a collaborator of Moholy-Nagy, who in his position as director appointed Kepes as Professor for Design for the New Bauhaus. Kepes continued to expand these ideas and pedagogy at MIT, and therefore CAVS and its successor, the ACT program, draw on more than forty years' history of research-based artistic practice and innovative pedagogy. But what does this legacy mean today, in a very changed geopolitical landscape?

Artistic research at MIT—or more specifically referring to the field taught by Kepes, titled Visual Design and Visual Studies—could be understood as what a colleague of mine, Arindam Dutta, refers to as the “techno-social” moment at MIT. This relates to the era after World War II when MIT faculty and students were reflecting on how technology supports societies in their environmental challenges and social interactions, beyond the idea of mere technological progress. It is interesting to note that when MIT started an energy initiative steered by the recent energy crisis, of course the arts were left out. Today, a program like ACT is not included in such a campus-wide

debate, and it is not considered that the arts might have anything to contribute in this respect. That forty years ago Kepes had already proposed using new technologies to protect nature and the environment is overlooked. So it is interesting that when we use the term “research” at ACT, we indeed research with the claim that the arts generate knowledge as well, but also investigate what is going on in other disciplines and schools at MIT.

Our self-imposed mandate favors free and experimental research as well as critical inquiry, focusing on what the artist Krzysztof Wodiczko defines as Interrogative Design. For him this is a form of artistic intervention, not only in what takes place in the world, but also intervening in what happens on the MIT campus. Kepes called for “art in civic scale,” an artistic practice that engages with everyday life and generates artistic proposals that react to the challenges of our times. Kepes along with Wodiczko, the recent director of CAVS, insisted that artists should take on a leading voice in negotiating civic society, not just leaving it up to other fields to address pressing issues on this globe.

ACT, founded in 2009 as a merger of the Visual Arts Program at MIT and the CAVS, is, with its academic program, one of the five-discipline groups of the Department of Architecture at MIT. With our research center that hosts fellows and affiliates, we report directly to the Dean of MIT’s School of Architecture and Planning. This means that ACT is a hybrid structure that operates semi-independently. After Kepes retired as professor and director of CAVS in 1974, one of his first fellows, Otto Piene, became the second director of the center, directing it for the next twenty years. Otto Piene is a founding member of the ZERO movement along with artist Heinz Mack, later joined by Günther Uecker. Formed in Germany after World War II,

ZERO developed out of a Düsseldorf studio where the artists would stage one-night exhibitions showcasing their peers and that evolved into an international avant-garde movement as the group spread across Europe to collaborate with other artists such as Lucio Fontana and Yves Klein.

Piene, like Kepes, also engaged in environmental issues when he became a professor at MIT, and continued to collaborate with engineers, physicists, and scientists to address relevant concerns of the time with a strong focus on artistic and interdisciplinary collaboration. Piene furthermore continued to work on the notion of light and energy, under the umbrella of what he declared “Sky Art.” The various “Sky Art” happenings, lead by Piene, often involved large-scale outdoor projects and multi-day collective events of experimentation and conversation, which fostered new developments in the arts, engineering, and science. Today Piene continues to be highly active as an artist and thinker. In 1968, he and his friend and later co-fellow at CAVS, Aldo Tambellini, an American-born artist with Italian roots, coproduced “Black Gate Cologne,” the first commissioned art program to be broadcast on a German television station, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) in Cologne. According to the artists, “Black Gate Cologne” was the first artist project ever aired on TV, and was pretty radical, combining footage from the funeral of Martin Luther King and the Robert Kennedy assassination with experimental film and slide projections by the artists, while the audience moved between kinetic sculpture and helium-filled transparent inflatables in WDR’s electronic studio. Audiences in their living rooms at home must have wondered a great deal about this early interactive TV experiment, which was certainly quite controversial.

Compared with the prominence of the work by the ZERO movement, very little of this cutting-edge collaborative work at the CAVS today is known by a younger generation. To meet Otto Piene in Cambridge, as he still attends MIT on a regular basis, made me revisit the work of ZERO and encouraged me to find out more about these artists, as the way I saw their works presented in museums felt almost a cliché. Over recent years, major contemporary institutions, including the MACBA in Spain (with the exhibition “Force Fields: Faces of the Kinetic”), major retrospectives of ZERO, and reenactments of early performance projects by Piene and members of the Gutai Group at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, are picking up the openness of a post-World War II period that generated new and exciting artistic approaches full of light and movement after the truly dark years caused

by the National Socialists and by World War II. To revitalize such work linked to this crucial moment in history, to review this period and reflect this within my own practice as an educator and curator, is critical to me. I had a similar experience in the 1990s when I revisited Joseph Beuys's activities and body of work. At certain times museums—often hand in hand with artist estates—focus on the “classical” part of an oeuvre and the presence of ephemeral aspects of a work or its political references are marginalized. This is one of the reasons why we as educators are asked to reinscribe these important aspects of artistic practice into the archive for future generations of artists and cultural producers. It is fine to question and reflect on museum practices and academics should take a voice and engage with what is collected and produced in art history and intervene if institutions and collections cut short the complexity of artists' bodies of work, or fail to represent the dimension of an artist's involvement in a movement or an art scene of their time.

At ACT our attempt is to include faculty-led research into the curriculum. For example, CAVS director Krzysztof Wodiczko, Professor Emeritus of Visual Arts at MIT, initiated and directed, for more than a decade, the “Interrogative Design Group (IDG)” at MIT CAVS, while teaching in MIT's Department of Architecture. His Interrogative Design Workshop, a course accessible to both graduate and undergraduate students from all MIT disciplines, dealt with conflict and trauma, addressing these sensitive topics through alternative notions of design. He applies design as a device of communication and transformation connecting his political practice as an artist with his pedagogy in the classroom. This kind of fluidity between artistic practice “out there” in the world should be in sync with what is taught within the academy and university and recognized as a valuable and critical contribution to knowledge production by our universities.

At ACT, where about half of our approximately 300 masters students graduate in art, architecture, or urbanism, we aim to do this through our curriculum. For example, one course we offer addresses the “Production of Space,” taking the reflections and writings of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre from 1974 as a point of departure, while engaging in a continuously changing geopolitical constellation. In the last decade, after September 11, 2001, we have experienced what happened to the freedom of speech and the right to gather and demonstrate in public spaces. I am glad that during the fifty-fourth edition of the Venice Biennale in 2011 the Greek curator Katerina Gregos addressed this topic through her exhibition “Speech Matters” at the

Danish Pavilion, where she presented works by artists from many countries in reaction to the threat to freedom of speech that occurs around the globe. But to return to ACT: through the arts we bring another perception and perspective on what is taught at a university like MIT. Teaching at the intersection of Art, Culture, and Technology, we implement our “findings,” our material from working “out there” into the university, allowing us to pay deeper attention to topics, using “academic time” to investigate and reflect what is happening in the world.

Under a proposed umbrella for off-campus work—kind of a mobile ACT lab—we can group projects thematically under course topics we offer, such as “Zones of Emergency.” Such intertwining of theory and practice I had tested through the biennale “InSite05,” in which I was involved when I began my tenure at MIT in 2005, with the “Mobile_Transborder Archive,” which I developed along with one of my PhD students from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, who is Elke Zobl. Located at the border between Tijuana and San Diego, it was an archive in the making researched over the course of two years and commissioned for this transnational biennial by its artistic director Osvaldo Sánchez. These are the kinds of projects that we bring to the classroom, to engage and to reflect upon but also to theorize the experience and information we collect from a specific site, a particular locality, which is a process that is not different from the working methods of other disciplines.

Nitin Sawhney, an alumnus of the MIT Media Lab and ACT post-doctoral research fellow and lecturer, founded the NGO “Voices Beyond Walls,” which engages with disenfranchised youth in the occupied territories in Palestine, including Gaza and the West Bank, in order to collaborate with Palestinian youth in telling stories through short films. His initiative allows young people living there who might not otherwise have access to media equipment to receive training in recording, editing, and storytelling through audio-visual material. This supports them in developing their own voices, in order to disseminate their views and to express what is on their minds. The results are short films on topics they choose, which are actually not so different from what is in the minds of young people around the globe: family and friends, their daily lives, etc. Nitin Sawhney also suggested that these Palestinian children create their own maps of where they live in order to generate a different spatial representation produced by the youth on site. To understand this challenging topography through their “eyes” is very dif-

ferent from how we might depict Palestine as covered by the news media or through the Oslo Accords (signed in 1993), mapping the territory through official statistics provided by the United Nations, for example. Nitin's attempt is to provide space for an experience from the bottom up, rather than from a top-down distribution of information. Nitin installed "Re-imagining Gaza" as an exhibition throughout the Rotch Visual Library, the highly visited Architecture and Visual Arts Library at MIT. Our librarians were so invested in this initiative that they hosted this exhibition over the course of four months. To pass this installation each time one entered the library was more thought provoking for the faculty and students at our school than if the project had been displayed in a gallery space.

ACT fellow and alumna of our program, Jae Rhim Lee, initiated research investigating environmental and health issues caused by trailers that were commissioned by the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The FEMA Trailer Project addressed the formaldehyde-polluted trailers provided under time constraints by FEMA for the people of New Orleans who lost their homes in 2005 due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Starting this as a project of the Visual Arts Program at MIT, we wanted to get one of the 145,000 FEMA trailers on-site at MIT, to research the various problems of the trailers on the MIT campus, and to include students from various disciplines in a newly established course tentitled "Artistic Practice and Transdisciplinary Research." Some of the resistance we faced at the beginning was that this topic was beyond a conventional notion of art, that this was engagement in environmental justice and directly addressed FEMA as a government agency. That such a research-related course is indeed about field-activism led by an artist at first created some doubts about method and accuracy in its investigation. It was surprising to Lee and myself that at a place like MIT we would be confronted with such a narrow definition of art. We thought that expanding the competence of arts at MIT was a done deal, especially given the history of CAVS and its engagement in questions addressing the environment, as pointed out earlier. Lee's interest was in joining forces with chemistry, law, and other programs at MIT. We were also in touch with the "Culture Agents" initiative, directed by Professor Doris Sommer, a cultural activist and professor of Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University, and together we had the naïve belief we could change policies, create strong support within our universities, and open up new areas of transdisciplinary studies under the umbrella of cultural engagement. Through her multi-year engagement in the FEMA Trailer

Project, Lee continued an in-depth exploration of the effects and impact of formaldehyde on the environment as well as on humans. Over the past few years she has established the Infinite Burial Project, and as part of that new research she discovered that the funeral industry is also affected by formaldehyde, as exposure to formaldehyde increases the risk of cancer for the embalmers, who preserve dead bodies in order to help them look “good,” even when deceased. The corpses when buried or cremated release toxins including formaldehyde, eventually contaminating ground water and air. When she initially started to interact with the funeral industry, visiting its fairs and hosting a workshop at MIT along with the Massachusetts Green Burial Council she faced, yet again, resistance—this time from the funeral business—because of the sensitive nature of the topic for this large industry. If you ask yourself why an artist is engaging with such a topic, one has to come back to French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who pointed out that the arts have symbolic capital, and have access to media visibility that workers and policy-makers often do not have. To expose such hidden matters to the public eye and to join forces with those affected, to claim agency, is an interesting challenge for artists. Working for over seven years on the effects of formaldehyde, addressing various problematics caused by environmental toxins, Lee was led to investigate US policy in this field as well. She has become a valuable voice on this matter, was nominated a 2011 Global TED Fellow, has been featured on CNN, and is supported by a multi-year Creative Capital Grant.

To look into our own archive, to reflect the history of our program, and also to take on the responsibility of what was started by previous generations at the CAVS and in the Visual Arts Program are all critical to our current agenda and mission at the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology. With ACT, we do not start from scratch, but rather we build upon what has been done during the last four decades and reviews of works and projects from this period have become part of the current ACT curriculum. Our goal is to deepen our knowledge of what we do through projects outside, and to integrate those projects into a number of overarching research clusters, enabling research over several years with the input of a diverse group of people. “Zones of Emergency” is such a complex field of study that it requires a wider and longer theoretical reflection than a one-term course. When we talk about theory and practice of contemporary art we try to combine it with potential applications, some of them in a very down-to-earth way, connecting theory with practice and vice versa. One cannot develop

a sustainable practice without theoretical reflection, nor can one reinforce theory without “real-life” experience; sustainable practice requires feedback embedded in practice itself.

Most of the time university labs operate in specialized areas, and academic communication is called “expert speak.” This leads a general public to think, “We have to leave this area to the experts,” and they do not engage anymore, as there is no entitlement. This creates a problematic and dangerous detachment of society from what is researched, although it is usually society that is most affected by the results. Artistic inquiry can serve as a kind of “interrogation,” a critical reflection of what knowledge production is and how knowledge is distributed. ACT, as a hybrid program operating in a triangle between art, culture, and technology, has to use its potential of being situated in a research university of such scope, a very different context than that of an art academy. But what is the potential of ACT collaborating with other disciplines and other MIT centers, or of being situated in proximity to very different fields of study and investigation? For “Zones of Emergency,” ACT currently collaborates with the Center for International Studies (CIS) at MIT in a shared “think-tank” format along with some outside partners, discussing the instrumentalization of otherness and reflecting on dynamic diasporas. A few years ago, the CIS developed a Web site addressing the “Human Cost of the War in Iraq” to counter the usual media reports and military records, the one-sided data collection of casualties in Iraq, which focus on collecting the number of casualties of US soldiers while overlooking the casualties and dangers the war brings upon Iraq’s civilian population and neglecting to discuss the devastating situation the war creates for civil society in Iraq. With this site the CIS made visible the civic side of the war in Iraq by providing a platform for a more complex understanding of the conditions and impact this long-lasting conflict imposes upon the region and its civil population. When I invited CIS director John Tirman, who initiated the “Human Cost of the War in Iraq,” to give a public lecture at our program series, he was grateful for the visibility of this site to a different audience than policy-makers or scholars in international studies.

This is one example of what ACT has been trying to work at: joining forces across disciplines to address the complex challenges we face today and developing an awareness of what technology determines as our future.

Microutopias and Pedagogies for the Twenty-First Century

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In January 2011, I was asked to speak at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. This invitation was a bit unnerving, since art school deans are not usually invited to this very high-powered, often-protested forum of corporate leaders, heads of state, and deans of business and economics schools. It came as a result of sessions I had worked to organize with others for the World Leadership Fellows at Columbia University in 2010 and then again in 2011. Sixty young, talented individuals from all over the world, who were being groomed for leadership by the Forum, came to Columbia University to engage in theater and voice training for a week. We called the workshops “Taking the Stage.” The participants also attended lectures by artists, curators, and art historians, and engaged in conversations about art, art-making, and the place of art in transforming society. These week-long sessions represented the first time the Forum took art seriously enough to consider it *core* to the education of their fellows and did not marginalize it with other such practices as “soft skills”—a term used in professional business contexts to describe all experience and information related to “emotions.”

At Davos, I was in public conversations about leadership and creativity with the deans of the London School of Economics, Harvard Business School, INSEAD, and the Skolkovo Management School in Moscow, all led by the CEO of Ernst & Young. I learned that these business leaders wanted to discuss the homogenization of difference in their own institutions or, as one dean bravely put it: “All the students we accept are interesting when we admit them, but by the time they leave us they appear all the same and they want the same job.” These institutions know that something is missing in how they think about educating their students. Perhaps the practices of art schools might have something to teach them.

How do art-making environments secure the sustained originality of their students? How do they think about process and the creation of new bodies of knowledge? To attempt to address these questions and their implications for society, I begin with some of the originary and unspoken premises that are at the foundation of schools of art. These presuppositions might not match those of other institutions, or those of my colleagues, but they represent how I personally think about Columbia University's School of the Arts. They also offer a useful place to begin.

Nine Assumptions About Educating Artists

1. The admissions process is designed to locate the most unique, committed, and talented students. Then we accept their uniqueness. In fact, we demand it, and we foster their desire to develop this uniqueness as essential to producing interesting work.
2. Because art making can function as a particular form of problem solving that attempts to resolve, or comment on, the relationship between the individual and society, we encourage our students to cultivate their subjectivity in relation to the collective, the art-historical context, and history.
3. We respect the insights of youth. We understand that the most startling ideas might emerge from the youngest artists. In this assumption we are like the sciences.
4. Unlike the sciences, however, we do not ask that this newly generated knowledge be "proven." We accept the work that artists produce as art and move on from there to discuss the work's coherence and effectiveness. While the ability to replicate results is an essential element of scientific

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verifiability, we know that the best art cannot be replicated.

5. We encourage risk taking and promote the value of shaking up what might be considered “safe.”
6. We respect innovation—which could be understood as applied creativity—and the expansive exploration of form.
7. We encourage the mixing, blending, reconfiguring, and intertwining of forms. We believe that such hybridity creates new knowledge.
8. We know that such experimental practices sometimes lead to failure. We understand that anxiety often results from failure, but we know that a refusal to conform to established rules is one of the keys to innovation. Samuel Beckett wrote: “Try again. Fail again. Fail Better.” Indeed, we encourage risk taking that could lead to failure and are often more interested in an ambitious failure than in more modest success.
9. We encourage ambiguity and understand that there is no one clear interpretation of most artwork. If the work is rich, there will be a multiplicity of meanings embedded in the juxtapositions that determine its effect. This commitment to an open-endedness of interpretations is vital to creative thought.

Out of these assumptions evolves a process of working that approaches the acquisition of knowledge in unexpected ways. It assumes that the entry point for knowledge is not the mind alone, but also the senses. Those with the most cultivated philosophical minds are not necessarily the most able to access the work, create the best metaphors, or perform the most engaging actions. It is often those who use their minds in conjunction with their senses and intuitions who achieve the greatest success.

In these pedagogical environments, we do not necessarily talk about creativity, in part because, like air, it is behind, underneath, and in front of everything we do. Yet we revere it.

Creativity and Process

What constitutes creativity? Why is it so highly prized, romanticized, and even feared? Creativity relies on the cultivation of the individual’s imagina-

tive resources, even when groups, collectives, or collaborators are involved. It also depends completely on the courage of each person to live in the hard-to-articulate space of *flow*, or *the zone*, where multiple consciousnesses—often hidden and unknown to the conscious mind—are manifested and given shape. What emerges often surprises even the artist, or artists, that imagined the work into being.

How can that be? How can artists at times be so uncertain about the work's direction and writers so unclear about where the story will go and yet also able to complete the work? Such practitioners allow themselves to be led by parts of themselves that might be unknown to their conscious minds. D. H. Lawrence wrote, "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale."¹ Artists simply don't always know what a work is about, nor do they always want to make its meaning easily visible to their audiences. The process of creating the work is therefore fundamentally irrational. Theosophists might say such work emanates from the subtle body; Buddhists might call it the primordial in contradistinction to the acquired; Freudians might refer to it as the unconscious; Jungians might name it the collective unconscious or the active imagination; and formalists might insist the meaning or the utility of the work emerges from the form itself—the colors, shapes, textures, and juxtaposition of materials that combine to create images that generate meaning.

It is often only in the editing process that the "sense" of the piece, its inherent order, makes itself known to the artist and then recognizable to the viewer/receiver of the work. But sometimes the meaning of the work eludes the artist completely.

This interrogative process can generate anxiety for the artist until the nature of the investigation has been revealed. Living with such uncertainty of resolution is part of the experimental nature of the process—the "unknowingness" inherent in the work that artists do. Art schools are the places that recognize the value of a process whose inherent nature is constant flux. This process is essential, yet it often remains hidden in the "finished" work. This aspect of artists' work could be understood as research—not just the preparation for the actual making of the work but, rather, the entire endeavor, which allows for the open-endedness needed to complete the work and the constant evolution of knowledge that results. It creates space for the use of intuition.

Although art making, like scientific inquiry, is based on discovery, unlike science, artists' research and the findings that result are often understood as "subjective." Therefore they are usually not as valued or supported. What is valued—literally, given value—is the art object that is usually tangible and can function within systems of exchange.

While process—the giving oneself over to the possibility of developing new knowledge—has typically been less well understood than the completed work, process has recently become more visible as contemporary artists increasingly insist on involving their audiences more directly in the making of the work. This type of art making is related to the notion of public space and how to create it. Can artists work with communities outside those they normally address? What is needed to achieve success when working beyond the traditional ecosystems of the art world?

Through writers like Jacques Rancière, Nicolas Bourriaud, and others, artists increasingly understand that, ultimately, the artwork is completed by the spectator. Many artists now talk about incorporating such an anticipated audience response directly into the work. The concept of process has therefore moved to the foreground, gaining a more visible profile as artists increasingly consider the potential impact of their work on multiple audiences. Such considerations are made more complex by a public sphere that changes daily.

The media floods us with images and an overabundance of information, and effects an unprecedented conflation of public and private, as well as a confusion of past, present, and future. Artists, many of whom are very attuned to the wiliness of the media—its use of visual representations and how it achieves its results—are often less susceptible to the seductions of the spectacle that overwhelms twenty-first-century society. As a result, they often know how to interpret and critique what is happening in the public arena and how to use it to achieve desired effects.

In response to the current complex state of the public sphere, artists are attempting to create public space where people can interact in very intimate ways. These efforts have taken the form of community gardens, green roofs, bicycle repair shops, and innumerable other neighborhood-based initiatives, as well as interactive public sculptures, mass actions, and their equivalents in the virtual world.

Microutopias

Institutional structures that are concerned with educating the next generation of artists, thinkers, and researchers need to recognize the idealistic nature of these types of contemporary practice. Such projects function as micro-utopian environments that might only last for a short time, but that are nonetheless essential to the development of consciousness and to how we envision our future societies. They have the ability to make individual and collective desires visible and understood. And they use enormous imaginative capacity to bring people together.

Art and the practice of art making can create an “interpretation of that which is—in terms of that-which-is-not,” as Jean-Jacques Rousseau might say.² They bring into society that which they fear does not exist. As Ernst Bloch said to Theodor W. Adorno, “The essential function of Utopia is a critique of what is present.”³ No matter what the content, the fact that such ideas could be imagined and given coordinates—a latitude and longitude externalized by the imagination—means that the particularity of individual *seeing* has been brought into the public sphere. Believing that a unique interpretation of the world *can* occur through externalizing an interior vision is a utopian prospect. This desire to give form to what Ernst Bloch might call “the not-yet-conscious” reveals a key imperative of utopian thought, to always “anticipate” and “illuminate”⁴ what might become possible within a societal situation.

Utopia always implies a change in the communal way of organizing and understanding the world. It is never just a re-presentation of a personal desire. Art allows for an individual vision to become communal by giving it narrative, shape, color, texture, complexity, sound, movement, or whatever other elements are needed to translate its intention to others. Such a belief assumes the utility of art making to demonstrate that the material world begins in ideas, in the incorporeal.

This notion of dreaming the world into being is an ontogenic, archaic, wish-fulfilling practice, and it is also a revolutionary one. The desire to present an individual transformation of the material world that also posits a collective vision of reality, while standing in juxtaposition to the dominant collective will, is an undisputedly naïve, utopian practice, but it is also one that must be promoted and supported more strongly if the species is to survive.

As others today look to environments predicated on such consciousness, there is recognition that those traditional models that isolate forms, reify categories, and focus solely on product while ignoring process inhibit the natural evolution of thought and do not allow the world to be constantly reimagined. This is why art-making environments that insist on a cross-disciplinary approach and hybridity to solve problems are unique and especially significant for this moment in history.

Whether corporate environments can ever truly embrace a pedagogical model that is so fundamentally non-utilitarian and essentially critical of the existing structures is yet to be determined. Perhaps this is why creativity is often feared. At its best, it shakes up the existent social order and implies the possibility of another. Still, as the shortcomings of global capitalism continue to engender great uncertainty, it is not surprising that those most attuned to its failures, and committed to educating the leaders who will inherit them, would seek out different forms of interrogation and models of practice that might foster profoundly creative problem-solving. It would seem there is no other choice.

- 1 D. H. Lawrence, "Studies," in *Classic American Literature* (London: Penguin, 1923), 8.
- 2 Alain Martineau, *Herbert Marcuse's Utopia* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), 35.
- 3 Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 12.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 17–29.

Economic Dogmatism and Poetical Thought in the Coming European Insurrection

Some days ago in a French or Italian newspaper I saw a photo that frightened me: in Athens a group of citizens were burning a flag—the blue starred flag of the European Union.

What has happened in Athens will soon happen also in Lisbon, and in Madrid and Rome, and then in Paris and Berlin, because the principle of solidarity has been abandoned and destroyed in favor of the dogma of competition and debt. I am not especially a fan of flags, but when I saw the picture I understood that a tragedy is underway. Europe has been a symbol of peace and of solidarity, and now people are so angry and despairing that they are burning that flag of hope.

In the crucial year 1933, Julien Benda wrote the following words, in his book *Discours à la nation européenne*: “You will make Europe thanks to what you will say, not thanks to what you are. Europe will be a product of your spirit, of your will, not a product of your being, because there is not such a thing like being European.”

I want to start from these words of Julien Benda because I want to talk about Europe-*ness*: what Europe is, what Europe may be, what Europe cannot be. I start from Julien Benda and from this well known speech on the European nation, but I want to change a word in his sentence. He says that “Europe will be a product of your spirit” while I will replace the word “spirit” with the word *imagination*. I use the word imagination in a very strong and in a very political sense.

What has Europe been during the past century? First of all Europe has been a political project of peace at the continental level. The war between France

and Germany marked the history of European modernity from the beginning of the nineteenth century until World War II. It was not only a war between two nation-states, but also a cultural war: Romanticism versus Enlightenment. Cultural identity versus universal reason.

Overcoming this opposition, which is at the very core of modernity, was the political assignment and the historical mission of the European Union. But this prospect has been somehow forgotten or at least marginalized by the economic definition of the European Union, in which the leading class of European nations, oblivious to the tragic background, opted for the fast track of financial and monetary unification. The Maastricht Treaty was the sanction of a monetarist reduction of Europe. Forgetting Julien Benda's warning, obscured by neoliberal dogmas, the European ruling class that met in Maastricht decided to establish the European process on identity, rather than on will and imagination. The European identity in those years was prosperity, so the members established the unification process with the dogmas of infinite growth, financial balance, consumerism, and the absolute power of the European Central Bank.

But the prosperity-based identity was not destined to last forever, so the financial absolutism in the long run displayed its violent side. At the beginning, the European project was essentially a project of "will, spirit and imagination." Then, in the 1980s and 1990s it became a project of affirmation of the economic identity of financial capitalism.

What happens now? What is Europe today? Europe is becoming a fiercely mathematical entity. Mathematics is ferociously inscribed in the living organism of society, and this ferocious mathematization of the living body

of society is preparing a violent reaction and nurturing barbarianism. This is why people are burning the European flag, this is why more and more people are turning toward racist sentiments, and this is why a wave of depression, despair, and suicide is sweeping the continent.

In the speeches of Angela Merkel or Mario Monti and other European politicians, belonging to the European Union nowadays means submitting to the ethos of debt, and sacrificing life, culture, and well-being to the mathematical necessity of the bank system. This is a dogmatic project of reassumption and reinforcement of neoliberal ideology, of neoliberal regulation that leads to the impoverishment of European societies through the cutting of salaries and the postponing of retirement, and that finally leads to a sad project of destruction, of devastation, and of dismantling the general intellect.

The core project of Europe nowadays is destroying collective intelligence, or if you want to say it in a more prosaic way, destroying the school, destroying the university, subjugating research to the narrow interest of profit, to the narrow interests of profits and economic competition.

All of us know very well the situation of the last generation, of our students: we are teaching things that are good or bad, but that are ultimately useless from the point of view of their future, because they do not have a future. “Not having a future” is already a kind of refrain, but I think we should start from this consideration, from this obvious knowledge—the nonexistent future—as a condition of thought. If we start from the dismantling of the very possibility of a future, we are obliged to go beyond the dogmatism of the reassertion of neoliberalism.

Let us look at the landscape of philosophical and political thought in Europe today, the so-called European high culture. The landscape is rather gloomy. I remember the philosophical discussion in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the critical thought that made possible the creation of the European entity in the sphere of dialectical thought. I also remember French thought in the 1970s and 1980s, in the age of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard.

Their thought was an attempt to imagine a possible future, but it was also much more: it was a cartography of the coming future of the neoliberal self-proclaimed deregulation.

Think of the lecture that Michel Foucault delivered in the year 1979 and that is now published under the title *The Birth of Biopolitics*. This book is a most enlightening foreshadowing of the coming transformation of the world: deregulation, welfare dismantling, and submission of life to the wild rules of competition and financial accumulation.

Also, Deleuze and Guattari's celebrated books *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, along with Jean Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*—the most important books of the 1970s and 1980s—may be read as the negative imagination of the coming neoliberal revolution. The works of the French philosophers of the 1970s and 1980s have been a cartography of the coming dystopia: a way of thinking about the coming future as a dark age of violence and impoverishment.

In the landscape of German philosophy in the 1970s and 1980s, the debate between Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann was an important moment of anticipation of what Europe was going to become. On one side, Habermas predicted good democratic effects of communication and drew upon the benevolent idea of the dialogic society, while on the other side Luhmann described a future without alternative, and the replacement of democracy with administration management: the future of governance.

Governance—this word that has totally invaded the field of political language—was first proposed and deconstructed by Luhmann in the 1970s and 1980s. What is the meaning of this word, beyond the political manipulation that the ruling class has been doing in the last decades?

As far as I can understand, “governance” is a word that is much used and never defined today, because it is a symptom of the total poverty of the political practice of our time. If we start from the Luhmann perspective, we can understand that governance is the automation of thought, the automation of social existence. Governance is information without meaning, dominance of the unavoidable. In the governance praxis, the economic dogma is transformed into techno-linguistic automatism.

In this sense Luhmann was speaking about the coming “no future,” which is here right now. Starting from this no-future foreshadowed by the visionary imagination of poets and musicians and thinkers of the punk culture, we can today understand what is happening in the present European nightmare.

Now cynicism has invaded the sphere of thought, not less than the sphere of politics. Look at the sadness of the French cynical thought. The cynical non-thinkers who inhabit the Parisian scene of today—those who came to the fore in the late 1970s with the empty label “nouveaux philosophes,” have paved the way to the abyss of dogmatism, violence, racism, impoverishment, and financial dictatorship.

A light of possible intelligence and openness seems to come not from philosophy but from art. I am actually not sure of what I am talking about when I say the word “art,” and you aren’t either: no, nobody knows exactly. Yet it seems that in a recent poll, around 24 percent of German young people interviewed by journalists answered the question “What do you want to do when you are an adult?” with the answer “I want to be an artist.”

What do they think that being an artist means, exactly? Do they think about the rich possibilities of the art market? Well, maybe, but I don’t think so.

I think that they say I want to be an artist because they feel that being an artist means “to escape the future of sadness, to escape the future of precariousness as sadness.”

Art is probably not the good word in this context, and is not the most appropriate word to say what I really am trying to say. I would propose a small rebranding and would propose the word *poetry*. In the very etymology of the word “poetry,” there is the idea of creating a new bridge: of creating, of producing, and of making something that does not actually exist in the present. This is the meaning of the word. Furthermore, the word poetry has something to do with what we really need now: a de-automation of language. That’s the main solution that art, poetry, can offer: de-automation of language.

In the history of the twentieth century I see a strong relation between poetry and finance, and I see a possible action of poetry as liberation of language from the effects that finance has produced and embedded in the social communication. In the past century poetry and finance have paradoxically shared a common destiny of de-referentialization, a loss of referential meaning, a separation of signs from their referential task. Poetry and finance have shared the common destiny of the aleatory.

Separated from its signifying function (from its meaning), language has been subjected to automation. Digital technology and financial economy are essentially acting as factors of language automation.

Since the symbolist age, and during the whole twentieth century, poetry has attempted to cut the relation between the sign (the word) and the referent (reality). Financial organization of the economy has produced a similar effect: cutting the relationship between money and so-called real economy, cutting the relationship that makes things valuable in terms of time of labor, and the economy has produced an effect of de-realization and abstraction of the financial sign from the materiality of money and of time. So, the financialization of capitalism has canceled and forgotten the referent—the product as referent—along with money itself.

In the place of the referent there is only the monetarist dogma, based on violence: how can we regulate a system where no relation between time and value is still possible? How can we regulate a linguistic system where there is no more relation between sign and meaning, signifier and signified? What is the force that makes possible regulation and measurement, when measure is based on no objective standard, and the relation between different persons and things is aleatory and uncertain?

The only way to regulate a relation in conditions of uncertainty is through violence. This is the effect of de-referentialization, of aleatorization, and precarization of the economy and of language. Violence is intrinsically inscribed in the system of techno-linguistic automatisms embedded in language, and is the only marker that defines the meanings of the signs that are circulating in the infosphere.

In the preface to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein writes: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” As world resides inside the limits of our language, therefore beyond the limits of language lies what we will be able to live and experience only when our language can elaborate that sphere of being that lies beyond the present limit. Automated language is language trapped inside the digital and financial limits of language.

But Wittgenstein also writes: “In order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to

be able to think what cannot be thought).”⁴

How is it possible to think what cannot be thought, how is it possible to see what cannot be seen? How is it possible to go beyond the limits that define my world by defining my language?

Guattari calls the process of going beyond the limits of the world “chaosmosis,” and he calls this going-beyond “re-semiotization,” i.e., the redefinition of the semiotic limit, which is also the limit of the experienceability of the world. Scientists call this effect of autopoietic morphogenesis “emergence”: a new form comes out and takes shape when logical linguistic conditions make it possible to see it, and to name it.

Digital financial capitalism has created a closed reality that the technicalities of politics cannot overcome and destroy. Only an act of language escaping the technical automatisms of financial capitalism will make possible the emergence of a new life form. In the cross-point of finite and infinite, in the point of negotiation between complexity and chaos, poetry can disentangle a degree of complexity higher than the degree of complexity of financial capitalism. Language is an infinite potency, although the exercise of language happens in finite conditions of history and existence. The definition of a limit brings into being a world of language. Grammar, logic, and ethics are based on the institution of a limit. But beyond the limit there is an infinite space of possibility. Poetry is *the reopening of the indefinite, the ironic act of exceeding the established meaning of words. Language has been reduced to information* that can be measured by economic standards, and the technolinguistic automatisms have been incorporated in the social circulation of language. But language is boundless: its potentiality is not limited to the limits of present signification processes. Poetry is the excess of language, the disentanglement of the signifier from the limits of the signified, the exploration of landscapes of imagination and emerging meaning.

We call poetry the semiotic concatenation that is exceeding the sphere of exchange and of codified correspondence of signifier and signified, the semiotic concatenation creating new pathways of signification, and opening the way to a reactivation of the relation between sensibility and time.

1 Julien Benda, *Discours à la nation européenne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 67; my translation.

- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Michel Foucault, *La naissance de la biopolitique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).
- 4 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 2001), 23.
- 5 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1992).

Digging

“Leonardo drew things to explain them to himself...
I once told Barney [Newman] a story which he wanted to adopt as the motto for the abstract-expressionists:
A little girl is drawing and her mother asks her “what are you drawing?”
And she says, “I’m drawing God.”
And the mother says, “How can you draw God when you don’t know what he is?”
And she says, “That’s why I draw him.”
—Hedda Sterne, *The Last Irascible*¹

When considering possible “new roles” to be played by “the artist as researcher,” I’m reminded of a line by Clement Greenberg: “[Jackson] Pollock’s paintings live or die in the same context as Rembrandt’s or Titian’s... or Manet’s or Rubens’s or Michelangelo’s paintings. There’s no interruption, there’s no mutation here. Pollock asked to be tested by the same eye that could see how good Raphael was when he was good.”²

Are works of “artistic research”³ to be tested by a *different* eye? The new field of “artistic research” hinges paradoxically on the question of *function*. On the one hand, many find the emphasis on research to be a possible defense of art practice and of the critical discourse around it against the widespread instrumentalization of culture. When both the terms of the marketplace (production of spectacle, collectibles, the justifications of economics) and the public sphere (justified through supposed contributions to the “greater good”) threaten to overwhelm the cultural realm, the idea of “pure research” holds the appeal of a possible oasis. This earnest and good-faith motivation is what largely animates the present discussion.

On the other hand, given the public policy emphasis on “creative industries” in the “knowledge economy” and the recognition that art represents a high-value-add sector, the shift in the academy from departments of art to departments of “artistic research” could in fact represent an integration of the demand for “direct applicability”—or, in other words, for a more radical instrumentalization of art than for city-branding and high-society trophy-making.

At this point we have had much discussion but little demonstration, and many good symposia but few good exhibitions, thus risking that the whole thing, the connection between art and research, could become another department of academia. More and more, discussions around “artistic research” have the humorless and ahistorical tone of the social sciences, with an implied and superficial benevolence.

But, as Claes Oldenburgh said: “Anyone who listens to an artist talk should have their eyes checked.”⁴ Or Andy Warhol: “What it means? Oh, I think you should ask Mr. Castelli. He’s in a much better position to say what it means—he has to sell it.”⁵

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Put in an other way, the temptation to establish a legitimating discourse can only lead to failure, first because the main evaluative criteria for artworks is still wordless apprehension, and second because the discourse of meaning around the visual arts is always prone to becoming nothing more than an elaborated sales pitch.

“Academicism” in the early period of modern art came to mean an inward and self-justifying irrelevance, and was rejected by Gustave Courbet and

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others in favor of an outward engagement in public life and conditions. This is the earlier and perhaps root paradox of *function*: the space within which to work for an engagement with the world was earned through a rejection of applied art. One need only think of Joseph Beuys barking like a dog at the microphone during an academic ceremony to feel the virulent rejection of the role of the functionary. And Beuys and his peers articulated synthesized and thorough understandings of philosophy, history, politics as artists and through artworks—i.e., the exact space “artistic research” aspires to inhabit.

The emphasis on subject matter, experimental methods, and a dialogue between one’s own art making and the questions of art in general all are part of modern art. “Artistic research” then could be established as a process of formalization and concretization of what already exists, but which is under-defined: the visual arts as a highly intellectual field with its own questions and claims.

“Artistic research” must be judged by the same terms as art in general. If we disconnect from the traditions and capacities established in the last hundred years, we will not only throw out the baby with the bathwater, but (at the risk of mixing metaphors) we will also cut off the legs upon which we stand. The risk is not just the instrumentalization of art, but also the abolishment of art altogether in favor of some new form of design. The new field would turn out to be not an oasis, but a mirage.

What is required from these discussions is not an evaluation, justification, or attack on the terms of a field that is so open and undefined that, as Mick Wilson once speculated, perhaps it will turn out to be entirely nothing, like the transcendentalists counting ghosts in the vapor.⁶ They too, after all, had their own journals, gatherings, heated debates, and even funding structures. Instead, I think, the moment calls for elaboration and exemplification of “research” that emerges from art making. What is needed is a bottom-up interrogation, not a top-down one.

For example, I once saw a caption text at the Rodin Museum in Paris in which the term “artistic research” was used in a generous and general sense, as an ongoing “life of development” in one’s practice (although it is interesting to note that even this example likely emerged from a translation from French to English, furthering my suspicion of the term). Or, I can also reference Hito Steyerl’s recent attempts to establish a non-bureaucratic footing

for the word “research,” drawing upon Peter Weiss and his “genealogy of aesthetic research, which is related to the history of emancipatory struggles throughout the twentieth century.”⁷ A further example is Simone Forti, who once distinguished herself from one of her peers who had gone on to form a large company, touring big venues, while Simone stayed small-scale, evolving different modes of improvisation with groups of four or five, and often solo: “Oh, she [the friend with the big company] got into development. I stayed with research.”⁸

After all, “artistic research” must refer to a method, not to a subject. In ten years all these art PhDs will either be a laughingstock or will produce some works of demonstrable and self-evident substance. Perhaps the contrast of those potentialities would be a better starting point for a discussion.

In the meantime—yesterday I went to help a friend, Erik Smith, by shooting some Super 8 footage of him digging holes in Berlin on a piece of property that is in limbo. It’s a piece of property that’s in limbo—former dead zone from the Wall, but in the last years a group of people have appropriated it as a site for art, calling it “Skulpturenpark Berlin.” The area they work in gets smaller and smaller as new apartment buildings fill in the gap; soon there will be no space at all. Erik Smith proposed to the Berlin Senate that he be allowed to use sonar to measure the underground structures and gaps—the buried ruins of the site. Smith wanted to make sculptures out of them, to cast the negative space and make positives out of concrete.

But the city declined and so Smith is moving forward on a different scale—digging with a shovel. He has discovered a whole buried staircase and will soon discover where it leads, descending downward. Along the way the dirt has turned to ash and chunks of burned wood now come up.

People pass by and mostly ignore him, but while we were there one man asked what he was doing. When told it was an art project the man asked, “Does art have some relationship to archeology?” Smith replied, “I guess it can.” Indeed, there is some relation.

I once asked Smith if he knows what kind of structure he has discovered—if it was a home, or an office, and if it was bombed or just burned down. Who lived there, and what happened to them? This is Berlin after all, where local history and world history meet frequently: did the owner die in the camps,

or perhaps help organize them? Smith replied that he has plans to go to the state archive to find out that kind of information, but he keeps delaying the visit. He prefers to sustain the period of this kind of discovery, through digging, attending to the soil and ash, in which a different kind of information is possible, one that is not axiomatic or verifiable. As the real estate developers build all around him, Smith produces an architecture as well, as the staircase downward emerges.

I believe that as Smith's staircase becomes visible it will attract more passers-by, and it will become his, not just the staircase of some former owners. By not knowing the "truth," Smith's act can become a kind of "fiction"—back to the root of that word, a shaping of circumstance, the transformation that gives art its own status, claims, and questions. Perhaps Smith's decision not to go to the archive (yet) is like what Friedrich Nietzsche called the choice of a "limited horizon,"⁹ in which not all questions have to be faced, in which one does not need to be responsible to all perspectives, to preserve the space of "becoming."

In any case, this "investigatory poetics" does not depend upon the academy or on the EARN (European Artistic Research Network) or even on "artistic research"—but it does *merit our support*. In this way, the efforts of the new field of research in art could shake off the dust of academicism and the false sense of purpose of bureaucracy, and instead actively foster those who dig in the ash and the dirt, and who insist on and demonstrate art's capacity to wrestle with broader questions and concerns, in order to have some stake and status (and not just a function).

- 1 The artist Hedda Sterne quoted in Sarah Boxer, "The Last Irascible," *New York Review of Books*, December 23, 2010, 43.
- 2 From an interview in *Painters Painting: The New York Art Scene 1940–1970*, produced and directed by Emile de Antonio, 116 min., Turin Film Corp., 1972. Reissued by Mystic Fire Video, 1989, VHS.
- 3 The term is problematic inasmuch as it seems to qualify a kind of research as "artistic" as opposed to qualifying a kind of art that might be *research-ic*. To make matters worse, "artistic" does not generally mean "of the arts" but rather embellishment or holding a decorative quality. Something like Ed Sander's phrase "investigatory poetics" would be more appropriate. Thanks to Fred Dewey for pointing out this important precedent.

- 4 Paraphrased from a remark quoted in a talk by Robert Morris, published in “Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture,” in *Critical Issues in Public Art*, eds. Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 250.
- 5 Paraphrased from a scene of the film *Painters Painting: The New York Art Scene 1940–1970*, directed by Emile de Antonio, 1973.
- 6 From public lecture “The Art Text—Writing In and Through the Arts,” held at the University of Gothenburg in 2009.
- 7 Hito Steyerl, “Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict,” *MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 8 (Winter 2010): 34.
- 8 From a conversation with the artist.
- 9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, trans. Ian Johnston (Nanaimo: Vancouver Island University, 2010), <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/nietzsche/history.htm>.

This text is an adapted version of “The Use and Abuse of Research for Art and Vice-Versa” published in *See It Again, Say It Again: The Artist as Researcher*, ed. Janneke Wesseling (Amsterdam: Valiz Publications, 2011).

Art as a Way of Thinking

“The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths.” This statement, made by Bruce Nauman in 1967, reappeared two years ago at the entrance of the American Pavilion, welcoming visitors of the 53rd Venice Biennale 2009. But how can we best describe these “mystic truths” today? What I suggest is to conceive of them as concerning certain “hidden” aspects of reality; aspects that art aids in once again making visible. They relate to life itself and to the power that art can exert upon it.

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Their “mystic” nature depends on this peculiar ability to transform our life experience. German philologist Robert Jauss described this as two parallel dimensions of the artistic experience: *poiesis*—poietic power—consisting in art’s capacity to free the world from its grudging extraneousness and, in this manner, to allow man to satisfy his essential need to transform the world into his own dwelling, to inhabit the world; and *aesthesis*, the work of art’s ability to renew an experience of the world and to free it from the habits of daily life and from practical necessities, sometimes even granting it a condition of cathartic freedom.¹

From this perspective, art becomes a form of knowledge—a cognitive experience—a discovery of the world made of wonders and surprises, of body and sensations. Ten years ago, when we began introducing the visual arts into the traditional realms of interest of the Iuav University, Franco Rella explained this passage, affirming that “through its very fragility, the plurality of languages (of art) and its motivations is the strongest weapon we wield against the tanks and bulldozers which aim to flatten differences, to reduce thoughts to a thought, to imprison not only our bodies, but also our minds.”² I would now like to introduce some issues that may help us interpret the peculiar nature of artistic practices of late modernity, along with their historic foundations.

The “total work of art” may be read as a key phrase of modernism, pertaining to the numerous experiments—straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—aimed at reestablishing the unity of the arts. The search for a “modern style” concerned the entire universe of artistic expression, and even the various forms of daily life. The coherence of the new style had to allow for the resumption of the interrupted dialogue between the arts: it recast painting, sculpture, architecture, and the design of everyday objects as uninterrupted variations of a single language, and thus as all sharing the same foundation.

Today it is no longer possible to further develop our reflections on the concept of the “total work of art.” It is sufficient to underline that the entire question of the “synthesis of the arts,” from the Bauhaus Manifesto to the later debates of the 1950s, may be understood as a development of this idea originally formulated by Richard Wagner in the second half of the nineteenth century. This enduring matter came to a “conclusionless” close with the end of World War II and the dramatic debate concerning reconstruction and “modern” continuity.

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As for the desired dialogue between the various artistic forms, the crucial question posed by the new postwar condition no longer seemed to envisage a conclusion in terms of the creation of a new “art form” that would transform the very essence of the different practices and sweep away the existing differences in the framework of a rediscovered artistic “totality.” The need to step beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries appeared to be more a result of internal dilemmas within the singular disciplines than a search for a new unitary synthesis. The sun definitively set on the modern dream of the total work of art. Gilles Deleuze observed that “philosophy, art and

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science come into relations for mutual resonance and exchange, but always for internal reasons.”

Consequently, a distinctively late-modern, tremendously interesting, and completely innovative condition has arisen. It may be described as a new “asymmetric” space, characterized by the expansion and revision—but not the fusion—of the traditional fields of activity of the various disciplines. Hence, we may interpret the nature of the contemporary relations established between art, design, and architecture as problems generated from within each singular discipline and, thus, completely alien to the traditional modernist approach. The visual arts and architecture, not unlike music, dance, cinema, and theatre, seem involved in a controversial process of overstepping their own habitual boundaries, of exceeding their limits, and of overlapping.

The visual arts look beyond the limited spaces of art galleries and museums, toward natural landscapes, urban public areas, and even the private zones of domestic dwellings. And they critically observe the places of everyday life, there recognizing the processes and events taking shape. English philosopher Peter Osborne described this behavior as an “architecturation” of contemporary art.³ Jan De Cock’s monuments; Dan Graham’s seminal masterpieces; the work of Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta-Clark; the conceptual investigations of Antoni Muntadas and Kyong Park; the sculptural installations of Hans Schabus and Mike Nelson: all of these reveal a constant, and even growing interest in the contamination of practices, drawing architectural elements into the artistic work. It is therefore legitimate to consider the “migration” of some of the most experimental architects of the second half of the twentieth century from the traditional territories of architecture to those of art and art exhibitions as part of this procedure: Yona Friedman and some of the protagonists of Team X (Alison Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, and so on), Diller & Scofidio, or architect-activists like Rural Studio and Teddy Cruz, whose works bear a strong likeness to that of artist-activists, including Marjetica Potrč or Kyong Park. They seem to share an ambiguous “between-disciplines” condition, closer to that of art exhibitions than to the professional and academic territories of planning and building practices.

Architecture may be described, within the field of art, as a tool for introducing meaning related to specific social or collective issues. As Jeff Wall observed, architecture is the emblem, the symbol, of our desire for a “modernism with a social content,”⁴ and even Osborne noted that “architecture

is an archive of the social use of form,”⁵ or of the socialization of spatial problems. The significance of these mutual interests lies precisely in the ambiguous asymmetry of this relationship. When the protagonists of the dialogue move beyond the disciplinary confines to finally change their very status—when Vito Acconci becomes an architect or Daniel Libeskind proposes himself as an artist—the process suddenly becomes devoid of interest.

Through the rediscovery of the traditions of modern architecture and its original social impetus, artists also rediscover the possibility of conceiving of art as a visionary practice. How could we otherwise interpret Potrč’s practice or Rirkrit Tiravanija’s group experiments? In these cases it is difficult not to appeal to the notion of utopia—an idea that was completely discredited by the modern tradition, its history appearing as a history of recurring failures. How can we still consider utopia today?

In 1964, during a famous debate with Ernst Bloch, Theodor W. Adorno called to mind that certain utopian dreams had, in fact, been achieved: television, and the possibility of visiting other planets and of traveling at the speed of sound. “One could perhaps say in general—he observed—that the fulfillment of utopia consists largely only in a repetition of the continually same ‘today.’” Yet, “something is missing,” rebutted Bloch, drawing on a well known Brechtian statement. “Something is missing” implies that humanity remains aware of the imperfection of the world in which it lives. And that the desire to imagine its transformation and improvement to the point of a condition of impossible perfection is an ineliminable element of our culture. And, in fact, it is.

Even if we no longer live in times of fantastic futuristic visions, such as those of Archigram, of the Japanese Metabolists, of Superstudio, of Constant, or of Yona Friedman, these visions have not been ultimately cancelled from our memory and, hence, they periodically resurface. In recent years, this seemed to happen not so much in architectural studios or in professional publications, but rather within large-scale international art exhibitions, including documenta and the Venice Biennale. Today artists seem unable to escape utopian lures, to cease believing that “something is missing.” It is no longer a question of the rigid totalitarian utopias of the past, and not even of the optimistic hyper-technological visions of the 1960s.

Yona Friedman spoke precisely of this in *Utopies réalisables*,⁶ claiming that

in our day and age, universal utopias are not only impossible but are even dangerous. It is precisely due to their failures that the term has acquired the ironic and pejorative connotation so rampant today. And, nonetheless, utopian visions may still form, justified by dissatisfaction, a ready availability of technical solutions and popular consent. The condition of their fulfillment represents the overcoming of their universality. For Friedman, the global city could be interpreted as a network of “urban villages” within which small groups of individuals may dedicate themselves to the search for their own utopia and “each utopia would be peculiar to a precise group,”⁷ a peculiar answer to a peculiar condition of dissatisfaction...

It is no coincidence that American philosopher Frederic Jameson specifically recognized this distinctive aspect of Friedman’s thought: its plural and “liberal” character and the specific political and cultural identity of each enclave, to the point of making communication between them superfluous: an archipelago of utopias, islands distributed in the web, a constellation of discontinuous centers.

At this point, it would be wise to recall László Moholy-Nagy’s manifesto, penned over fifty years ago, shortly after his arrival in the United States: the arts, as a critical process and tool for interpreting and transforming everyday life, cannot be isolated in separate territories. These flow from one expressive form to another, making any distinction between art and non-art, between individual craftsmanship and anonymous mechanical technology, senseless, while consenting each stage in the process to improve its understanding and to significantly come closer to the totality of life.

For Moholy-Nagy, design (and art) was an expression of a deep existential philosophy concerning how men and women perceive themselves in the world. Design penetrated the various layers of life and social organization, until it fused itself in the magnificent totality of a “design for living.” And art was asked to take on a crucial social function within this process, “to penetrate yet-unseen ranges of the biological functions, to search the new dimensions of the industrial society and to translate the new findings into emotional orientation. [...] Seeing, feeling, and thinking in relationship” and, in this way, becoming “the seismograph of events and movements pertaining to the future.”⁸

And this is what we are still dealing with today.

- 1 Hans Robert Jauss, *Kleine Apologie der ästhetischen Erfahrung* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1972).
- 2 Franco Rella, “Il sapere dell’arte,” *lectio magistralis* on the occasion of the inauguration of the 2000–01 academic year of the Iuav University of Venice, in *1991–2006: Inaugurazioni accademiche* (Venice: Iuav University, 2006), 256–63.
- 3 Peter Osborne, “Ou est l’oeuvre d’art?,” *Multitudes TR* (Winter 2007): 88–101.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Yona Friedman, *Utopies réalisables* (Paris: Éditions de l’éclat, 1974); my translation.
- 7 Ibid, 179.
- 8 László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947).

What the Scientist's Eye Tells the Artist's Brain

We are used to believing that knowledge is the product of a thinking process, that thinking is in the head, and that art is a practice that produces artifacts and that has to do with the hand and the eye. Since Leonardo da Vinci's time, in order to support the idea that art can produce knowledge, it has been argued that visual artists are thinkers, and today it has even been claimed that art is vanishing into philosophy.

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I suppose that art scholars and artists who are mostly teachers in art schools do believe that art practice, not just art history, can be taught to some extent. At the time when knowledge (*epistêmê*) was not yet separated from practice (*tekhnê*), the original meaning of the Greek word *matematiké* was “everything that is taught.” Only after Aristotle was the term used to denote something similar to what we mean by mathematics. An author from the third century AD wrote:

Why is mathematics so named? Aristotelians say that rhetoric, poetry and popular music can be performed even without being studied, but no one can understand things that are called by this name without first having studied them, and for this reason the theory of these things is called mathematics.¹

In a sense, just like the character in Molière's play *Le bourgeois gentil-homme*, who spoke in prose without realizing it, we are speaking in math without knowing it. I shall argue that contemporary artists are doing math, in accordance with the old meaning of the word, and that contemporary scientists are doing art, also in the old meaning of that word (that is, they are making artefacts, or things that do not naturally exist).

It is trivially true, of course, that applied science and technology make and

do things. What I'm saying is that pure science obtains knowledge of natural phenomena through the production of artificial phenomena. When some similarities between art and science were noticed in the debate raised by his famous book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn pointed out that visual forms of knowledge are ancillary for the scientist, because they are not knowledge in themselves but means to the end of obtaining knowledge.

The paintings are end-products of artistic activities. They are the sort of object which the painter aims to produce [...]. The scientific illustrations, on the other hand, are at best by-products of scientific activities [...]. The artist, too, like the scientist, faces persistent technical problems which must be resolved in the pursuit of his craft. Even more we emphasize that the scientist, like the artist, is guided by aesthetic considerations and governed by established modes of perception [...]. But an exclusive emphasis upon these parallels obscures a vital difference. Whatever term "aesthetic" may mean, the artist's goal is the production of aesthetic objects; technical puzzles are what he must resolve in order to produce such objects. For the scientist, on the other hand, the solved technical puzzle is the goal, and the aesthetic is a tool for its attainment. Whether in the realm of products or of activities, what are ends for the artist are means for the scientist, and vice versa.²

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The background assumptions of Kuhn's argument were that scientific knowledge is propositional knowledge, that the scientist's business is to represent the world through objects that are linguistic entities (scientific theories), and that the artist's business is to represent the world through non-linguistic entities (images).

Paolo
Garbolino

Forty years have elapsed since Kuhn wrote these lines, and two facts have emerged in the meantime. The first is that contemporary artists engage in interventions that do not make representations: they do not make “aesthetic objects,” but rather they produce events, and bring into being phenomena, in the classical meaning of things that happen and that can be perceived through the senses. The second fact is that in the last thirty years a deep change has occurred in our understanding of science and scientific knowledge: we have become aware of the implications of the fact that modern science is *intervention*. The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard used the term “factory of phenomena” referring to physics,³ and in the age of genetic engineering, this has become true of life sciences as well. If contemporary artists are thinkers, scientists are artisans, and the old division between “natural” and “artificial” has become meaningless.

This claim has been forcefully defended by the late Paul Feyerabend, who used it to sketch a wider metaphysical vision reminding us of Nelson Goodman’s concept of “worldmaking”:

In a way, individual scientists [...] function like artists or artisans trying to shape a world from a largely unknown material Being [...]. Or researchers are artists, who, working on a largely unknown material, Being, build a variety of manifest worlds that they often, but mistakenly, identify with Being itself.⁴

I take a more modest, and empiricist, stance: science produces probable beliefs about the world out there in many ways, and one of them—the most effective—is by producing in a laboratory environment a phenomenon that does not exist naturally, at least not with the purity and saliency that can be obtained within laboratory walls. Both artists and scientists intervene in the world and intervention is a process in which an underlying causal reality is used to do, make, or change things.

Science as Practice

The standard view among philosophers of science at the middle of the twentieth century (let’s call it for the sake of simplicity “the positivist view”), was that knowledge is propositional knowledge, and that theories are sets of sentences, written in a theoretical language. Theories are to be tested by comparison to empirical evidence described by an observational language, which is “neutral” with respect to theories and intersubjectively available to all impartial observers.

In the 1960s, the so-called antipositivists, like Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend, challenged the possibility of a “neutral” observational language as a consequence of the difficulty of tracing a border between theory and observation: they claimed that sentences describing observations are always seriously infected by theory, and that scientific theorizing is always prior to good experimental practice.

The antipositivist view had an important impact on most radical views of science of the 1970s and 1980s, and on Arthur C. Danto’s ideas about the transfiguration of mere objects into art works, but it maintained, in common with the positivist view, the idea that all scientific knowledge is propositional in content, and that all forms of *knowing-how* are to be transformed into *knowing-that*.

Positivists and antipositivists both focused on the role of experiments in testing theories, considering the complex practical activity of producing phenomena in the laboratory only a means toward this end. Positivists claimed that testing can be done through universal epistemic tools, whereas antipositivists denied that possibility, asserting that experiments are carried out within a particular conceptual scheme and are understandable only in terms of that scheme. Both groups overlooked the fact that for experimental scientists the goal is the production of a particular phenomenon and that many scientific puzzles must be resolved in order to produce that phenomenon.

Starting in the 1980s, a new and more balanced view developed, which takes seriously the assertion that scientific methods are experimental methods. The new approach, put forward by philosophers and historians of science like Ian Hacking, Allan Franklin, Peter Galison, David Gooding, and Andrew Pickering, among others, has challenged the theory/observation dichotomy by seeing experimentation and experimental techniques as central to scientific practice.⁵

In this recent view, science is driven by practice and is largely skill-based, network-based, and laboratory-based, and experimental practice embodies a *knowing-how* that cannot be entirely captured by the notion that knowledge is propositional knowledge. Practicing a theory is not a matter of understanding a theory’s formal expressions, but is rather the business of adopting and transmitting through practice a set of mental and material technologies used in contextualized applications of the theory to problem solving.

According to this “practical turn” in philosophy of science, as opposed to the “linguistic turn” of the first half of the century, scientific knowledge is the product of stable patterns of scientific practice that emerge from complex networks of skills, competences, instruments, and intellectual and material resources, in which “the manipulative hand and the attentive eye,”⁶ to use Ian Hacking’s words, play a role.

Experiment in Science and Art

The “practical turn” has put experiment in the forefront, showing the variety of roles it plays in the production of knowledge beyond the mere provision of data for testing theories. Experiments explore new domains of phenomena (today through methods that include computer simulations), check new instruments and equipment, add precision in measurement, and create new phenomena, as Ian Hacking in particular has stressed. He wrote in 1982:

No field in the philosophy of science is more systematically neglected than experiment. Our grade school teachers may have told us that scientific method is experimental method, but histories of science have become histories of theories. Experiments, the philosophers say, are of value only when they test theory. Experimental work, they imply, has no life of its own. So we lack even a terminology to describe the many varied roles of experiment [...]. One chief role of experiment is the creation of phenomena. Experimenters bring into being phenomena that do not naturally exist in a pure state. These phenomena are the touchstones of physics, the keys to nature and the source of much modern technology. Many are what physicists after 1870s began to call “effects”: the photoelectric effect, the Compton effect, and so forth. A recent high-energy extension of the creation of phenomena is the creation of “events,” to use the jargon of the trade. Most of the phenomena, effects and events created by the experimenter are like plutonium: they do not exist in nature except possibly on vanishingly rare occasions.⁷

The Compton effect is so called after the physicist Arthur Compton who, in the 1923, discovered that we can play billiards by hitting electrons with photons. Other examples of laboratory-made artifacts are lasers, insulin synthesized by genetically modified bacteria, and the phenomena occurring in the most sophisticated machine ever built by mankind, the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, where scientists are trying to make in the machine a physical state, the so-called Higgs boson, which, according to theory, existed

shortly after the Big Bang and can not be observed in the actual universe anymore.

When we talk of “artistic experiments,” we are speaking metaphorically, and we have laboratories in our art schools, but “real” experimentation is what is running in scientific labs, or so we suppose. But let us examine what happens in the scientific creation of phenomena.

It happens that events produced in artificial settings allow scientists to “see” certain features of the world that could not be observed by naked eyes in the natural course of things. The above-mentioned Compton effect provides a simple example of what I mean: Arthur Compton fired X-rays against a graphite plate (the artificial setup), analyzed the scattering of the rays (the artefact), and found out that they had lost energy. He toiled to explain this surprising property of the artefact and, in the end, the best explanation turned out to be that photons, like electrons, behave as if they are particles, a feature of the world that cannot be “seen” when nature is left to her own course. A few years later, the newly born field of quantum mechanics provided a full theoretical explanation of the phenomenon produced by Compton, and of many others.

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Scientific experiments make “visible” certain features of the world, and they keep them separated against the background of all other factors that concur in bringing about natural events. Artistic experiments—not only interventions but representations as well—produce knowledge by creating phenomena that highlight, underscore, display, or convey in their traits certain features of the world, and in doing so they make these features salient, allowing people to see what cannot easily be seen in everyday life. An artwork, as Catherine Z. Elgin states, “affords epistemic access to the features it exemplifies [...]. It presents those features in a context contrived to render them salient. This may involve unravelling common concomitants, filtering out impurities, clearing away unwanted clutter, presenting in unusual settings.”⁸

Today a new practice of phenomena creation is becoming more and more important in both the natural and social sciences: namely, computer simulations, which allow scientists to test hypotheses and probe models in limiting situations that cannot be physically produced, and it has been claimed that computer simulations constitute a genuinely new methodology of science that help us to “extend ourselves.”⁹ Creation of virtual phenomena

is a border territory where it can sometimes be difficult to trace a divide between art and science.¹⁰

Science and art are, of course, very different in the ways they carry out their experiments. Contemporary science normally needs large research groups and sophisticated instruments to “see” phenomena, and inferences from data are made with the help of formalized languages. Art is usually an individual activity, does not need high-tech tools, and deductions from visual data can be made by common-sense reasoning. Even if a theory of an “art world” is needed, this theory is expressed in natural language.

When all of these differences are considered, science and art experiments still share a common problem: When does the experiment end? When is the work well done? Scientists face the problem of deciding whether there is indeed a genuine phenomenon among the raw data, whether the “golden event” researchers are looking for has been produced. Artists have to decide when the sought-for result is fully accomplished: Marcel Duchamp had been working for many years at the *Large Glass* before deciding that it was “done” and ready to be exhibited.

In both cases, decision is the output of a process of mutual adjustment between theory and phenomena, taking into account theoretical, instrumental, and experimental constraints. Scientific theoretical constraints fix the background from which the “event” must be isolated: in the case of Compton’s effect, the theory accepted at his time about the behavior of X-rays was among the theoretical constraints. Experimental constraints have to do with the experimental setup—in our example, the technique of pointing a source of energy toward a target. Instrumental constraints have to do with laboratory machines: the device for emitting X-rays and the material the target is made of. A successful experiment realizes a trade-off between all these factors: very often the experimental constraints are modified, while only sometimes are the instrumental and only rarely are the theoretical constraints altered.

Andrew Pickering has written of scientific practice as a “performance”:

My basic image of science is a performative one, in which the performance, the doings of human and material agency come to the fore. Scientists are human agents in a field of material agency which they struggle to capture in machines [...]. The dance of agency, seen asymmetrically, from the human end, thus takes the form of a dialectic of resistance

and accommodations, where resistance denotes the failure to achieve an intended capture of agency in practice, and accommodation an active human strategy of response to resistance, which can include revisions to goals and intentions as well as to the material form of the machine in question and to the human frame of gestures and social relations that surround it.¹¹

In artistic experimentation, instrumental constraints are tools and materials, and experimental constraints can be understood as the way in which tools and materials are used, the devices with which they are employed, and the physical and social settings of the works. Theoretical constraints are “hard” in science, and much more “soft” in art: they range from explicitly asserted art theories to the “tacit knowledge” many artists have of our perceptual makeup and that neuroscience has begun to study. Maybe this is the scope of neuroaesthetics, namely, not the pursuit of some sort of physicalist reductionism in aesthetics, but studying the physical constraints that our bodily constitution assigns to aesthetical experience.

What is Science? What is Art?

“If someone asks ‘What is a scientific theory?’ it seems to me there is no simple response to be given.”¹²

We can say that neither “the” scientific method nor “the” experimental method exists. What indeed exists is a plurality of scientific practices, but it is precisely this plurality that, at odds with appearance, brings stability and strength to the enterprise of science. Peter Galison has put forward the concept of “trading zones,” spatially located (laboratories) or virtual zones (networks of labs connected by the Web) where theory meets experiment, engineering meets theory, scientific subcultures meet each other, and “wordless interlanguages” are spoken (he calls them “pidgins” or “creoles”), which are embodied in objects and procedures.¹³ Knowledge moves across boundaries and coordination around specific problems and sites is possible even where there are not globally shared meanings. Meanings do not travel all at once in great conceptual schemes or “paradigms,” but partially and piecemeal. This picture brings with it important consequences for our idea of scientific change and the overall picture of science.

Positivists saw scientific change as the process of incorporating earlier and successful theories into the framework of their successors, and they believed

that theory change occurs when needed to accommodate new data expressed by the “neutral” observational language. Antipositivists rejected the idea that observational language is the bedrock upon which building a cumulative view of scientific change is possible, and claimed that theory change is a dramatic gestalt-like “paradigms shift” involving incompatible conceptual schemes and carrying with it a change in standards of observation. Positivists privileged observation over theory, and antipositivists privileged theory over observation, but both failed to appreciate that science is practice and overlooked the common ground provided in any scientific field by shared instruments and experimental practices.

An *intercalated periodization* of the history of science can now be contrasted with these views, in which instruments, experiment, and theory do not change at the same time, because each has its own “systematic” time and dynamics of change, and breaks in each of these practices do not necessarily involve concomitant breaks in the other practices. Galison offers the image of a brick wall as a visual analogy for this view:

This intercalated periodization would depict the history of the discipline as a whole as an irregular stone fence or rough brick wall [...]. And, just as the offsets between joints in a brick wall give the wall much of its strength, it is this intercalation of diverse sets of practices (instrument making, experimenting, and theorizing) that accords physics its sense of continuity as a whole, even while deep breaks occur in each subculture separately considered.¹⁴

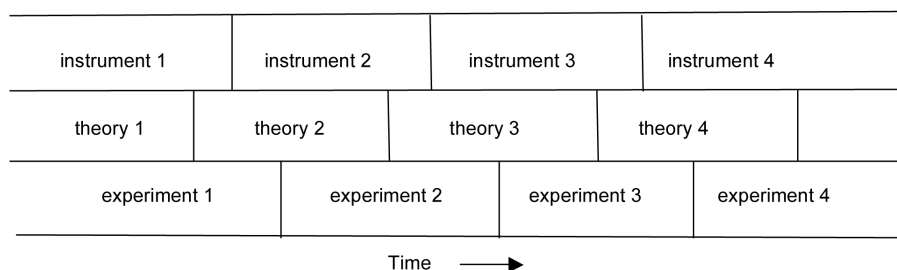


Figure 1: Intercalated periodization. Adapted from Peter Galison's *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

He also mentions the metaphor of the cable and the thread:

In 1868 Charles Sanders Peirce invoked the image of a cable [...]. With its intertwined strands, the cable gains its strength not by having a single, golden thread that winds its way through the whole. No one strand

defines the whole. Rather, the great steel cables gripping the massive bridges of Peirce's time were made strong by the interleaving of many limited strands, no one of which held all the weight. Decades later, Wittgenstein used the same metaphor now cast in the image of thread, as he reflected on what it meant to have a concept. "We extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres." [...] These analogies cut deep. It is the disorder of the scientific community—the laminated, finite, partially independent strata supporting one another; it is the disunification of science, the intercalation of different patterns of argument—that is responsible for its strength and coherence.¹⁶

We can also find the metaphor of the bundle of fibers in George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*, where each fiber is a "formal sequence" that is in his view a "linked progression of experiments"¹⁷ that are different solutions to the same artistic problem, "related to one another by the bonds of tradition and influence."¹⁸

We can imagine the flow of time as assuming the shapes of fibrous bundles, with each fiber corresponding to a need upon a particular theater of action, and the lengths of the fibers varying as the duration of each need and the solution to its problems. The cultural bundles therefore consist of variegated fibrous lengths of happening, mostly long, and many brief. They are juxtaposed largely by chance, and rarely by conscious forethought or rigorous planning.¹⁹

According to Kubler's idea, every work of art is:

A complex having not only traits, each with a different systematic age, but having also clusters of traits, or aspects, each with its own age, like any other organization of matter, such as a mammal, of which the blood and the nerves are of different biological antiquity, and the eye and the skin are of different systematic age.²⁰

We can say that artworks make up formal sequences of phenomena (objects and events) whose traits—which can embody relational as well as physical properties—are the effects of the choice of instruments and techniques, devices, setups, and theories. The process of artistic change looks like an ivied brick wall, covered by "formal sequences" climbing all over it, whose bricks have partially autonomous tempos: something can be made using old

materials in a new way according to an existing theory, and something can be made using new materials in an old way according to a new theory, and so forth.

It is by this intercalation of different patterns of instrument, theory, and practice embodied in the traits of objects and events that art is given its sense of continuity as a whole.

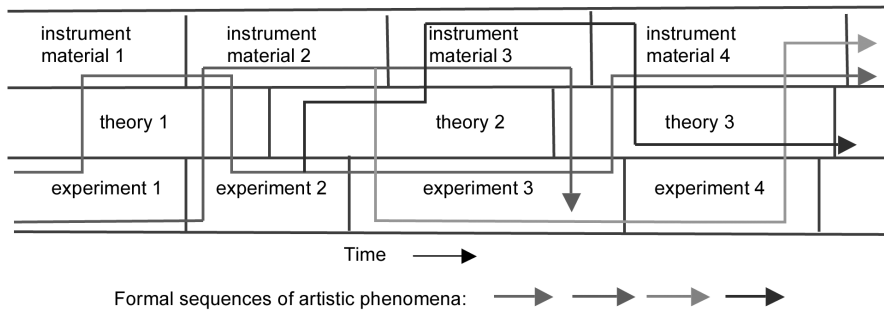


Figure 2: Intercalated periodization of formal sequences.

We have learned that there is no simple answer to the question “What is science?” but this does not hinder the view of the “intertwined strands” of scientific practice. No straightforward answer can be given to the question “What is art?” but this does not hinder us from seeing the “overlapping of many fibers” and the “continuous series” of things that make up what we call art: “The series has branched many times, and it has often run out into dead ends [...] but the stream of things never was completely stilled.”²¹

Artistic artefacts encode relationships among physical objects, people, and particular settings. These relational properties as well as physical objects are things of the world, and they contribute to shaping the forms in the sequences of artistic phenomena.

- 1 Anatolio, “Heronis Alexandrini Opera quae supersunt omnia,” 5 vols., reprint ed. 1976, vol. IV (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1974), 160, 17–24. Quoted by Lucio Russo, in *La rivoluzione dimenticata: Il pensiero scientifico greco e la scienza moderna* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2003), 224.
- 2 Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 342–343.

- 3 Gaston Bachelard, *L'activité rationaliste de la physique contemporaine* (Paris: PUF, 1951), 10.
- 4 Paul Feyerabend, "Theoreticians, Artists, and Artisans," *Leonardo* 29, no. 1 (January 1996): 27. See also Paul Feyerabend, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction versus the Richness of Beauty*, ed. Bert Terpstra (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978); Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988).
- 5 Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Allan Franklin, *The Neglect of Experiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Allan Franklin, *Experiment, Right or Wrong* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Peter Galison, *How Experiments End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Peter Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); David Gooding, *Experiment and the Making of Meaning* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1990); David Gooding, Trevor J. Pinch, Simon Schaffer, eds., *The Uses of Experiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Andrew Pickering, ed., *Science as Practice and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- 6 Ian Hacking, "'Style' for Historians and Philosophers," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 23, no. 1 (March 1992): 4.
- 7 Ian Hacking, "Experimentation and Scientific Realism," *Philosophical Topics*, no. 13 (1982): 154.
- 8 Catherine Z. Elgin, "Understanding: Art and Science," *Synthese*, no. 95 (1993): 17.
- 9 Paul Humphreys, *Extending Ourselves: Computational Science, Empiricism, and Scientific Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); E. Winsberg, "Simulated Experiments: Methodology for a Virtual World," *Philosophy of Science*, no. 70 (2003): 105–25; Margaret Morrison, "Models, Measurements, and Computer Simulations: The Changing Face of Experimentation," *Philosophical Studies*, no. 143 (2009): 33–57.
- 10 Stephen Wilson, *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
- 11 Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice*, 21–22.
- 12 Patrick Suppes, "What is a scientific theory?," in *Philosophy of Science Today*, ed. Sidney Morgenbesser (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 63.

- 13 Peter Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 46, 781.
- 14 Ibid., 19.
- 15 Ibid., 799 [Figure 9.5].
- 16 Ibid., 843–44.
- 17 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 85.
- 18 Ibid., 33.
- 19 Ibid., 122.
- 20 Ibid., 99.
- 21 Ibid., 2.

The Quest for the Common Good and the Participatory Community

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In this essay, I will reflect on and relate to the current chances and challenges of practice-based PhDs. It is a line of thinking that is based on the experiences of working in the educational artistic field in the Nordic Art Academies during the last decade. The tone is neither nostalgic nor self-congratulatory, nor does it celebrate the bright future. The tone is sober, serious, and critical yet constructive. The task is to articulate the premises for an alternative way of production of knowledge within the fields of contemporary art and visual culture. Or to state it another way, with a bit of a deliberately melodramatic touch: what are the chances of survival for content-driven, practice-based artistic research that explicitly and expressively enjoys the pleasures of experimenting?

I am convinced that practice-based PhDs should not function outside of or provide an illusion of being outside of (or even against) the economy of attention created by museums and galleries, or by government agencies. As a long-term committed, situated, and self-critical process of knowledge production, this economy of attention is part of the overall game. We are in it, at it, with it, and on it. The question is not *what* we do, but *how* we do it.

This very *how* is not seeking to be articulated, searching for a way to *become a place* in neutral or natural circumstances. This *how* is thrown into the deep blue scary waters full of nasty sharks and terrible currents—and all the while this very *how* is in the middle of learning the act of swimming, and the act of waving, rather than drowning. The sharks are the political and economical structures that we are part of and embedded into, and which are certainly attacking us with the full force of one-dimensionality, be it in

schemes of economic or bureaucratic rationale. In this train of thought, the currents are the hypes and flavors of the month by which we so very easily let ourselves be fooled.

Thus, we need something else; we need an alternative. To quote philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, a Thomist Aristotelian, on the need for an alternative to the quest for a common good, to the quest for thinking within give-and-take processes of coherence and continuity:

In this situation what is most urgently needed is a politics of self-defense for all those local societies that aspire to achieve some relatively self-sufficient and independent form of participatory practice-based community and that therefore need to protect themselves from the corrosive effects of capitalism and the depredations of state power.¹

What this Aristotelian frame—this long legacy of thinking differently about the values and the ends of knowledge production—means is that we must reclaim, not the streets or the street corners, but the sense and sensibility, the integrity and intensity, of what a practice is and of what a participatory practice is. This is in order to distance us from the omnipotent dangers of speed, volume, and price. It is to comprehend the inherent potentiality and the extreme difficulty of doing things slowly, so slowly. It is to get closer and to develop the internal changes and challenges of a practice, rather than being jerked around by external pressures.

This alternative sense of a practice is something that is based on the opposite of a one-size-fits-all model. In it, we return to local sites and conflicts, and we remain at the scale of interaction that is small and face-to-face. It is a site that argues for and with an idea of a common good that is not there before

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the actions begin, but that is described and defined along the way. It is not about consensus, but about something that is called a loving conflict.

The Conditions of Our Conditions: Practice

Following Alasdair MacIntyre, and consequently, the long trajectory based on Aristotle, a practice refers to “any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially, definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human concepts of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.”²

What this kind and type of a practice needs and requires is then indeed a demanding list. We are searching for a practice that has a long-term perspective, that is committed to furthering its internally defined goals and aims, and that has a collective character of producing and extending knowledge that is then passionately shared.

Seen this way, we are not only able to start focusing on the very acts that we are doing, asking what makes that act that we act worthwhile, how could we do it more meaningfully, or how could we develop it even more. This type of a setup is open-ended and is never ready. It is a practice that also allows and encourages us to contextualize activity in a self-critical way. Therefore, as a directly involved implication, a lot of things we do and act out are not considered a practice. This kind of a deep-seated version of a practice implies that things we do or try to do, to use a deliberate shorthand, are done and acted upon professionally. Admittedly, the label of “doing things professionally” is not enough. It must be answered in the ways not of what one does, but of how one does it.

Understood this way, a practice both includes and excludes. It does this not by seeking fixed forms of categories, but in order to construct a frame within which the ongoing process of figuring out the acts we act continues. It is to ask, again and again: What do we do when we do what we do? And when trying to come closer, and stay closer, to this honest dilemma, one only gets so far, and one only gains so much by following the limiting strategy of what it is not. Sooner rather than later, we have to turn it around and start both articulating and acting upon what a specific type or

individual version of this specific type of a practice is actually doing and trying to achieve.

However, no practice survives without the structures that sustain its long-term commitment; without its continuity that is linked to its history of effects of consciously being aware of its past, present, and future; and without its circles of friends with whom it talks and gets together in a collective.

It is of utmost importance to stress the structural side of these matters that matter. Any serious, committed act is lost if it is not taking place within a structure that holds its course and does what it needs to do: protects the ongoing experiments and productive failures of doing things. Therefore, a practice without a solid and credible structural frame is certainly left to nasty sharks and terrible currents.

This wished for and wanted for list of Continuity, Commitment, and Collectivity is something that is not preexistent and that does not come for free, and cannot be taken for granted. As already underlined, all these “three Cs” need to be answered for and contextually constructed both on the structural and on the individual levels.

Continuity on a structural level seems to be quite simple. It is a recognized fact that doctoral programs in artistic research are taking place in institutions, located in universities that have a clearly defined profile and long-term plan, and the means to implement that plan. Or is it?

Unfortunately, the structures upon which we often rely are exactly lacking that stamina and that long-term perspective that they should stand for. This is, obviously enough, partly because *how* and *where* artistic research sits within the whole frame of a university system are both new and challenged. This very particular way in which artistic research floats and aims to be anchored varies from one national setting and one university stage to another, but common to each system is that it is not clear what, how, where and when.

The most effective way to address this lack of clarity is to highlight the questions of how practice-led, content-driven, and experimental the activity can be; and of to what degree pre-fixed academic requirements are added to it; and of which one of the routes is prioritized (as in alternatives, for example

a practice-based one that is experimental and/or a more academic version). Many programs cut to the chase and state that it is half-and-half (half experimental, half academic), but that statement denies the struggle that is always fought when finding the balance between what leads and what follows in each individual case. Examples are vast of cases where, because of doubts and lack of vision, the so-called academic control part is actively found behind the wheel while the practice—in its messiness and procedural, organic nature—is located neatly in the backseat. The problem is that what really happens to a practice when it is not allowed to roam and to experiment, and when it is too often treated like a backseat nothing, is that instead of flowers of romance, we get a wallflower of a boring sort.

When scrutinized in nuance and in detail, the nature of commitment on a structural level is not very clear-cut either. Granted, many of the aspects hinted at in the above analysis of continuity are also found with commitment, but the latter also has other aspects that must be addressed with care. The problem with structural commitment is that it presupposes much more competence, professional weight, and gravity than it actually admits. Asking for commitment comes, of course, easily, but to really stand for and stand tall for it requires a certain type of extensive back catalogue of working at the site in question and understanding of the relevant issues connected to it. It also requires longevity of presence within the structure.

It is this lack of longevity in positions within a structure that turn out to have negative consequences. To ask for a commitment to a structure—that is, from the individual agent professionally active in it—is to expect that they both are embedded within the structure for more than three years before and at least three more years (the reference runs to the duration of the appointment of the professional, which is based on a three-plus-three years formula of appointment that excludes long-term planning). But currently we have many professionals—artists, writers, and curators—in institutions and universities who, in fact, are sitting on the same seat while constantly remodeling that seat for up to ten years.

The blame for the shortsightedness of structures does not go to the so-called capitalistic model of organizing varied exchanges in goods and views in a society. The blame sits extremely squarely on the universities and institutions that are asked to imitate the ways and means that sometimes bring out the best results in the private sector, and that are led to believe it is worth

doing so. The unfortunate fact is that they are so busy putting on the dress of private enterprise, setting the clock on quarterly logic, and imitating the ways that type of a play is played, that the institutions and universities in which we sit have lost more and more contact with, and creative craving for focusing on, the content of practice.

On the face of it, the part of the collective is perhaps the most straightforward. The argument embodied in the definition of a practice in the lines of Aristotle is that a practice is not a practice when there is not a certain volume of agents doing it, and when those agents are not close enough to each other in intensity. This has nothing to do with whether a work is done by a single person or a unit of persons who decide to work together. The question is how, within a practice, the people doing it are located such that there is a continuous and committed way of bouncing views and visions off of each other.

This is not much more complicated than making it fruitful, possible, and challenging enough for a group of professionals to come together; than constructing that first circle of an audience, that first encounter of trying things out; and than engaging in trial and receiving and giving critical views and opinions. Regardless of the specific field, this is the way research has traditionally been organized since nothing we do can actually be meaningfully achieved when we do it alone. We need a collective aspect, we need that first group of a professional audience to provide feedback for the comments that then guide and guard the next step, the next experiment. In short, we need a context, and because as with all these elements, they do not preexist the endeavor, they must always be made and shaped. It is also the chance and the responsibility of this set of committed professionals to construct that very specific context of what we talk about, how we talk about it, and how we share the knowledge toward which we strive.

This, truly and duly, seems like it would not be very difficult to achieve, right? But why is it that reality bites and gives us a growing number of examples of the very opposite? The clearest case of doing things in the wrong way and for the wrong reason is the national artistic research group in Sweden, started in 2010. The aim of it, if we want to be charitable, was indeed good. The government was pushed and lobbied, and gave out new funds for almost twenty new positions of PhDs in practice-based artistic research (each of them guaranteed four years of a researcher's salary). But instead of

structurally locating this program so that it really creates and generates the necessary volume and concentration of enough people (preferably from six to eight) in an institution to do this research, it decided to spread out the positions and the money so that not one single institution gets more than two of the recipients.

Not so surprisingly, the decision was believed to be the best one because then more institutions would get the money, and more artists (and more fields of artistic production) would be able to claim a piece of the cake called artistic research. Unfortunately, this decision is diametrically opposite to what a serious, committed, and embedded research practice must have as a structure. Research is not to be done by everyone, and everywhere. It must be concentrated, and it must be done in a collective manner that brings things and people, and arguments for and against, together, instead of wasting them away and sending them into wildly different locations and lost cases.

Certainly, in the Swedish case, the governmental body had heard the critique against spreading and scattering all the positions around often enough. Therefore, it added something on the top, something that was from the beginning just an excuse, just a superficially stated act. On paper, all of these twenty doctorates are together in the national school for artistic research. They do their research individually in ten institutions but come together once a year and, well, do what? Shake hands, drink a bit, eat a bit, listen to a lecture or two that has significantly little relevance to their specific theme and focus, and disappear home with value having been added to the research process, either on a collective or an individual level. Consequently, each person continues with the work he or she did before, now happy-go-luckily calling it research. It is an act of name-dropping since the results are not anywhere near the criteria for qualitative research. They embody the worst of the worst scenario: theory as an ad hoc pasted element that is stuck on top of the activity like a cheap sticker that is blown away after the first lovely storm.

The Conditions of Our Conditions: Situated Self

Now, I will switch from discussion of the structural side of artistic research to the individual act of acting things out. For this change of focus, let us start with two quotes from Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The first will function as a bridge between the structural and the individual level, accentuating

the necessary intertwined connectedness of the two. The second will then set the tone for the articulation of a practice from a view of a situated self.

1. “To be born is to be born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted.”³
2. “Things we perceive make sense only when perceived from a certain point of view.”⁴

In the first quotation, Merleau-Ponty articulates our *situatedness* within structures. We are not outsiders, and we are not innocent. We are tainted. We are in a mess, and it is our mess. It is the ways we try to be part of and participants in shaping and making the content of the practice that we *feel* for and want to pursue further. It is a situatedness in which we are constantly effected by circumstances, by surroundings, by the people we deal with and confront. At the same time, we have the potentiality to effect our circumstances and our surroundings. It is for very good reasons that we are seen and acted upon as potentialities. There are no guarantees, but there are the need and necessity to be part of and part with—the being-of-the-world for which we are.

It is a being-in-the-world within a practice that is also by its character colored by its wish for and its need to be in direct touch and interaction with its collective self—a collective that is not given and stable but that must be constantly on the move, and in the making. It is an understanding of the acting agent of “I” that expands the notion of the very “I” by including parts in the process—that is, parts and particles that are effecting us. Not all of them, but the ones that we feel for and try to include. This is then a family—not a family of a man, but a family shaped by and from a first, second, and even perhaps third circle of (professionally defined) relatives, friends, and people next to whom we work. It is not, and it should not be made, more complicated than that, because dealing with the extended “I” is already enough of a challenge.

Moving to the second Merleau-Ponty quotation, this is where we slow down, take a step aside, and ask, hold on, what is going on? What is this “certain,” what is this “point,” what is this “view,” and how do they all come together in the act of perceiving?

If and when the “I” that we are dealing with is both situated and enlarged to conclude its immediate surroundings, all of the questions above must be addressed with care and with stamina in each meaningful situation. None of these are indeed certain. They are contested, contextual, conflictual, and constructed, but due to these very localized and effective complications, this is a site we face that is absolutely, positively very confusing, and therefore in order for us to deal with its demands, it must create and generate a surplus of the attitude called compassion. Not for the solitary figure standing alone in the rain, but for all the individuals taking part and wanting to be part of a process-based professional practice.⁵

Obviously enough, what Merleau-Ponty refers to with the word “certain” is not certainty, but rather the fact that whatever we do, we are looking, acting, saying, and standing *from* somewhere, and *toward* something that itself cuts out many other ways of looking, acting, saying, and standing. What we see or believe we see is always a perception of and with something. What Merleau-Ponty describes are both the spatial and temporal aspects of our perceptions. We are positioned, we are located, and it goes nearly without saying that this position and this location are not automatic, and are never not there yet. It is the very task of a committed and continuous practice to provide views and versions of the very practice that it keeps practicing. Again, it is not what we do, but how we do it.

The “view” that we choose to take, or that we out of the habit follow or adapt to, is situated within that position from which we speak and look. It is shaped within that location, through context and ongoing struggle to articulate that context. It is never a view from nowhere, because that in itself would be meaningless, incomprehensible. A view is a view when it is seriously connected to the previous and upcoming views of the same and similar sites and situations.

And yes, in the above stated Merleau-Ponty quotation, in between “a certain” and “a view” are the words “a point,” which puts the spell on and brings it all together—in order to be moving away again, and again. This point is what we make of and with it, and it is something we must stand up for and defend. we should be very careful to avoid believing that it is the only point, or the most acute point. It is one of many, and it is certainly the one made from a position and view combined together, but it is not much more. It has to stand there, and struggle for its recognition and its chances to say

something now and also tomorrow. It is a point that must be made, but not by wagging the finger, and not by shouting so that others have no lust or no motivation to come closer with their versions of the point. It is a point that must be made in a civilized way. It is an act that should, in fact, first let others make their points and while doing that, it must really concentrate on listening to the points that are made or that are in the process of being realized. This is nothing more and nothing less than the art of listening.⁶

Now, how many of us that want to be part of a collective give-and-take situation grounded in a committed and continuous practice are actually good at listening? Instead, how many of us have actually forgotten that very burning fact that unless we know how to listen and to listen with care and with the passions at play, we are not getting connected, and we are not in the process of making that context, that collective part of the practice? We are—oh, yes we are—so very well trained and accustomed to speeding up and shuffling through that listening is not only lacking, but also has almost disappeared from the agenda.

It is a sign of the times that we are still haunted by and hunting the consequences of the idea of the death of the author. And we are so busy at this act when all the while the actual problem has significantly shifted its location and its heartlands. There is much volume, noise, and visibility of authors claiming this and that, while something else is obviously there—not in a concentrated fashion, but amid the cacophony of the contemporary times of which we are all part. What we lack are the give-and-take sites of listening to and listening with where all of us emotional hooligans with a hungry heart and perhaps a bit too much of an appetite always need to return. We are facing a huge dilemma. It is not the death of the author; it is the lurking disaster, the almost-already-happened death of the listener.

The Combined Conditions of Our Conditions: Get Something Started

In order for the open-ended practice to survive, in order for us to keep on keeping on, what do we need to do? What is the adequate strategy, where can we locate some hope that will sustain our activities?

If there is hope, it is because we shape it for ourselves and by ourselves. It is the hope of an opening, the chance of doing things in an alternative way, of changing things, of making a difference. Not for issues at large, but within one's practice, within one's daily routines of doing what one is doing while doing it.

Hannah Arendt called it the human condition.⁷ It is a site and situation with which we have difficulties, and in which we constantly and always fall short. We fail to live up to our own expectations. But we move, and we keep on moving—agile, awake, and aware. It is the acts we act. And these acts can never ever make sense and reach their potentiality and their meaningfulness until they are done in cohesion, together as the act of loving to disagree about the same and similar issues. Not by running away, but by staying with, staying close. It is all about proximity.

The acts that we act are not motivated by and should not be motivated by any version of altruism or notions of being a good person. This would be a sure formula for an immediate catastrophe. We do the things we do because we want to do them. We want to invest our time, energy, wants and wishes, hope and fears—pretty much everything—in a manner that never ends up looking that neat or pretty. It is a horrible mess, but it is our mess, and it is the only mess we have. Taking part in the committed and continuous give-and-take processes of sending and receiving critique, and calling for responses and comments, is based on the most effective way of comprehending our deepest self-interests as professionals. Because, well, if you take, then remember to put back. Otherwise the shelves are soon enough empty.

This is not an argument for a social Darwinism. It is not the model for the survival of the fittest. It is an argument for a practice-based shared collective of the most crucial type of export-import. It is, in fact, like breathing in and breathing out. Never alone, but never just by holding hands and looking at the stars. We give because we do really want to get.

What the acts we act require and what they rely on is a matter that one cannot buy or borrow. It is formed and framed, gained and generated, but also lost and left beside within the acts we act. But without it—without established confidence at what one does when one does what one does—it is impossible to figure out how and even why one could and would question it, open it up, and open it up to share with others, all in order to get it back again.

The practice-based research community is a collective built upon reciprocally respected confidence. A confidence, not cockiness, in both the value and chances of what you do and in the value and possibilities of what people next to you do. It is never an issue of understanding it all, or of agreeing

with it all, because that would definitely take all of the air, all of the needed multiple and plural rhymes and rhythms, away. We need challenges, clashes, and collisions, but they must remain within the practice, within the frame that we frame with our acts that we act out. This is where we should be curious, caring, and filled with the fulfillment of serendipity.

As a way of concluding in connection with the overall frame for the quest for the common good created in and through participatory practice, it must be said that commitment, continuity, confidence, and collectivity all add up to the concept of trust. Never ever should it be blind trust, because then we only hurt ourselves. It is trust in the acts we act in and out, and it is trust in the meaningfulness and possibilities of the practices that we practice. It is trust that is made and shaped in and through participatory interaction. Because otherwise someone else will definitely be doing it, and doing it in ways that are not so pleasing. Therefore, we do have to get up, wake up, and start acting the acts. We must get ready for it—ready to start getting something started.

- 1 Alasdair MacIntyre, *The Tasks of Philosophy, Selected Essays*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 155.
- 2 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd. ed. (London: Duckworth, 1985), 187.
- 3 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2002), 527.
- 4 Ibid., 499.
- 5 Mika Hannula, *Politics, Identity and Public Space: Critical Reflections In and Through the Practices of Contemporary Art* (Utrecht: Expothesis, 2009), 33.
- 6 See Les Back, *The Art of Listening* (London: Berg Publishers, 2007)
- 7 See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), chapter V.

Experience as Thinking

Thinking is preeminently an art; knowledge and propositions which are the products of thinking, are works of art.¹

—John Dewey, 1929

John Dewey

For American philosopher John Dewey, knowledge is produced through the experimental process of inquiry we call experience—knowledge production is experiential. Experience is cognitive in a wide sense and, for Dewey, knowing in the conventional sense of known facts or things is but one mode of experiencing. Within this realm of experience, the making and experiencing of art holds a special place.² For Dewey, art is a particularly important mode of inquiry leading to knowledge production, because “art is the most direct and complete manifestation there is of experience *as* experience.”³ I’ll return to that point after considering the characteristics Dewey laid out for the experiential process of knowledge building.

First, knowledge creation is a *dialectic process*. It moves between doing and reflecting, making and thinking. Quite simply, Dewey said, “We do something to the thing and then the thing does something to us in return.”⁴ So experience has an active and a passive aspect: the active he called “trying,” doing an experiment in the world to find out something; and the passive he called “undergoing,” the necessary complement when in reflection we discover a connection among things. This is embodied in Dewey’s pedagogical principle of “learning by doing.”

Secondly, knowledge creation is a *relational process*. It is the making and articulating of relationships or connections to knowing in the world that constitutes thinking as an experience. Thinking is an experience because we

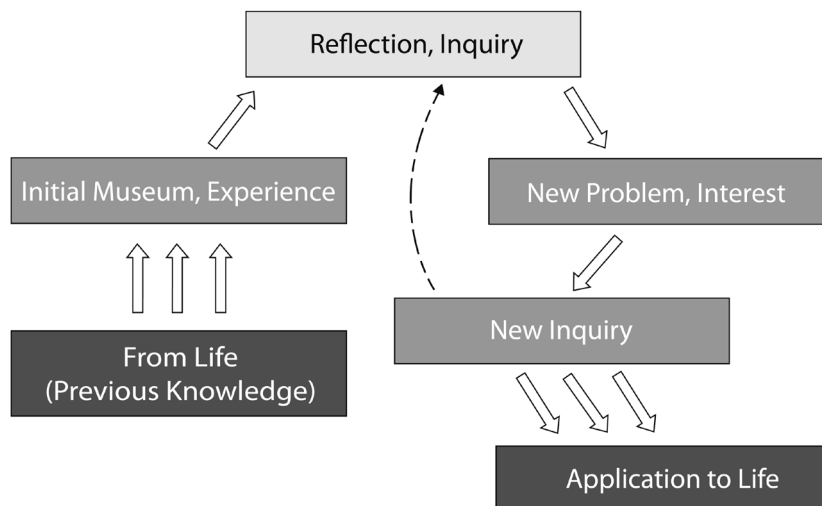


Figure 1: An education cycle, based on John Dewey. Adapted from George E. Hein's "John Dewey and Museum Education", *Curator*, no. 47 (October 2004).

move dialectically between looking at a problem, tentatively trying out an idea, and then considering its worth or meaning. "Thinking, in other words, is the intentional endeavor to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous."⁵ The importance of experience to the activity of thinking rests in the discernment of these relations, and for Dewey this is the genuinely intellectual or educational act. Hence, knowledge exists in relation: it is the making and articulating of relationships that constitutes thinking as an experience. And "ultimately, the value of knowledge is subordinate to its use in thinking."⁶

Thirdly, knowledge creation is a *progressive process*. It proceeds from the observation of a given situation and begins with having the right question. So at the outset it is essential for one to clearly define the aims of an inquiry before defining the goal or actual end result. It is critical for the aim to be rooted in values by which one can steer the course of research toward achieving a goal. What is perhaps most exciting for us in art schools, as understood by contemplating knowledge from Dewey's perspective, is that this process of coming to know is *as* important as what comes to be known. This we find omnipresent in the art school, where the process of trying and making abounds. So if thinking is an art, then for Dewey, not only is knowledge a work of art, but also "the process is art and its product, no matter at what stage it be taken, is a work of art."⁷

As a progressive process, the path of inquiry toward knowledge is uncertain. There are murky periods on the way to true discovery. As the process unfolds, Dewey observed, it passes through a disturbed, troubled, ambiguous, confused state. Yet it is in this very state that thinking happens. That is, "thinking occurs when things are uncertain or doubtful or problematic."⁸ So knowledge comes about not in a regular, mechanical way, but out of, and because of, this tension. Thus, in order to think we need to cultivate the capacity to sustain "the rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union" in order to arrive at new knowledge.⁹ This process has been called one of creative chaos.¹⁰

Dewey found that artists care in a peculiar way for this uncomfortable, uncertain phase of experience. Artists are adept in moments of resistance and tension, as they throw open the act of making to experimentation and innovation. The "new," a guidepost for the modern era, has come into contemporary art as a hallmark. Art, like science, has always been propelled by such creativity. In the creative process, artists employ unclear moments for the potential held by these periods of not knowing to bring to consciousness something new. In the attainment of equilibrium, in Dewey's terms, when the process is resolved or a work of art created, a new relationship to the environment is initiated and meaning is formed.

Fourthly, for Dewey, creating knowledge is a *continual process*: "Every successive stage of thinking is a conclusion in which the meaning of what has produced it is condensed; and it is no sooner stated than it is a light radiating to other things."¹¹ Hence, knowledge initiates new inquiries.

Finally, knowledge creation is a *dynamic process*. It is open-ended and changes with time and space. It is not didactic. Rather knowledge is referential and exists in individual ways. So knowledge production is not just about attaining the condition of having knowledge, but also about being in the process—the process of having an experience that holds the potential for meaning beyond itself.¹² So this process requires us to be aware, and the more awake we are, the more we can be attuned to locating experiential references and build knowledge. That is what we try to engender at an art school: to help students cultivate a state of consciousness during periods of becoming (when works are in progress), to be in the moment, and to make the most of those essential processes.

Not just artists undertake creative processes in making art; according to Dewey, everyone enters a creative process when experiencing a work of art.¹³ This is how art can lead us all to greater awareness and, for Dewey, art is the ideal means for cultivating this consciousness. Moreover, art's power to cultivate awareness makes it a transforming agent. So for Dewey art is central to a process of teaching and learning—and not just for learning art, but for all learning.

Still, of all Dewey's ideas on the subject of knowledge, what is most relevant here is that he asserted: "Art experience is a knowledge." To Dewey, works of art are not fixed things, but are both the "outcomes of inquires" and the "means of attaining knowledge of something else" by way of reflection.¹⁴ In this process, "in both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience."¹⁵ Thus, art is foundational to living; it informs us about and can contribute positively to the human condition.¹⁶ In the relationship between artist and audience, as Dewey sees it, art crystallizes experience in order to communicate and be experienced by others, revealing new meanings that find relation to the life experiences of others: arising from the artist's experience, art affords experiences to others. So, the experience of art is not just a knowledge-building activity for the artist, but can be so for everyone. As Dewey created his model for progressive education in America, creative making permeated his ideal public school system. The museum—the place for looking at and reflecting upon art—also had a unique place in Dewey's social model. And, art as a means of creating knowledge, was not just the domain of art schools, but should be the way all schools operate, Dewey imagined.

Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama

Turning to the corporate sector for another model of knowledge production, I will consider parallels between Dewey's philosophy and that of business management scholars Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama. Nonaka and Toyama have hypothesized that innovation and creative thinking in corporations is a *synthesizing process*.¹⁷ They define four phases: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization. Like Dewey, they place emphasis on process, recognizing the valuable potential for multiple outcomes and byproducts along the way when experimentation looks beyond a predefined result.

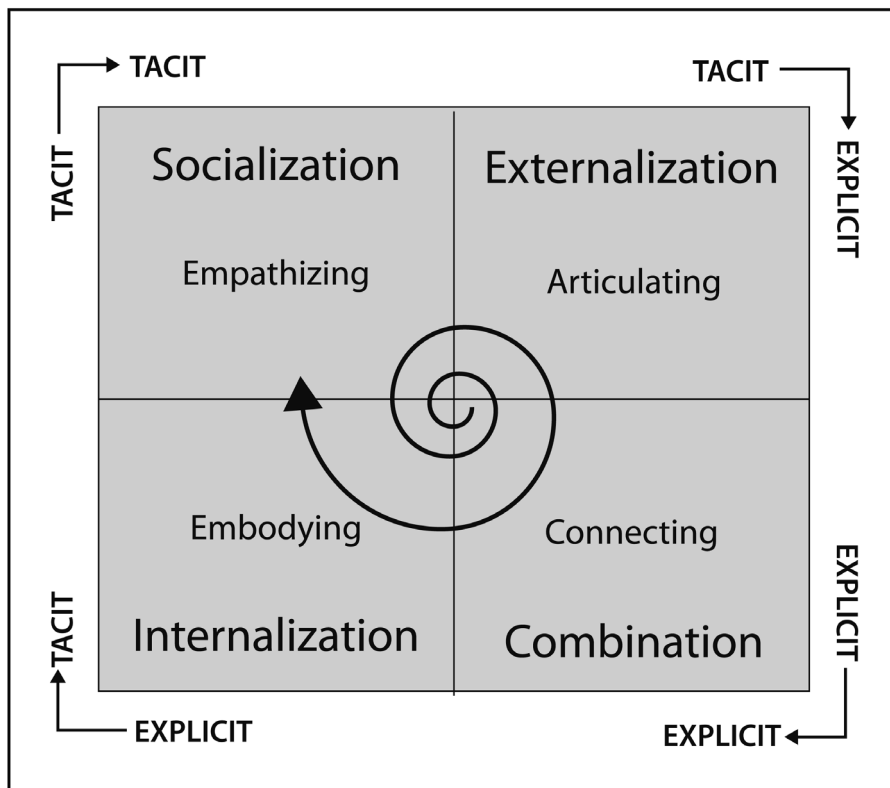


Figure 2: SECI model of knowledge creation. Adapted from Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama's "The Knowledge-Creating Theory Revisited: Knowledge Creation as a Synthesizing Process," in *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 2003.

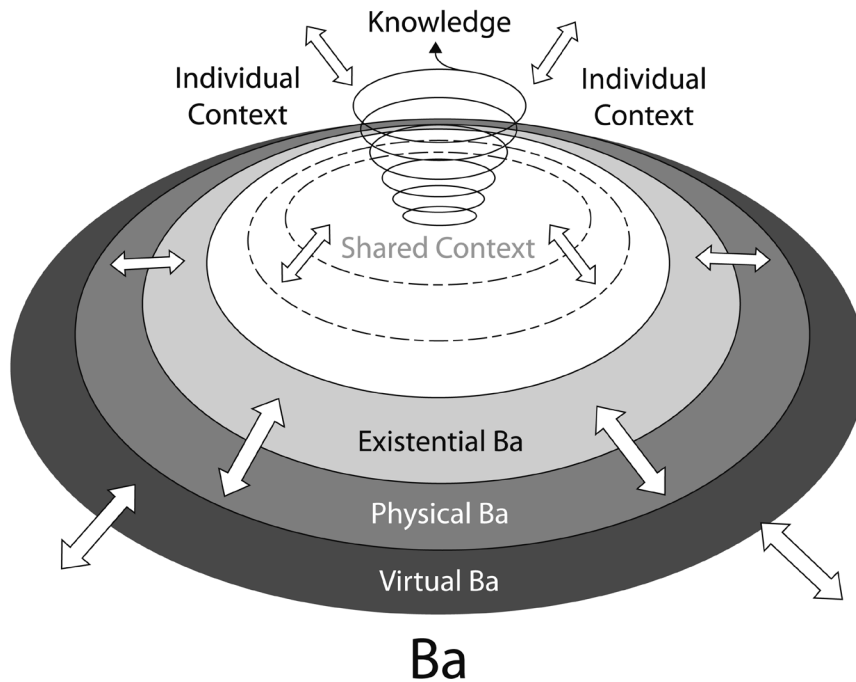


Figure 3: Conceptual representation of Ba. Adapted from Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama, "The Knowledge-Creating Theory Revisited: Knowledge Creation as a Synthesizing Process," in *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 2003.

Nonaka and Toyama propose that knowledge is created in a spiral that emerges from a *dialectical* interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Their process of knowledge building is also *progressive*; similarly to Dewey, it starts with observation. Their model is a *continual process*: one spiral triggers new spirals, each leading to new knowledge. However, unlike Dewey, theirs is a *collective* model wherein the knowledge held by individuals, who each have different points of views, is shared to form new knowledge. So the goal of the dialectical process is to synthesize these seemingly contradictory perspectives of tacit and explicit knowledge. Yet this synthesis is not a compromise; rather it is an integration of different aspects through dialogue and practices, welcoming these diverse viewpoints in order to gain a wider picture of reality. Hence their model is *dynamic*, changing with each context and group of participants.

As the spiral travels upward, shifting between ostensibly opposing poles (order and chaos, mind and body, thought and action, thinking and making), it traverses multiple viewpoints on a given subject of inquiry and weathers the

storm of creative chaos. However, while during this “disturbed, troubled, ambiguous, confused” phase Dewey speaks of the need for the individual to have the clear aims and focused intent guided by values, Nonaka and Toyama take a different strategy to arrive at knowledge creation in the business world. What becomes critical in their model is the necessity of engendering a shared context in which individuals’ tacit knowledge assets can be exchanged and converted into new knowledge, thus moving the process along and up the spiral. So in contrast to Dewey’s relational model, in which new ideas are formed in thoughtful reflection by the individual, Nonaka and Toyama’s model places emphasis on the sharing and interaction of one’s ideas in relation to those of others.

Nonaka and Toyama employ the Japanese word *Ba* to denote this space of shared context. We might relate this to what Dewey sought to engender in the space of the classroom and in the larger framework of a society based on participatory democracy. Like Dewey’s process of knowledge production, *Ba* is dynamic and continual. It is in continual motion; it transcends time, space, and organizational boundaries to create knowledge. It has an open, permeable boundary—it is an open space—allowing for the sharing of time and space through direct experience. *Ba* is fluid; it can change quickly. So persons come and go, sharing a connection and a relation to the context for a time. *Ba* is best when it is self-organizing, emanating from a shared intention, direction, or mission, as occurs when a group undertakes a project. And like Dewey’s necessary tension, *Ba* generates energy to produce knowledge through the very contradictions present in its dialectical process and among its participants.

Productively *Ba* is able to hold space open for experimentation and change to occur. Creative chaos is held within the safe space of *Ba*, where things can be tested and from which new knowledge can arise. It is within such a space that art is made, too, both individually and collectively. Art benefits from, and even demands, the open space of *Ba*. Furthermore, art itself can be *Ba*. It can become a zone, a shared and open context for anyone, where communication and understanding can happen, and where change and new knowledge can occur.

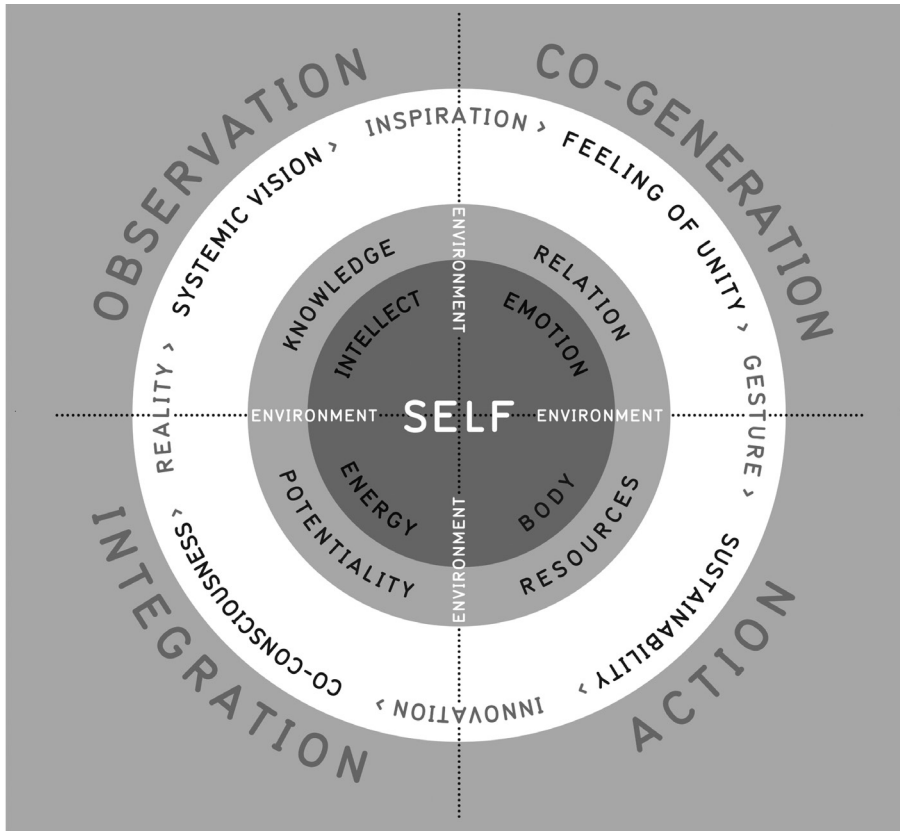


Figure 4: Co-Creation Circle, © 2011 artway of thinking.

The final model for creating knowledge presented here is that of the Venetian arts collective artway of thinking. Their Co-Creation Circle translates knowledge building to the process of art making. Like both models above, it is *dialectical, relational, progressive, continual, and dynamic*. It is a cycle of both individual thought, as Dewey described, and of collective thinking, as Nonaka and Toyama lay out.¹⁸ Artway's emphasis, however, seeks to bring these two modalities of self and group together and into alignment with each other and with the environment. They seek to instruct on not only the way art happens, but also on how creative thinking in non-art sectors can occur. And in the case of their artistic practices, these are one and the same.

For artway of thinking, the creative process builds knowledge *dialectically* in each quadrant of the diagram by asking among the group: Has the goal of

that phase been attained? What has been learned? What does it mean? How does it affect how to move forward? Here strategic, business-like analysis joins with self-critique and critique of the work, a practice well known from art school assessments. The *relational* aspect comes into play, too. How has the way things relate to reality changed? How might reality be changed for the common good?

The process at artway of thinking always begins, as for Dewey, with observation of the given situation at hand. Like Nonaka and Toyama, it moves between tacit and explicit knowledge gathered through a systemic observation of reality. With artway of thinking this leads to an inspired gesture; from there, the new knowledge gained can be converted into forms of sustainable innovation. This knowledge made explicit alters the baseline of tacit knowledge about a real situation and becomes integrated into our consciousness or collective understanding. So the process is *progressive* as it moves with each quarter turn.

For each project undertaken as a collective (or for an individual who practices this methodology), works of art and works of social change are responsive, following their own unique courses and timeframes. So this process is *dynamic*, not formulaic or what Dewey called “didactic.” As with the other models examined, the process of knowledge creation is *continual*. Here this is demonstrated by the cyclical nature of the diagram: the process moves from observation to co-generation to action, finally arriving at integration, only to begin anew—though most importantly—starting at a new point.

This sequence of processes brings about a synthesis of different points of view (within the self or among persons) to incorporate, as with Nonaka and Toyama, a wider picture of reality. Artway of thinking’s integration phase parallels Nonaka and Toyama’s fourth and final phase of internalization, in which knowledge is embodied. For Dewey this is when, having undergone an integration of experience, new knowledge is applied to life; for him, it is in the undergoing that change happens. For all three models, the aim of creating new knowledge is change. But only John Dewey and “artway of thinking” trust the unique capabilities of art in this process: for them, art is knowledge building, and art is transformative. Perhaps most significant here, the knowledge-building process for “artway of thinking,” like in the business model, requires the presence of *Ba*. For “artway of thinking” *Ba* is engendered by the co-creation process. It exists in practicing the diagram.

The Co-Creation Circle is a roadmap, a safety net and tether, a mandala representing the process and on which to focus attention.

Curatorial Reflections on an Art School

Ba can also bring about a space of potentiality in an art school. We might also consider the experimental space of artmaking as *Ba*. It is the space where potentiality can be enacted upon by students and faculty in an engaged process of learning-by-creating.

Art practice in the art school incorporates making and reflecting; it is a *dialectic process*, as Dewey already noted. Connections are made along the way, so it is *relational*, and as ideas get disconnected or reconnected in different ways, the process is *dynamic*. Ultimately reaching resolution when an artwork or project is completed, it is *progressive*. This occurs with each project, each semester, and each year, so it is *continual*. Practice reinforces this process, making it habit-forming, so that the cycles can occur productively into the future.

For me, as a curator, *Ba* also describes the process of contemporary curatorial practice of collaboration with artists and audiences, and of how I make exhibitions. This is a mode of curatorial process I have found especially attuned an art school. For me curating has become more about taking care of art's processes than about selecting artworks. The curating process is also about cultivating the space of *Ba*.

An example of a collective process of knowledge production within the art school is "Learning Modern" at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2008–11). This was a program of art-as-a-thinking-process, an exercise in learning-by-doing, thinking-in-making. Those engaged investigated core questions through a shared experience: Why does modernism remain alive in the thought and action of contemporary artists, architects, and designers? How is modernism alive in their practices? How could school, the city of Chicago, and its public embrace the dynamic impulse of modernism?

The art-making and exhibition-making experience was a thinking process. The process *was* the product. This learning process threaded through all of the projects and programs that comprised "Learning Modern" as they led to and fed off of each other. It was sustained by the participants' commitment to the shared context—*Ba*—and undertaken as a deep investigation of the

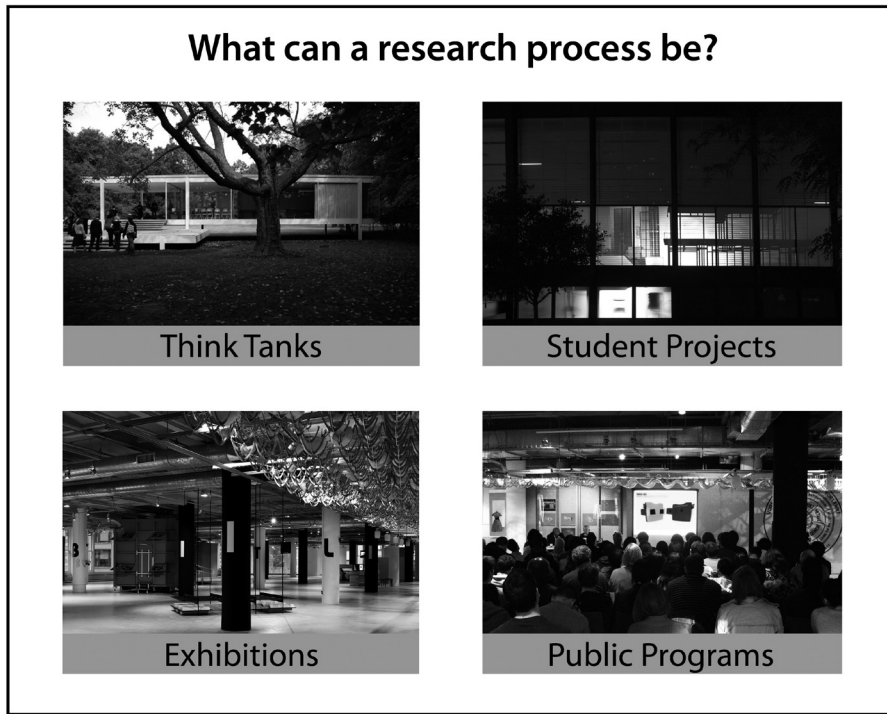


Figure 5: Learning Modern © 2009 The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

subject with openness to others. In this open process of “not knowing,” we resisted defining outcomes at the outset (even leaving open the possibility that the endeavor would not be an exhibition), and instead moved along a progressive path that included defining goals. We listened to where the process took us—individually and collectively—as faculty, students, visiting artists, scholars, colleagues from other cultural institutions in Chicago, and the public. Sharing this open, generative process, being together in a state of creative chaos, we cycled many times between trying and undergoing, making and reflecting, and tacit and explicit forms of knowledge.

My curatorial task was to cultivate this hybrid creative-thinking space and then to keep alive the space of *Ba*. The curating process meant creating a space for *not knowing* to exist. It included enabling those involved to be comfortable with the discomfort that comes with a project-in-progress, during which speculative propositions can raise self-doubt along with collective insecurity, interpersonal tension, and institutional fears. It was necessary for the artists and others to be able to imagine what could be, along with new possibilities for the use of facilities and finances, either unprecedented

or as adapted organizational systems. It was a process driven by our shared research agenda, and was affected by the ideas that emerged. It was not an attempt to fill an existing box—be it the gallery, the budget, institutional expectations, or the way the artists and others had worked before. This, of course, always becomes a dialectical process, too, between resources and desires. But the aim of the process allowed us to play out ideas and to realize as much potential as possible.

The outcomes of “Learning Modern” took the form of exhibitions, lectures, student projects, and newly commissioned works by artists, designers, and architects. A book emerged, too, from this evolved process: *Chicago Makes Modern: How Creative Minds Shaped Society*. Unlike an exhibition catalogue that records what is known at the point in time when an exhibition opens, this volume used the exhibition as part of the research process and benefited from all that unfolded in the program.

The art school was the right place for this open-ended research process—maybe the only place. The art school is a collective culture of makers, exploring and researching, who are comfortable in the process of becoming. It is their way of working. Unlike the museum, the art school allows for an exhibition to be a shared set of inquiries, drawing from the diverse ideas and backgrounds of those involved, valuing both their intuitive and factual knowledge, and enabling knowledge building to be carried out in the practice of individual and collective work. In fact, collectivity is a primary modality in our art school. It takes the form of classes, workshops, and direct artistic collaborations; it incorporates dialogue among students and faculty, between the school community and the community-at-large. Here exhibitions are a means to create and to understand, to practice and to experience. It is a way to integrate existing types of knowledge and to generate new knowledge.

Dewey said, “Thinking originates in situations where the course of thinking is an actual part of the course of events and is designed to influence the results.”¹⁹ So it is in the art school.

1 John J. McDermott, *The Philosophy of John Dewey, Volume I: The Structure of Experience*, and *Volume II: The Lived Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 316.

2 Ibid., 240–41. Dewey wrote that art is “A strain of experience rather

- than an entity [for example a painting or sculpture] in itself.” John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934; New York: Penguin, 2005), 344. See also “The Pattern of Inquiry” written by Dewey in 1938 in McDermott, 223–39.
- 3 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 309.
 - 4 McDermott, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, 495.
 - 5 Ibid., 495, 500.
 - 6 Ibid., 505.
 - 7 Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 373.
 - 8 McDermott, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, 502. This is, in part, because: “While a conclusion follows from antecedents, it does not follow from ‘premises,’ in the strict, formal sense.” Ibid., 316.
 - 9 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 14.
 - 10 For a discussion of this concept, see Mary Jane Jacob, “In the Space of Art,” in *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, eds. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 167.
 - 11 McDermott, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, 316.
 - 12 Ibid., 181.
 - 13 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 348. “We understand it [art] in the degree in which we make it part of our own attitudes, not just by collective information concerning conditions under which it was produced ... To some degree we become artists ourselves as we undertake this integration, and, by bringing it to pass, our own experience is reoriented.” This is more than twenty years before Marcel Duchamp famously delivered his 1957 speech “The Creative Act” in which he spoke of the role of the spectator, though this has often been misunderstood. See also Jacquelynn Baas, “Unframing Experience,” in *Learning Mind: Experience Into Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 217–29.
 - 14 Ibid., 182, 223.
 - 15 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 302.
 - 16 As McDermott writes, “Dewey sees an analysis of art as providing a microcosm of the pattern of relations at work in the doing and reflecting which characterizes the human endeavor overall.” McDermott, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, 301.
 - 17 See Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama, “The Knowledge-Creating Theory Revisited: Knowledge Creation as a Synthesizing Process,” *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* 1, no. 1 (July 2003): 2–10, <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/kmrp/journal/v1/n1/pdf/8500001a.pdf>.
 - 18 Even though Dewey located his model in the individual, his concern

was always with the individual in relation to society. Hence his ideas became the cornerstone of participatory democracy. Meanwhile, though Nonaka and Toyama speak of group interaction, they address the individual in the initial socialization stage of their process where the goal is self-transcendence, which is necessary for the group to function. Thus, these three models share more than they do on first sight.

- 19 McDermott, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, 50.

Artistic Research Formalized into Doctoral Programs

It is important to remind those readers who are not familiar with the current Finnish situation that a new type of university, namely the “Art University,” has been established in Finland. The Theatre Academy, the Sibelius Academy, and the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts all belong to this new “category”: they are small, autonomous institutions with the right to examine students on pre- and postgraduate (including doctoral) levels according to artistic standards.

Therefore the common questions concerning the relation between art education and universities are, in a certain way, turned upside down in the case of Finland—instead of looking at art’s complicated relation to science, the Finnish art universities are developing a new paradigm within academic research: artistic research.

The process, however, is not a simple one and in this paper I will try to describe the essential features of Finnish (doctoral) training within the field of artistic research.

Introduction

The following text is based on my own experience as a student (from 1997 to 2002), and as a professor of artistic research (from 2004 to the present) within the doctoral program at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Although I will touch upon some of the fundamental ontological and epistemological issues of artistic research, I will mainly focus on the practical aspects of doctoral programs and artistic research. While I was writing this paper, I tried to remain aware of the limits of the addressed arguments. Although the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts enjoys the status of an independent university, endowed with artistic freedom and the right to confer doctorates in fine art, most art universities have had no choice but to link their activities

to science-oriented universities and to force artistic research into a module in order to fit the requirements of the science university and its standards for doctoral degrees.

The Concepts of Artistic Research and Prejudices Against Them

Practice-based research, practice-led research, studio-based research—there is no shortage of nomenclature for research conducted in art universities and other higher education institutions. The nuances and slight differences between these terms are not relevant, however. They all seek to put a name to research in which practice plays a more central role than in the so-called purely theoretical and/or conceptual research. A much more important distinction is that between arts research and artistic research.

Rather than being insignificant or ideological, the difference between these two terms is quite fundamental. Arts research is the investigation of objects of art that are separate from the person conducting the research (in other words, it is directed toward art), whereas artistic research is an investigative endeavor undertaken with the means of art (it is directed from art toward the world). Arts research inscribes in a traditional academic research, in which new knowledge is communicated textually in the form of a dissertation—just as universities have always done—whereas, in artistic research, the process and result (whether in the form of a thesis or some other demonstration of scholarship and skill) consist not only of text or other types of verbalizations, but also of works of art intended for sensory appreciation, and whose meaning may be quite complex and ambiguous.

The artistic aspect of artistic research has often been criticized for containing a dimension of subjectivity and relativity. In essence, the critics ask:

How does this kind of practice differ from other artistic practice, and what is the need for so-called research? Is it not enough that artists make works of art just as they have always done? In what follows, I will try to respond to this criticism.

Works completed under the rubric of artistic research do not necessarily differ in any way from art made “elsewhere” in the art world, and the venues where they are exhibited are traditional spaces, art galleries, and museums. However, only a few critics of artistic research have discussed the fact that the practices and works of doctoral students may have developed during their studies in a direction that would not have been possible under the conditions of an “ordinary” artistic practice. How can such development be promoted in practice, and how is it evaluated? It is promoted—just as the work of students is promoted in all branches of education—through pedagogy, that is to say, through professional and competent artistic supervision as well as through seminars and critiques that, more often than not, take place within a circle of others engaged in research. It is evaluated by experts (supervisors), by numerous visiting critics, and finally by external opponents.

It should also be borne in mind that artistic research also includes writing or other types of verbalization. It does not necessarily have to be scientific and academic, but it does have to produce knowledge in its own field, and at best also serve others who are interested in art.

There is a general misconception that artists engaged in artistic research only write about themselves or their own work. In actual practice, however, artists may be too careful not to focus on themselves and their own practices, in which case they run the danger of drifting too far from their own core competences. The “self” seems to have become almost taboo, which is rather surprising, considering the increasing prominence of auto-ethnography in humanistic and social-scientific research fields. One reason for such neglect of the self may be related to the fact that the notion of the artist with “a big ego endlessly generating itself” has lost its prevalence. Operating in the world of contemporary art demands that practitioners engage themselves in a process of constant contextualization, which is sometimes even too much.

Another aspect of artistic research that has largely been overlooked is related to the question of what kinds of effects reflection and contextualization—undertaken in writing—of an artist’s practice have on that artist’s

works. This has obviously been discussed, but the discussion has mostly been rather superficial and, in some cases, has even involved underrating the artist's intellectual capacity. In the golden age of modernism (mostly in the 1940s and '50s) it was actually thought, rather simplistically, that verbalization has a detrimental effect on the artist's freshness and uniqueness and that a "conscious artist" would only illustrate theories.

Through most of history, a writing artist was considered more or less a curiosity; some have even advanced the notion that art making is a kind of compensation for not being able to express oneself in writing or conceptually. This has changed over the past couple of decades, however, especially in the 1990s: many contemporary artists are excellent writers, and it has been discovered that many artists who were considered "mute" in the 1950s and '60s did actually write, but never published their texts. And to verify this shift one only need take a look at the shelves of any major art bookshop in Europe or America: there is a new category known as "Artists' Writings."

To return to the main question: How do theorizing, contextualizing, and writing affect artists and their practices? Are the artists more conscious as a result? Does it improve their eyes for the artistic game? Yes, certainly—there is no doubt about it. But these are fairly automatic results, and any artist worth his or her salt is careful not to become a mere mechanical producer at the expense of his or her artistic creativity. A much more interesting effect is that which takes place in between practice and thinking (or writing/theorizing/contextualizing), in the meeting between the cognitive and the bodily and sensory aspects of the craft. It is this grey area that comprises the greatest benefit that artistic research confers on the artist and on his or her colleagues and audience, but the underlying methodology and associated "knowledge" are difficult to define and to share.

The Artist and Doctoral Education

Many doctoral programs do not like to take on recent graduates, demanding instead that their students have had the practical experience of operating in the profession. This is a sound principle—after all, doctoral studies are much more demanding than studies for a master's degree.

Student admission is one of the most difficult and complex issues in any doctoral research program. One key factor in this is that, unlike the BA or even the MA level, postgraduate education does not seek to "shape" students,

but is instead concerned with steering their interests toward research. The main criterion in postgraduate student admission is therefore not talent and/or skills, but suitability. Consequently, we must ask, do the portfolio and research plan of the prospective research student include such elements that they might eventually constitute artistic research? And what would such “elements” be? The question could also be reformulated more broadly and more provocatively: Are all artists (with an MFA in their pocket) suited to artistic research on the doctoral level?

Artistic research requires that a student have the desire and the ability to engage critically in the interaction between conceptualization and practice. It is clear that this is not every artist’s cup of tea, if only for the reason that many are quite satisfied with just the practice. Moreover, many artists find it difficult to make a long-term commitment to a specific theme, research question, and research plan. But what about those who have the willingness and the interest? Are some of them (I am specifically thinking about prospective doctoral students here) more suited than others, and how can we find out? Perhaps by reading their research plans? Undoubtedly so, but it is at least as important, if not more important, to consider the evaluation of the prospective students’ portfolios themselves as part of the admission criteria. This may sound like a truism, but it is not. Portfolio evaluation calls for experience in traditional artistic practice as well as in research, and most artists do not possess this combination, not to mention the required theoretical knowledge.

This lack of expertise is quite common in institutions of artistic research, which simply lack the required traditions, experience, and structured guidelines. In art universities linked to science universities, this lack of competence is solved by delegating evaluation to people with formal qualifications, which in practice means doctors of academic disciplines—which is unforgivable, considering the nature of artistic research. My contention is that a good application to an artistic doctoral research program should include not only an interesting textual research topic, but also, and more importantly, artistically interesting work. If this is not the case, artistic research runs the risk of ending in a ghetto of uninteresting arts research.

The Hidden Potential of Postgraduate Programs and Research Schools
Studying to become a doctor is, at least in Finland, traditionally considered a long-term and generally solitary endeavor for artists who already

have a career and who are often rather advanced in age. In the past couple of decades, however, the situation has changed dramatically: as a result of the demands for efficiency made on the public sector, the government has funded research schools and other programs to speed up and diversify doctoral studies. Tighter schedules are always a problem, of course, but the networking and sense of community created by research schools and similar institutions is an excellent thing for artistic research. Why?

Research schools and doctoral programs in artistic research offer opportunities to engage in artistic practice and reflection in a way that is relatively independent of the art market and also potentially cross-disciplinary and experimental. We must remember that artistic research is a new institution in the art world, one that is viewed with suspicion by commercial art circles with their penchant for the traditional idea of artishood.

That said, we must nevertheless be careful when setting up research schools and doctoral programs for artists: in Finland at least, it has been rather common, with good reason, to be concerned about getting funding from the world of science (in Finland represented by the Academy of Finland). This involves the risk that art, as a non-scientific discipline, is excluded, and artists, if they want money, are, once again, turned into pseudo-scientists.

For the purposes of the future development of artistic research, doctoral programs established within art universities as part of their regular operations are a more interesting option than national or international cross-disciplinary and artistic research schools: a carefully drawn-up curriculum for doctoral research in an art university, with all the seminars, symposia, and other activities for researching artists that that entails, is at best a new, and radical, player in the world of art.

Teaching Contemporary Art (and Aesthetics)

I teach aesthetics to philosophers, to designers, and to art historians. They all have different interests in art and aesthetics; some even don't. But what they, on average, have in common, is that they do not want "the history of" approach, starting with twenty or 500 years ago and arriving (or, usually not quite) at contemporaneity at the end of course. They want to start with contemporaneity not because they like it most, but because they were already too exposed to specifically historicist educational approaches, which were invented in the seventeenth century by Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet *ad usum Delphini*—for the successor of the crown—as a proof of humanity's progress and of God's providence. Students want to start with contemporaneity (or contemporarity, as it is called in some other circles) because they believe neither in humanity's progress nor in God's providence. And, to add yet another negation, they do not want to become successors to the crown, that is, to become a young generation that will make the dreams of their forefathers come true. So, since they want to start with now, that is what we do. But there are obstacles.

The first obstacle is that a step aside from progressive history of mankind in art and aesthetics is not a step from one idea or concept of time to another.¹ Contemporaneity, at least as it is often understood today, is not a category of time and does not appear on the time scale, coordinated as an answer to Paul Gauguin's fin de siècle title: *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* Contemporaneity is about orientation in space because it describes that which is assembled together. There is a lot. There is an astonishing crowd and a frightening mass of art and of aesthetics, produced by artists and philosophers alike, with the additional and abundant help of all the other involved professionals and engaged laity. This does not call for orientation in time—offering guiding ideas of progress, modernity,

avant-gardism, retro-gardism, decline, or decadence, each of which includes ultimate end, *causa finalis*—but rather it calls for an apparatus of orientation in and through this abundance. Being philosophers or designers or art historians, students need at least a hint where to put themselves on a map, if it is possible to make a map out of such a chaotic dis-cyclopaedia at all. They would like to take a position from which it is possible to see it all, to occupy the best point both to get a feeling for it and to collect as much insight about it as possible—a position that we all want to get as a spectacle, where everybody involved thinks that the others got a better place, while he or she was put on the backside of a construction's pillar. Said differently: they would like to occupy the best place for seeing the production from among the actors on stage rather than from among the audience.

In need of a historical example (I myself cannot put history aside) of a similar situation, we cannot name the Copernican turn (1543). We are confronted with a situation similar to consequences of the Western conquest of the world after 1492, when the world came to be accepted as a globe: a planet-ball. During a few centuries, unforeseen and unprecedented varieties and abundances of species of all kinds were discovered, including different humans and their cultures, arts, and customs. This abundance of natural and human artifacts and phenomena called for an apparatus of orientation, because without it, in spite of all the ways found and mapped to travel around and across the world, it was not possible to think about the earth as a consistent place to live in. One of many planets circling around the Sun was still meant to be, in the post-Copernican philosophical turn, a privileged place of human certainty and freedom, and (as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz has it) the best of all possible worlds. Massive appearances of differences put under suspicion the possibility of finding reasons and causes for such a

state, and—more importantly—it questioned the essence of privileged narrative: its end. End is not just a final coma of storytelling but has to be an end in itself, a conclusion that offers the final cause of the whole narrative. The first need, therefore, was for some discernibility of a plan in that multitude of found objects, a need which gave birth to *taxonomy*, which became an independent science in itself, but which is now nearly forgotten, or mentioned only as a side auxiliary to more fundamental scientific fields, very probably because its prominent position has been taken now by *statistics*. Taxonomy was invented to arrange a seemingly infinite variety of minerals, animals, people, customs, cultures, etc., into a certain and controllable image, and into a departmentalized idea of the whole. The basic concept was used in traditional museums before interactive media, video, and similar innovations were used in taxonomy. The image of the whole was necessary to produce orientation from the first step on, before any idea of an end of this abundant mass of collected data could be constructed. Of course, there were other ways tried, among them cultural pessimism, maintaining that our world is, ultimately, not really the best of all possible worlds, and that we live in unbelievable chaos without any hint of order. Some baroque ideas could testify to that.

Contemporaneity is a name for a space similarly crowded with artifacts, and calling for taxonomy, mapping, and a compass. Taxonomy shows a difference between supposedly Chinese and Western encyclopedia.² Taxonomy depends on definitions, in contrast to present conditions of academic knowledge that detest them. Taxonomy means to avoid accepting things as they are, instead putting some sense into them through an arrangement of a chaotic crowd into manageable order. It is not expected anymore that “the new” will arise as a consequence of historical movement of modernity toward a future (understood as temporal movement to perfection, or as a decline and fall, perhaps even as a catastrophe). “New” is already here somewhere, but we could miss it because we have so much in front of us, so it has to be discovered by taxonomic enumeration of cases and instances, put in a menu order before digestion. This is not postmodernism anymore, because in postmodernism the phrase “Anything goes!” meant a newfound freedom of artistic possibilities and the end of art history, while now “Anything goes!” means that any kind of putting art to order is an appropriate start. This ordering can use any kind of concepts and theories, as long as they offer some better ideas about the astonishing variety and multitude of artworks, movements, and institutions that, taken all together, may not

even fall into the same family, because in family you have to be related, even when you do not share a family resemblance. Is contemporarity of contemporary art the only mark of family resemblance left? And, do the works all come from Adam and Eve, or do some of them have a more divine or more hellish origin? The taxonomic girdle has to place the field under some control, but, as in the example mentioned above, it does not need a fixed viewpoint of an end. It has to be able to move around the countryside, measuring distances, altitudes, and depressions along with similarities and differences. It is an empirical task built on an ideology of preexisting order and on an ideology of common family origin, or, in pessimistic cases, of no origin worth mentioning. The second ideological position about contemporary art is preferred, because optimism about a harmonious whole of art is not that popular anymore. The method is like the constant movement of a scientist of a kind described by Karl Marx: a mineralogist jumping from one side of the world to another, hilariously pointing at rocks and repeatedly yelling “This is mineral! A mineral! Another mineral! Again a mineral,” and so on. Taxonomy has to be generally accepted to become a good tool for orientation. Until it happens, there are as many ways to describe the countryside as there are countrysides, from one contemporary art institution to another. This is much different than what happened in the case of museums of modern art, which more or less followed one common model. Museums of modern art appeared when modern art already had some past, but also some presupposed future, in order to collect their permanent exhibitions from the past, and to exhibit new modern artworks not as contemporary art but as potential enrichment of the collection that already has some taxonomy built in it. Contemporary art museums each have a taxonomy of their own, and it is a preferred mode of existence to have a taxonomy of contemporaneity that is obviously different from that of the neighboring museum. One can make as many taxonomic images of contemporary art as material allows. At this moment, we still have not arrived at a parallel to Carl von Linné in contemporary art, and even when we do get there, it will not be a theory but rather a well and acceptably arranged collection. We are still in need of an analogue to Charles Darwin.

The second obstacle, however, is not this taxonomic approach, an approach which starts from a non-Leibnizian world—not the best of all possible worlds. The second obstacle is not the question of how we can understand, or at least, envisage, a contemporary art world of an infinite number of art species. That an infinity of infinite progress is bad infinity (*schlechte*

Unendlichkeit) is one of Hegel's most insistent points.³ Bad infinity in the taxonomy of art shows that we are at a pre-theoretical stage of examination in contemporary art, and have not reached the point of synthesis of infinity with its finity. That much is understandable and reasonable. We can still conclude that in due time, we will be able to construct not only an acceptable schema for contemporary art but also a general theory of it. But how is it possible to like contemporary art, or to see it as an action important for our lives? Art used to be important as action that "creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history,"⁴ or, where transcendental subjectivity starts with a breakthrough to move in the direction of freedom as realization of human existence.⁵ With contemporaneity as approach, both action and transcendence, which are tightly connected with the future as a specifically human horizon, fall out of the picture, and the following view of Kant's third critique is irreparably broken: the view of hope—of telos or *causa finalis*—or, the view of an end.

Once again, art's fate in contemporaneity is deplored or criticized, and contemporary art is disliked. We can see the whole field in combination through Michael Kelly's conclusion that all aesthetic theories are iconoclastic, by which he means "a combination of *disinterest and distrust in art*,"⁶ and through Donald Kuspit's diagnosis that "postart is completely banal art—unmistakably everyday art, neither kitsch nor high art, but an in-between art that glamorizes everyday reality while pretending to analyze it."⁷ Finally, we arrive at cultural pessimism. Gerard Vilar's study *Desartización: Paradojas del arte sin fin*⁸ speaks about tradition and contemporaneity of "the end of art" theories that have now become theories about the end of art's end, and of art after the end of its end. This sounds complicated, but to look for an explanation the best approach is to take it from the title onward. The word *Desartización* is a Spanish translation of Theodor W. Adorno's *Entkunstung*, which has two sides: one is that art cannot continue to represent truth without destroying its own material and means of expression, because the world is not harmonious and even its perspectives aren't bright anymore, and another is that because of such necessity the distance and misunderstanding between art and its public is increasing. Adorno coined his term *Entkunstung*, however, because the more familiar or perhaps too familiar *Entartung* ("degeneracy"), embraced by Nazi Kunst politics as a slogan against post-classical music, for instance, would not do anymore. But *Entartung* was not a Nazi invention. They adopted it from Max Nordau's book of the same title, which appeared at the end of the nineteenth century,

and, founded in Cesare Lombroso's views, claimed that contemporary artists were decadent and even mentally or otherwise sick and abnormal types who should be in asylums and not in art. There is a great difference between Max Nordau and Theodor W. Adorno, but not an insurmountable one, especially if we take into account that Adorno's most sophisticated criticism is that of American Negro music. What I have in mind, however, is not criticism of Adorno but a real need to reread the contemporary aesthetics of the end of art, and of the absence of any end in art, by comparing it to Max Nordau, and to the consequences his healthy Zionist ideology of art had. Cultural pessimism is a tax paid for taxonomy in a place where an autotelic reason for art's contemporary existence should be given. Contemporaneity does not possess any end in itself, but it repeatedly demands that art should deliver it. Should we really blame art for not being "Hello telos!" home delivery, with an end to satisfy anybody's historical appetite?

This includes the end of the avant-gardes as movements that transported the end of art from the metaphysical into the physical world, and the beginning of public questioning of high art's elitism in the name of democracy. Such questioning happened in the United States at the beginning of the 1990s and in France just a little bit later. French polemics about and against contemporary art were analysed by Yves Michaud. He gave the first list on which three main arguments against contemporary art belong to all of those who enter the debate, without any differentiation between left and right, democratic or authoritarian, general public or intellectual specialist. These groups all agreed that no aesthetic criteria should apply to contemporary art any more, that contemporary art is nothing but a product of a market, and that it is separated from its public, which could no longer understand it.⁹ These were quite banal arguments, as were all of the other arguments on the list, which all participants of the general debate did not necessarily share. This (together with many similar cases from other cultures) leads to another conclusion: concerning contemporary art, fundamental and substantial aesthetic and philosophical debate, discussion, and polemics are not really possible.

Contemporaneity as a place without progressive temporality makes sense, even a lot of sense and perhaps too much sense, but it has no end in itself. It does not hope for future progress but for an extension of contemporaneity, and it does not hope to develop into something new but to develop persistent steadiness. When we speak about art as contemporary art—that contemporaneity is its new stage or form—then in terms of aesthetics of

contemporaneity, we have to admit that art is not an autotelic world anymore. Not because it would not possess autonomy anymore, but because it has no telos, while autonomy of art, deprived of its end, has become just a legal issue. And, as political debates on contemporary art show, even the legal issue of autonomy of art does not apply when public funds are concerned, because what applies here is moral taste for art among the majority.¹⁰

To give another example, more recent than discovery of the rest of the world that has always already been there: aesthetics, as well as the art of the twentieth century, already over and complete, are represented now as being over, but not necessarily as the past. Instead of historicization, a method that adapts past for present use, taxonomy is used, which treats all of its phenomena as contemporary, which is a much better way if you have to fill in and fill up all buildings devoted to art of the twentieth century, from the Tate Modern to the renovated Beaubourg and elsewhere. No new artwork can be added to the story, and no new aesthetic view could emerge in a century that has already passed away. What could be done and redone is the story told about it. Is it a story with an end in itself (a history—*historia*), a chronological cronicle, or a taxonomical redistribution into evolutionary compartments? Mario Perniola told the story of twentieth-century aesthetics¹¹ to prove that its history is consistent, from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten to Kant to Hegel and on, which gave a result quite similar to Clement Greenberg's insistence on continuity in painting from Renaissance to Abstract Expressionism, but which provided us with a table of five aesthetic approaches and their respective cultural turns in the 1960s, which at least make sense, even if this taxonomy cannot assure that aesthetics has any end. The image we get is taxonomically acceptable and possible, even manageable, but it is not autotelic; it does not contain an end because it does not represent historic movement. The only movement of contemporaneity is continuity. This movement of continuity is quite visible in contemporary art institutions, now spread around the world in an epidemic tsunami. Contrary to some of Terry Smith's views, they do not start with the 1980s, but with the 1960s and even before that, declaring nearly the whole territory of twentieth century as "contemporary," and leaving more or less just the period before World War II untouched by the invasion of contemporaneity. This comes out also as a result of rivalry between "outfashioned" museums of modern art, which found themselves overnight in the position of dead relatives, quite often also having to give up what they had already started with. But continuity as a movement is much more than a result of rivalry. It

opens another aspect of Ludwig Wittgenstein's introduction of family notions. A family notion is an enumeration of A, B, C, D,... to X, Y, Z, and a claim that what the components belong to is not a particular essence x but rather a family tree as an open and inclusive notion, where we can find, if the enumeration is complete and comprehensive, at least two members who share family membership without any shared resemblance between them at all. But family resemblance is always quite a lot more than that: it is a proud narration of continuity without any other end but continuity itself. Without changing all the time because of inclusion of new members who do not come from the same family, family would disappear.

The third obstacle, therefore, is a traditional and persistent notion of art as autotelic. Contemporaneity complicates things if we stick to the autotelic notion of art. This notion turns art into another world, aside from the scientific and natural world (*Lebenswelt*), adding a third to two already competing and opposed views. Even after art became another kind of post-industry, or part of the so-called creative industry, it kept its looks as something without practical or useful use. We can discuss modernity and postmodernity as much as we want, but we cannot awaken the dead body of art's modernist end, which was a redemption of humanity by the religion of art. After the final efforts put into such an understanding of art's end (as in those of Martin Heidegger, Theodor W. Adorno, and Hans-Georg Gadamer), there is no trace of artistic religion left in contemporary art. What is left, then? Consistently with economy as the prevailing image of contemporaneity, art, being without end in itself and without practical use as such, has to prove its right to exist beyond its position of post-industry and creative industry. This does not mean that art is now subjected to market and commodity rules (artwork was subjected to those rules long before anyway); it means that it has to prove its right to existence by discovering a cause for its existence, and this cause cannot be autotelic anymore. Any cause would do, be it political, scientific, cultural, civil, public, intimate, community oriented, human rights engaged, preaching ecology or morality, or offering stress control or narrative therapy. Not even in times before the autotelic view on art, when art was just one of the arts—that is, technical skills—were there as many practical uses for artworks for different causes as in contemporaneity. Sometimes, or even most of the time, the main phase of artistic activity is to discover a cause for art-making. But we cannot say that this deficiency or absence of end and plurality of causes is art's problem. It is much more than that.

Let us take the case of car velocity and progress. As with previous machines, especially the railway, and the slightly younger flying machines, the car became a symbol of progress almost immediately. During the 1960s, it was still there as one of the most important symbols of a “macho” way of life, which supported, for instance, a *Playboy* figure of a single male bon-vivant¹², analyzed by Beatrix Preciado in her study. I have to thank Jennifer McMahon, who turned my attention to an excellent example of artistic designs for a BMW Art Car. BMW has a long history of cooperation with great artists invited to design new race and sports cars, from Alexander Calder (1975), Roy Lichtenstein (1977), and Andy Warhol (1979) to Robert Rauschenberg (1986) and Olafur Eliasson (2007). What all of these artists did was design—including Eliasson, who is very probably one of the decisive inspirations for the Venice Biennale’s “Making Worlds” title in 2007. His special touch was more than confirmed by later artists such as Jeff Koons, who continued with the previous tradition of “car painting.” For Eliasson’s project, on the BMW home page, from the first sentence of the car’s presentation on, we observe a picture of contemporary art’s creative process and creative result interwoven with causes and purposes: “Eliasson’s project transforms an object of advanced industrial design into a work of art that critically and poetically refers to the relationship between global warming and the automotive industry.”¹³ His work is presented as being “a reminder of the profound effect design can have on our lives,” and as “an experiment really, as much a social and political intervention as an aesthetic one.” This metal-and-ice-covered, hydrogen-powered automobile exemplifies the car industry’s concern about global warming along with a strong will to keep the special BMW image intact. Eliasson comments: “Our movement in space implies friction: not only wind resistance, but also social, physical, and political friction. Thus, movement has consequences for self-perception and the way we engage with the world [...]. In driving a car, one obviously also negotiates the way time-space is constructed. What I find so interesting in the research on movement and environmentally sustainable energy is the fact that it enhances our sense of responsibility in how we as individuals navigate in a world defined by plurality and polyphony.” This phenomenologically colored taxonomic statement could be (ab)used to get us in the neighborhood of Donald Kuspit’s post-art, but we have to understand that it is a result of great collective effort to dress BMW’s logo-motional activity in a scientific, artistic, and politically correct (which nowadays means “critical” and “engaged”) approach which at the same time produces food for thought and spectacular experiences for the senses.

To build this structure of ice, Eliasson's group of experts had to develop technology comparable to that of a car itself. The project includes a film and a book, but what is really typical are the preparations in Eliasson's studio, where more than forty scholars, artists, architects, scientists, and other experts met to discuss artistic, social, political, environmental, and other issues. The result is an artwork with supporting architectural elements of social, political, environmental, and other causes. Because BMW started with its Art Car project in the 1970s, it is possible to put this work of contemporary art in perspective. During the 1970s, sport cars of high velocity were symbols of scientific progress, but also of unleashed manhood: the latter is now much less popular with the art world public, but to possess such a car is still a status symbol. What changed as well is the status of artwork. At the beginning of the 1970s, the car itself was still an artwork in itself, a result of advanced technology with symbolic aesthetic appeal, a proof that the world was progressing to its end on the path paved by enlightenment. The Art Car meant to put artistically designed carrossery on a chassis made by engineers, following their ideas and plans, so that in the final product the car appeared as another sort of canvass covered with painting by an artist, but really produced by technology. The car needed some highbrow touch just for advertising issues, as a part of marketing which was put in danger by an oil crisis. Up until now, however, the relationship between chassis and carrossery as components changed in favor of a car's image, trademark, and especially way of life it promises to its owner. Nowadays, cars are products of design and marketing strategies, and not of engineering itself. On the other side, artistic touch, if it wants to keep its credibility alive, has to produce an impression of social and environmental awareness even more than it needs to produce artistic design mastery. In short, it needs a cause or a number of causes. The result is not only an artwork that makes us think about general circumstances of car-making critically, with social awareness developed from strange body impressions we experience when we enter a polar space in which a car is situated in a simulation of an art world as once Brillo boxes were in the Stable Gallery. It is a result that, while representing a car as an artwork, cannot give us any other end for this very elaborated project and result except for the production of such cars—that is, instead of a modernist end of art we get a purpose that was already there before artistic intervention. There is a network of social, political, cultural, and other awareness invested in this space, but the critical range of that awareness does not extend beyond the limits of the BMW company's marketing strategy, which must, against the company's image as a producer of ex-

pensive, wasteful, and environmentally unacceptable machines, construct another image: that of a company aware of social, political, economic, and environmental issues, giving its rich clients enough excuse for a feeling that they, by driving BMW, support all the right causes, including the healing of the earth. A car becomes a vehicle of political correctness, and that is exactly what the company needs, and that is what it got from the art. Kuspit wrote these polemical statements on post-art before Eliasson's project, but they do apply: "Postart is completely banal art—unmistakably everyday art, neither kitsch nor high art, but an in-between art that glamorizes everyday reality while pretending to analyze it. Postart claims to be critical of everyday reality but in fact is unwittingly collusive with it. Postart is art in which the difference between creative imagination and the banal reality that it uses as its raw material has become blurred, so that the mechanical reproduction of raw social material is mistaken for an imaginative triumph."¹⁴ Still, I do not agree with this kind of criticism if it involves an idea that art should and could do more than that. The absence of the end from contemporary art does not mean that there still is one but that art does not want to get involved with it anymore. It means that contemporaneity has no end, and contemporary art cannot create an end because there is no way to bring it out from art's magic hat: there is no magic any more because it proved to be misleading and dangerous.

Contemporaneity is a place-space unable to produce an end. What it hopes for is not unending progress toward perfection; it hopes that it will remain possible to avoid making a choice between final ends. Contemporary art and its aesthetics are not art and aesthetics of and in crisis. Crisis is a moment in time when disease is well developed and all available medicine has already been taken, so that the body just has to live or die: a decisive moment when we are without any certain grounds of its outcome. Contemporaneity is not such a moment, a moment of crisis—it is the production of a shelter place where we can avoid a decisive moment and continue as normal, as an *angelus novus* reposing in an aviary. Contemporaneity is not a problem. The problem is how long can contemporaneity last before history takes over once again?

- 1 Donald Kuspit lectured on this issue in Mexico City in January 2005. See Donald Kuspit, "The Contemporary and the Historical," *Art Net*, <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit4-14-05.asp>. "The 'contemporary' by definition is not necessarily the 'historical,' that is, the contemporary is a quantity of events associated in a specious present rather than a consistent narrative integrating some of these events in a system or pattern that simultaneously qualifies and transcends them by giving them some sort of purposiveness, appropriateness and meaning, thus making them seem fated." My approach is just slightly different. First, contemporaneity is not present, because present is in between past and future, and thus part of historical narrative which knows that it is part of historical narrative. Second, purposiveness (which is sometimes how Kant's "telos" is translated, but teleology is not about purpose, as in practical philosophy, but rather about hope and the possibility this hope has to come true) is in my view an end, a *causa finalis* ("final cause"), something that does not belong to things of this world but rather to our hope for perfection of freedom built into the world of necessity, or, as Kant has it, for humans to become supranatural beings originated from nature.
- 2 Foucault's famous quote from Jorge Luis Borges does not concern China as a real place and culture but rather the China of "Orientalism," where it is addressed in Enlightenment's A-B-C regulation of all knowledge. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), xv.
- 3 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 753.
- 4 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 9.
- 5 Jan Patočka, *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem: Phänomenologische Schriften I* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 248–67. There are his own different formulations, and different translations for Patočka's three movements, but in description, they are: a movement of anchoring in the world (on a time scale: the past), the movement of self-expansion/production (on a time scale: the present), and the movement of breakthrough (on a time scale: the future). His ideas here are derived from Aristotle's theory of the soul, but also from Arendt's description of the human condition between labor, work, and action.
- 6 Michael Kelly, *Iconoclasm in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xi.

- 7 Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 91.
- 8 Gerard Vilar, *Desartización: Paradojas del arte sin fin* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca, 2010).
- 9 Yves Michaud, *La crise de l'art contemporaine* (Paris: PUF, 2005), 16–17.
- 10 As proved in the debate in the United States on morally or politically controversial art that began with *Piss Christ* by Andres Serrano in the spring of 1989 and that continued with controversy over Robert Mapplethorpe's retrospective "The Perfect Moment," which was scheduled for July 1989 in Washington, and canceled one month before opening. The argument was not about the autonomy of art, or about art's freedom, but rather about the use of public funds for support of obscene, indecent, and politically incorrect art. See Andrew Buchwalter, ed., *Culture and Democracy: Social and Ethical Issues in Public Support for the Arts and Humanities* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).
- 11 Mario Perniola, *L'estetica del Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997).
- 12 In her study of "pornotopía," Beatrix Preciado does not touch on the importance of sport cars specifically, with the exception of the "Porsche azul" at the Playboy mansion of 1962, because she deals with Hugh Hefner's—Playboy's—launch of architecture and sexuality. Her thesis is that the Playboy style of life means men's liberation from ideological domesticity, and that the Playboy way of life creates a kind of Disneyland for adults. This is represented in an active bachelor's home that functions as a pleasure machine meant to create a special and simultaneously open and secluded men's world of "pornotopía" with four elements: space, sexuality, pleasure, and technology. All of these apply to cars as well, and Playboy did follow the idea that such liberated men's pleasure needs a proper vehicle as well. See Beatrix Preciado, *Pornotopía* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 2010), 8, 9, 10, 17, 41, 120.
- 13 All quotes on Eliasson's ArtCar are available from <http://www.bmw-drives.com/artcars/bmw-artcars-eliasson.php>.
- 14 Kuspit, *The End of Art*, 91.

Concrete Concepts

This short essay describes some of the characteristics of art education at the Faculty of Design and Arts at the Iuav University of Venice.¹ It is a deliberate step away from the tradition of artists thinking “I am the best artist,” which has been the model for art making at least since the time of Michelangelo.

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The unique character of the art, theater, design, and fashion sections of the university is that they employ a large number of practicing professionals. This exposes students to individuals who must not only practice what they preach, but who must succeed in this, as part-time teaching is a wonderful but not life-sustaining profession.

This approach, oddly, liberates the arts arm of the university from the academic in-fighting that characterizes much of university life. Since most professors in the arts arm are barely in the embryonic fluid of departments, let alone caught up in inter-departmental or university politics, a blissful atmosphere for the most part prevails, whereby teachers come and go, dispatch what they know, and then recede again, to their far from passive *studiolos*.

The teaching models taught in the realm of the art of display are variegated. There are professionals who run departments or entire museums (Hans Ulrich Obrist, Carlos Basualdo, Angela Vettese), directors of vanguard contemporary arts spaces (Marta Kuzma), and visitors who have directed biennials (Francesco Bonami), and so on. There are less obvious contributors to the panorama, and I count myself among them. I teach a rather home-baked philosophy that is an outgrowth of a moment I lived through in the 1980s and 1990s in New York and that entails a look at the mechanisms that

constitute the staging of art, and at the ways in which catalogues and institutional framing create an artist's work, the creation of the artist's brand, the history of collecting, and so on.

Recently, I've found it very interesting to look at the ways artists describe themselves and their work. I search for these descriptions both in print and in virtual media, as well as in the staging of exhibitions. This interest is probably a result of early research into the work of Hans Haacke and Marcel Broodthaers, several decades spent with artist Joseph Kosuth, and enough time in the nightclubs and galleries of New York City to see careers made and fall. Some of the Iuav University student projects that have grown up in my time include the work of Jacopo Seri (launch of an art magazine, self-promotion as an artist), the work of Michelangelo Corsaro in the fabrication of an artists' studio (in collaboration with Hinrich Sachs, an invited visiting artist, and others), the printed catalogues of Ryts Monet (and choice of paradigmatic chicken-in-a-bun image), a book work by Diego Tonus, the neo-Memphis chandelier of Tiziana Bolfe, a magazine collective known as Blauer Hase (including members Mario Ciaramitaro, Riccardo Giacconi, and Alessandra Landi, among others), a lesson on the fonts of Joseph Beuys by Riccardo Perella, recycling projects by Roberta Bruzzechesse (among others), ecological projects by Alessandra Saviotti (among others), a magazine about artists' books by Laura Longarini, the realization of a multiple made in Venice for Haim Steinbach by Kathrin Tschurtschenthaler (among others), and a competition entry with Ken Lum by Valerio del Baglivo.

These projects, many of them social in nature, or rooted in the reality of Venice, are under the radar as far as artistic signature goes, and fly in the face of what is commonly deemed an artistic career. There's a ludic spirit

involved, a lightness, and an ability to weave together craft and concept that is unique to the Veneto, no matter how international the students.

Though Iuav University is known primarily for its architecture school, which propagates an identity that often seems dominant at the university, it is the gossamer wings of the small and often renegade art/design/fashion/theater department that plots the future of the school. This is not because of any internal warfare. It is because we believe and hope that the kinds of projects being created are in the forefront of thinking about visual culture today and epitomize the dreams and aspirations of young people whose ideas have not yet turned to concrete.

The panorama of teachers assembled is oddly peaceful and mutually supportive because of the selection and winnowing that has taken place by the school's directors. It is in this environment, oddly resilient despite the current state of Italian universities and the country's government, that an experiment flourishes, dedicated to structures, and ideas, and faith in models of art that go beyond technique and style.

- 1 Angela Vettese and Chiara Vecchiarelli, eds., *Visual Arts at IUAV, Venezia: 2001–2011* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2011).

Art as a Form of Knowledge and as a Creative Process

To Leo Castelli and Gaetano Kanizsa, two friends of Hungarian descent from Trieste.

If we were to turn the title of this paper into question form, we would find that there are a number of different answers, some banal, others not so banal at all. For a start: Is art really a form of knowledge?

Usually the answer to this question takes the form of a historical and cultural approach. The artistic output of a particular period is considered to be a means to understanding the culture of the times; almost all histories of art are based on this paradigm. The classic work by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh—*Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*—is a case in point; its pages include comments on how psychoanalysis was a catalyst for the art of the times:

Nevertheless, by the early thirties the association of some modernist art with “primitives”, children, and the insane was set, as was its affinity with psychoanalysis [...]. An interest in the unconscious persisted among artists associated with art informel, abstract expressionism [...]. Rather than the difficult mechanism of the individual psyche explored by Freud, the focus fell on the redemptive archetypes of a “collective unconscious” imagined by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung.¹

And it is important to note how the modernist moment was influenced by the experimental school of Gestalt, for example, which provides guidelines for interpreting and analyzing individual works of art:

The cross at the center repeats the most basic form of a vertical figure against a horizontal ground, but this figure-ground relation is under-

scored here, only to be undone. This occurs not only through the excessive elaboration of the black stripes, but also because the whitish lines between them, lines that appear to be the “figure” on the top, are in fact “the ground” underneath [...]. Where Johns might be playful about this fact, Stella is positivistic; where all is “changing focus” in Johns, “what you see is what you see” in Stella.²

As well as, finally, mirror-imaging between a system of thought such as that of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was probably the most important philosopher of the last century, and that of an artist or art movement:

Duchamp would remain a crucial point of reference for Johns. The same is true for the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose critiques of language appealed to his sense of “physical and metaphysical obstinacy,” as Johns wrote in a sketchbook note (he began to read Wittgenstein around 1961, an interest soon shared by other artists of his generation, especially Conceptual artists).³

These are examples of the most important instances of the reciprocal intertwining of zeitgeist and art. Over the last few decades artists have also been strongly influenced by technological transformations, an influence which has produced new forms of artefacts.⁴

The entire work by Foster et al., from which the above excerpts have been taken, is constructed on these diverse forms of mirroring. However, there is a more abstract approach to the question with which we opened this paper, which can be formulated in much the same way as the query that Roberto Casati posed for philosophy: What can we learn from studying and reasoning about a given work of art?

Paolo Legrenzi
&
Alessandra
Jacomuzzi

There are many ways of answering this question. The feeblest option is to assert that reflecting on a work of art helps us to better understand our emotions and how our cognitive processes work (for example, the figure-ground example). The work of art is considered as a function of the emotions and sensations it triggers in our minds, facilitating a more in-depth auto-analysis. In other words, our conception of the effect of the work of art is in relation to our understanding of ourselves, of our mental reality, rather than to its influence on the outside world, in the widest sense.

Another possibility, which is a little less feeble than the option illustrated above, is that the work of art shows us the preconditions for a knowledge process. For example, examining a work of art helps us to understand the functions of signs. This requires a reference to the original work on the subject by Charles Sanders Peirce, who identified three main categories: symbol, icon, and index. Each example of this type has a different relation to its referent. Symbols have a purely conventional relationship (for example, the name iPhone and the corresponding smartphone); indexes have a causal relationship (for example, footprints in the sand or broken branches in the forest are traces of a human being or a beast that passed that way); and icons share some invariants, as in Wittgenstein's famous example of the movements of a pianist's fingers over piano keys, the production of mechanical waves, and the perception of music.

If we apply this tripartition in our contemplation of works of art, we will discover that they do not fall into just one sign category but are a combination of the three typologies—take photography, for example, which is a blend of icons and indexes. And so we can say that the examination of a work of art helps us better understand the different types of signs and how they interact.⁵

There is also the possibility of a more articulated answer, sustaining the position that the contemplation of a work of art, as in mathematics, facilitates our comprehension of the structure of the ideal objects invented by man. Just as reflecting on numbers leads us to understand them,⁶ contemplating a work of art stimulates reflection on the question: Is art part of the outside world or is it just a mental reality? And if it is both, where is the borderline? The passage below is an example of a reflection on the so-called Cubist grid:

The Cubist grid is, perhaps, the first instance of the kind of pictorial composition that would later in the twentieth century come to comprise

the whole of Frank Stella's paintings. Derived from the shape of the canvas and repeating its vertical and horizontal edges in a series of parallel lines, the grid is an instance of drawing that does not seem to delimit a representational object, but, mirroring the surface on which it is drawn, "represents" nothing but that surface itself. Stella would make this "mirroring" more emphatic by casting his paintings into eccentric shapes [...]. There was not only no question of anything but the shape itself being represented, but also no possibility of reading "depth" or illusionistic space into the surface [...]. Writing about Stella's work, the critic Michael Fried called this procedure "deductive structure."⁷

This step leads us to consider art as a cognitive (thought) process bound by constraints. The history of art evolves by progressively breaking down constraints, so that works of art can be created that flout preceding rules. In this perspective, Stella's "deductive structure" can be compared with the important results obtained by adopting formalisms and computation:

- The combinatorial explosion that thwarts attempts to verify that areas of knowledge are consistent⁸
- Gödel's incompleteness theorems
- Arrow's Paradox, which illustrates the conditions under which a given voting system cannot satisfy the transitivity of preferences

Likewise the creation of artistic artefacts can be considered as the progressive demonstration that:

- It is not necessary to layer images one on top of another to obtain a bi-dimensional representation of a tridimensional spatial distribution of objects; an aerial perspective based on the grain of the surfaces can suffice.
- Lines are not necessary to delimit boundaries, nor is color needed for coloring: Henri Matisse understood why Paul Cézanne had to annul the traditional opposition between color and drawing. Since any single color can be modulated by a mere change of proportion, any division of a plain surface is in itself a coloristic procedure.⁹
- It is not necessary to have just one single viewpoint, as can be seen in the landscapes painted by Picasso in Spain at Horta de Ebro in 1909.

As Hal Foster states in *Art Since 1900*, "For in these works, where we seem to be looking upward—houses ascending a hill toward the top of a mountain,

for example, their splayed-apart roof and wall planes allying them with the frontal picture surface—and yet, in total contradiction, to be precipitously plunging downward.”¹⁰ And later in the text he continues “In these works by Picasso, there is no need for the coherence between visual and tactile experience, the problem which obsessed nineteenth-century psychology as to how separate pieces of sensory information could be unified into a single perceptual manifold.”¹¹

And finally, there is no need for an ontology,¹² as the work of art becomes pure epistemology: “With Morris’s early work it also became evident that a work of art can be created merely by naming it so—which could open in turn onto what one could call the administrative or legalistic definition of the work.”¹³

This progressive breaking down of the previous constraints through a series of increasingly abstract and general invariants until the criterion of mere definition is reached is perfectly aligned with the three mental models of creativity proposed by Philip Johnson-Laird. The first is the so-called neo-Darwinian architecture by analogy to the theory of evolution, and it is the only mechanism available if there are no constraints that can guide the initial generation of ideas. The second possible architecture for creativity is defined by analogy with Lamarck’s theory of evolution. In this opposite case, all the available constraints govern the generative stage. The third one, the multi-stage architecture described below, uses some constraints to generate ideas and some to select viable ones from amongst them. On the one hand, this progressive breaking down of constraints is not a random process; it is controlled by invariants: “Consider, for example, Picasso as he is painting a particular picture. At any moment, there are probably several brush strokes that he could make, all of which would yield a perfectly recognizable Picasso picture.”¹⁴

So while painting is, piece by piece, a random process, there are also a number of invariants. Experts are able to identify a picture as a Picasso or a Monet even if they have never seen it before, and they can do so without being able to articulate the cues they use. These skills demonstrate how random and deterministic processes intertwine in creating a work of art. If the processes were entirely random it would not be possible to recognize a style; if they were totally deterministic the entire sequence of brush strokes would be imposed by the first. Johnson-Laird defines this combination as a

multi-stage procedure when describing his three mental models:

The third sort of process takes the multi-stage procedure to an extreme. All the constraints that have governed the generation of ideas. So, if the constraints are viable, the output needs no revision. By definition, no other constraints exist to evaluate it. At various points in the procedure, there may be more than one option, because constraints seldom yield just one possible next step. But, because we have used all the constraints we have, a choice among the options must be arbitrary. The choice is where the nondeterminism of creativity enters into this process.¹⁵

The history of art of the twentieth century proposed by Foster et al. can be seen as the narration of the progressive breaking down of constraints until just one remains: the author pronounces an artefact as being a work of art and establishes the boundaries between what is art and what is not. When Maurizio Ferraris visited the Marlborough Gallery in October 1996, he posed the question: Why, if everything that is housed inside this gallery belongs to the art world, do we not generally consider the Rolls Royce Silver Shadow used by Fernando Botero to go to dinner after the show a piece of art?

- 1 Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 17.
- 2 Ibid., 409.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., 676.
- 5 Ibid., 685.
- 6 Roberto Casati, *Prima lezione di filosofia* (Rome: Laterza, 2011), 114.
- 7 Foster et. al., *Art Since 1900*, 682.
- 8 Paolo Legrenzi, Vittorio P. Girotto, and Philip N. Johnson-Laird, "Models of Consistency," *Psychological Science*, no. 14 (July 2003): 131–37.
- 9 Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 75.
- 10 Ibid., 110.
- 11 Ibid. See also Nicola Bruno et al., "A Visual-Haptic: Necker Cube Reveals Temporal Constraints on Intersensory Merging during Perceptual Exploration," *Neuropsychologia* 45, no. 3 (2007): 469–75.
- 12 See Maurizio Ferraris, "The Artworld and the World of Works of Art," in *The Two Cultures: Shared Problems*, eds. Ernesto Carafoli, Gian Antonio Danieli, Giuseppe O. Longo (New York: Springer, 2009), 265–85.

- 13 Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 528–29.
- 14 Philip N. Johnson-Laird, *The Computer and the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 256.
- 15 Philip N. Johnson-Laird, *How We Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 52–53.

From Work to Research: Sites of Artistic Research

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Over recent years, the umbrella term “artistic research” has been taken over “artwork” and “art projects” to serve as the description for the end product for art practices. The very term “artistic research” does not arise from the air, and there is a site, be it socio-geopolitical, that can contribute to the causes for such nomenclature to emerge. If an artwork can be replaced by art research, then what differences does art research stand for, in comparison to artwork? What will this research, specifically, target with and contribute to the field of knowledge? That is to say, can the topological relation of production knowledge be effected from the specificity of artistic research? As we know, there is a research imagination for every type of research. Does artistic research much follow methods of conventional research? What is the research imagination that artistic research can bring forth? These are the questions I attempt to address from grappling with the site of artistic research in establishing “a research of the research.”

Artistic research, instead of just “research,” is by definition a work with discursive content, which is formulated in an academic method through writing and work, and which is bounded by a certain format with limitations that need to be sought systematically. One can observe such a trend in the development of art in the late 1960s, when conceptualists started to develop an art practice along with a discursive manner and often included a written statement in disclosing the work. One can also see that this practice is parallel to the insertion of MFA programs into the art academies. Therefore, the primary site of artistic research should be academia, and henceforth the academization of art practice. Artistic research, by definition, does not quite correspond to the *research on art-related subjects*, such as art theory, art history, aesthetics, etc., although it can parallel the discourse of critical theories that are popular nowadays. But when the term “artistic research” comes to

describe an artwork, it apparently demands a particular mechanism of conceptualization operating within the making of it. Artistic research cannot be simply equated to the research-based art practice, but rather a structural conceptualization of art-making implied in the word “research.” The truth is that when we use the term “artistic research,” the emphasis is always on the “artistic” side, not the other way around. Indeed, the institutional factor and the aesthetic factor need to be combined in considering what comes to be what we know as artistic research today.

That is the precise reason that we do not need to go for Marcel Duchampian algebra or Kazimir Malevich’s philosophical quest of abstract forms as the precedents of artistic research. But rather, in seeking where these two factors meet, one of the primary scenes would be the time when Conceptual art became a major trend and coincidentally higher art education came to be based on the training of MFA programs. Many works produced since then not only were capable of delivering the discursive content, which is contrary to the practice of modernists’ representations and formalistic approaches, but also of transformation to a creative model in which disciplines of art have been played by linguistics and semiotics such that dialogical and discursive content are employed. The increasingly popular MFA program, one of the terminal degrees for practicing art, aimed to combine theoretical discourse and creative production together.

Most practicing artists with an MFA degree must present their artistic works and written theses equally as their results. This is the occasion for art practice in the academic institution, which in turn internalizes the art practice in a different phrase of production that can be seen as distinct from the earlier concept-oriented artworks. Conceptual art continued through postmodernist

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practice until now, and the disposition of combining theoretical research and visual works as a creative conceptual mechanism became the predominant practice in contemporary art, though the research and the works sometimes cannot be easily resolved.

Partly because of the transformation of the institution of higher art education, and partly because of the tendency of art practice to become more and more dialogical, and with the proliferation of biennials flourishing around world since the 1990s, artwork has become more of a research-oriented endeavor. It has to do with the numerous exhibitions that are taking place everywhere, so that the artists are traveling somewhere to realize their projects. Especially during recent years, artists have been asked by curators to realize site-specific projects whose contents and subjects aim for relevancy for the local. Contextual art exhibitions, especially on the occasions of biennials, are playing a much more significant role than before—artists are engaged in field research and works are revised. The artist then functions as a researcher, who is much like an anthropologist in probing the local for a field study in a cross-cultural context. Even though certain styles and approaches from artists' preexisting works have been adopted, newly commissioned artworks are produced from the reference to the local. This sort of artistic practice/research, being held in the international exhibitions, is much more concerned with the notion of territory, whether socio-cultural, epistemological, or conceptual. These artworks can be loosely termed "global conceptualism" reflecting the MFA training that the discursive part of work is necessary. With biennial exhibitions, different research approaches and subjects are employed to create an exhibition that significantly reflects the academization of art practice, which can be noted as the transition from "work" to "research."¹

In recent years, the debate on the artistic research has been much more heated than ever before because in the past decade art schools have begun to found practiced-based PhD programs, rather than MFAs, in their departments. Not only in the United States and Europe but also in Australia and Asia, many schools have founded the PhD programs as the production of knowledge economy goes global. Although the weight on the creation aspect in curricula is varied, there should be more credits and theoretical writings than in MFA programs. The founding of the PhD in art practice can be seen as the increasing demand and supply for higher education to create the supplement for the old terminal degree in art, the Master of Fine Arts. In

order to win over the average, the MFAs, in terms of symbolic capital such as prestige and entitlement, but also in terms of social capital such as job opportunity and teaching position, the PhDs in fine arts were created to rise above the MFAs .

Today practiced-based PhD programs are following a very similar trajectory to the terminal degree in arts from the past, namely the DA (Doctor of Art), which no longer exists in the United States. In order to obtain a DA, the work and dissertation have to be presented. Although many universities closed their DA programs in the late 1990s, the DA program provides a distinguished reference for today's academic artistic research. Both DA and PhD programs were created as supplements to the MFA degree, and many graduate students with MFAs went on to get DAs.

The DA training also reflected one possible way of combining the theoretical work and the artwork together, i.e. by using artwork to demonstrate and conclude the findings in theoretical writings and dissertations. Most DA research was heavily influenced by methods from art history, which were dominant subjects in interoperating arts, and which take the issues of style, motif, subject, material, and expression as their entry points for investigation to position their creative works in research contexts. For example, the topic of DA research can be “the mannerism in the postmodern era,” which is to take the motif of a past art style “mannerism” for a new meaning and for the application of the artworks, which nevertheless leans toward the stylistic concern for art. Although today the PhD's research employs vastly different interpretative methods that exceed those of art history upon which DA training relied, the relation between the art and research remain the same. The differences in the interpretive framework between the PhD and the DA can be accounted for by the fact that art today is moving toward polysemic dimensions, and so the critical methods for art have become more eclectic—cultural studies, literary criticism, sociology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and even economy (as in all humanities in general) have become the methodological toolbox for artistic research. One can assume that the eclectic nature of artistic research makes the production of art knowledge become a pluralistic theoretical practice. Moreover, this pluralistic nature has a second layer of meaning: artistic research must contain the creative practice side (artwork) and the discursive side (writing). Although often the line separating the practical and the theoretical sides are shifting and can be blurry, these two sides cannot easily collide together and be resolved, precisely because there are two

different systems of discursive modes: one with the form and the other with words. The intrinsic difference between the linguistic and the formal make artistic research an interdisciplinary approach that does not solely value various specialized branches of knowledge. It breaks down the old branches of knowledge and discourses—which can be deemed a creative aspect—for a new object and a new language, neither of which can effectively belong to any domain of those branches of knowledge. Therefore the discipline of that knowledge is defied, and so is the rationalism behind it. Conceptual art, which employs linguistics and semiotics as part of the artistic model, can be seen as one example. The instrumentalization of knowledge in the service of art-making shifts the epistemological base of the artistic research, so to say, by stressing the “artistic” side, while the research side is to be justified in the final stance of work.

Although Pierre Bourdieu has raised the notion of *habitus* that insists on an academia whose participants internalize themselves for shared perceptions, which define what the scholarly activity means, the composition of art academia is heterogeneous—scholars from different fields of humanities and disciplines can become its players, as we have witnessed in most of the faculties in art academia worldwide. Different accounts, reflections, speculations, argumentations, and rationalizations are made on the bases of different disciplines and subjects in the production of knowledge in art academia. The production of art knowledge can only take the plural form, which is not a simple repetition of a fixed body of knowledge, and which is democratic in essence. No longer are the selections, exclusions, and rejections made in accordance to certain criteria, and the immeasurable nature of such production of knowledge, which cannot accord with the conventional *habitus*, is to create a situation of knowledge production whose scholarly activity can be much varied by challenging the old disciplines.

Therefore, it would be meaningful to ask what can be research in the heterogeneous art academia, and how can artistic research differentiate itself from conventional research? As Arjun Appadurai once said, “a research is a systematic interrogation of the not-yet-known.”² The norm of research always involves the institution. In writing research, there are formats and rules that need to be followed. Research is possible through a statement of a claim, the delimitation of a research field, related literature to be referenced, and methods to be complied with. Conventional academic research is “re-search,” where certain repetitions and transformations are taking place

and therefore can be verified and falsified, which is in the unwritten rule of academia itself. Yet when it comes to artistic research, its verification and feasibility cannot be decided because there is no single knowledge to measure. Artistic research cannot be “re-search” in the sense of reproduction of knowledge, simply because art practice needs to be unique and different. The unique and pluralistic nature of the knowledge of art makes artistic research an anomaly in the field of knowledge, which much relies on an institutionalized methodology that is formed by given methods and disciplines. The knowledge that contributes to artistic research is the plurality in essence, which does not mean just having multiple meanings and comprehensions, but rather always attempting to achieve the status of plurality in the subject—not just coexisting but traversing from one to the other through different combinations of processes and agendas. The specificity of artistic knowledge does not respond to a judgment or an interpretation—there is always a liberal course involved for a dissemination of meanings. This plurality does not depend on the ambiguity of its contents, but rather on the inter-textual level that artistic knowledge weaves through, and can only find its repetition as difference where we find the result of artistic research.

Aside from the heterogeneous and democratic nature of knowledge production of art, artistic research is different from conventional research because there is a tendency for artistic research to cross the boundary between artwork and theoretical writings, be it in the trainings of the MFA, DA, or PhD. The discursive space of artistic research requires an epistemological gap where the translatability (and un-translatability) between artworks and art writings are gauged. Most artistic research operates on a discursive space that crosses between two seemingly unparallel systems—one has to do with the making of art, and the other with the writing of art. Moreover, for conventional research, the notion of “replicability” is important, which is precisely the reason that research has to be made in accordance with academic consensus following a fixed format; that is, the result of research can be replicable once it is done to contribute to the field of knowledge for reproduction. It is based on the principle of accumulation that knowledge can induce further research that perpetuates in academia. Yet the creative practice aspect of artistic research operates in a different manner, because the result of artistic research, in essence, cannot be replicable—an artwork is unique, and thus cannot be repeated, accumulated, and “re-searched.” Therefore, artistic research is trans-disciplinary in a sense that it not just crosses over different subjects and crosses the boundary between work and discourse,

but also transgresses the very definition of theoretical disciplines—whether it is philosophy, aesthetics, art history, sociology, and so forth. Existing in an in-between status of subjects and disciplines, artistic research imposes its politics on art and knowledge, which creates a totally different research imagination.

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Jacques Rancière differentiates two types of methods: the social method and the emancipatory method. The former operated on the principle of consensus, the latter on the principle of dissensus, for its democratic nature.³ The emancipatory method must realize its research imagination through innovation within the framework of an already established institution and authority to show its unique outcomes: artworks with discursive practice. As art is unteachable and unlearnable, the practice of artistic research always keeps its borderlines in order to shift and to expand on the open ends. Much artistic research can coincide with what we come to term as critical art and contemporary art to challenge conventions and conformity. Multiple disciplines can be of use for the research. As such, artistic research produces a specific mode of production that escapes from the inequality and classification of knowledge per se to open up the possible principle of equality to question authority—that is to say, as an alternative to the hierarchical forms of institutions and knowledge where powers asserted can be attained through intervention.

Considering these assumptions about the emancipatory aspects of artistic research can lead to a reorientation in art PhD education nowadays in the politics of art as well as of education. In particular, artistic research can create instability within the production of knowledge to seek to avoid being captured by institutional formation through indeterminate research imagination—autonomy in producing a knowledge from work and words, and as such, it means precisely that there can be no concrete expectation or demand, and only self-organization and determination. It is based on the principles of democracy and quality: the principle of self-determination and commonality in the course of doctoral study showing that there can be a supplemental version of the art system that we have already had by mobilizing another way of art practice fueled in academia through the format of research, as most art PhD programs emphasize their experimental eclecticism.

Artistic research, when we investigate its primary site—academia—carries such traits of the emancipatory method that always involve an indecisiveness

between works and words, research and discourse, method and un-method, or forms and thoughts. Gaps between these pairings are the very problematic that artistic research finally needs to confront, and thus mark a special situation of art in the production of knowledge. As we know art is organized by external factors and cultural agencies in the art system, artistic research has created a political effect in canalizing its eclectic practice by inducing autonomy through the principle of democracy and equality that is set within the production of knowledge. It is artistic research that can effect a change in the way we see artists and their works in contemporary art, but also in institutions in which it has been implemented. All of these indicate the ambitious project that artistic research sets forth, and many gaps can be crossed over without a prescribed and given solution; there can never be, that is to say, any guaranteed success out of it.

- 1 The requirement for an MFA or PhD graduation is similar in the United States, varying from fifty to sixty credits.
- 2 Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 9.
- 3 Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 102.

What the Thunder Said¹: Toward a Scouting Report on “Art as a Thinking Process”

At first blush, “art as a thinking process” seems to signal a see-feel-know mode that is single-track and monolithic. The phrase, however, covers a throng of diverse modes of expression in which “art” and “thinking” are paradoxically both at one with and at odds with each other—if not entirely at loggerheads.

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These jottings touch on elements of this jostle of modes—at least, on those that have caught my eye. I look at them in this study under three main headings: (I) Hominidization, made up of two notes; (II) Humanization, with three items; and (III) Hamletization, consisting of four notes.

This is the prologue to Section (I). Sections (II) and (III) are included here only as entries in a rudimentary chart immediately below. They are on standby for future elaboration.

(I) Hominidization

If we give ear to the phrase “Thinking Through Art Practice,” we can just about catch its double drift: on the one hand, it signifies thinking “by means of” or *via* art in the sense that art is an “investigative vehicle or probe.” This is perhaps not unlike the way Marcel Duchamp saw his *Large Glass* as an “agricultural implement” for breaking new ground, a tool for unpacking representationalism in visual art and in thinking, for querying the “given” and going beyond it. On the other, it evokes the sense of “a passage through,” the duration of step-by-step self-scrutiny—an introspective experience during which art practice takes stock of its own processes and procedures, stands back to watch itself plying its trade. As we undergo this combing through, a stretched-out inspection and scouring, we are in the thick of shadowing matters as they tick over at their innards.

This double drift pervades visual art practice as knowledge production: the latter covers a congeries of forms and operations that teeter between what I call the poles of “Know-How” and “No-How.”² Two issues crop up right away. The first, a point of method: “art” and “thinking” are blankets, abstract categories. We need to be wary of treating them as hard and fast givens, as fixed, immutable entities. To circumvent their somewhat reductive, generalizing sweep—that has to do with the inescapable coils of language itself—we have to work both with them and against their grain. It also means the prudent move of taking up something like a nominalist approach. This involves tackling “art” and “thinking” in all the varied, erratic, contrary forms in which they manifest themselves in concrete instances—in the singularity of this or that art work or event, in this or that particular episode of thinking. By focusing on actual one-off, standalone occasions of “art and thinking,” we are better equipped to grapple with their inner differences, their teeming diversity and vagaries—with their “phenomenal density” that the abstract categories sidestep or iron out.

The second issue devolves on that “unnameable process” anterior to what we come in hindsight to split up, define, and label as the separate processes of “art” and “thinking.” In this prior “indeterminate flux,” the two processes of “art” and “thinking” are so merged and melded that they are “of a piece,” so “at one” as to be indistinguishable. This amorphous pre-process state—an emerging creative splurge, so to speak—is the phase of “ur-utteration” when neither “art” nor “thinking” are utterly separate, distinct utterances. We face an eruptive, self-spawning capacity that goes beyond the “given”—a self-raising, self-erasing drive that transcends it. An expanding, mushrooming force, in the sense of Duchamp’s *épanouissement*, it throws up new experiential and epistemic intensities, objects and dimensions that

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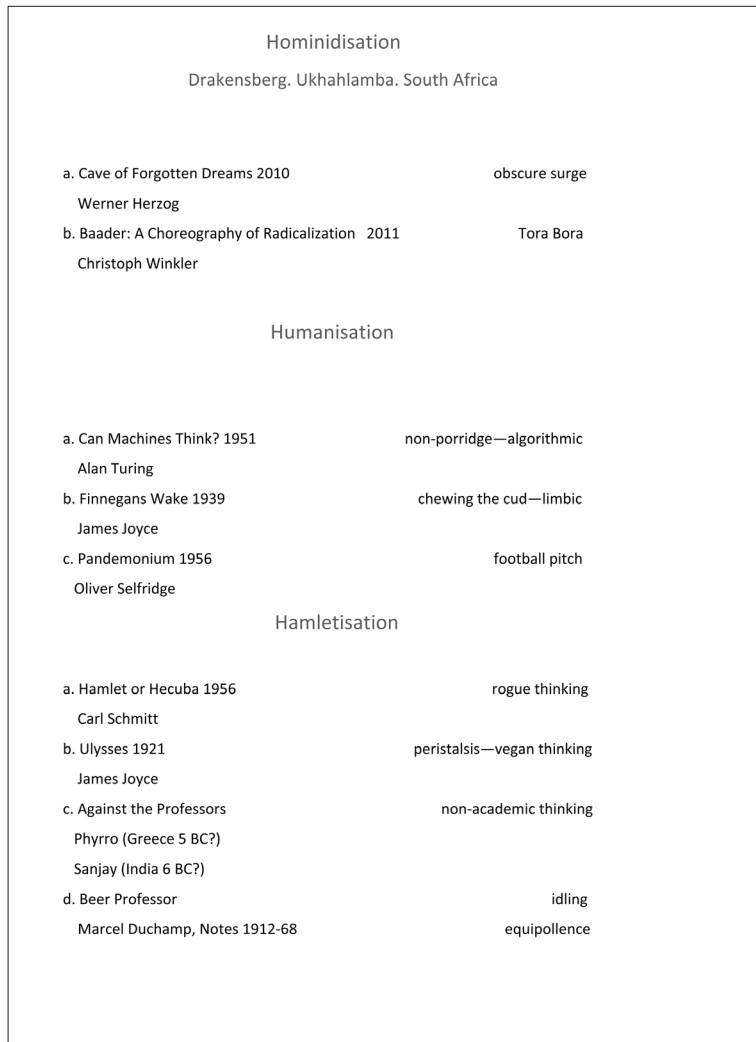


Figure 1: Hominidisation, Humanisation, Hamletisation, © 2012 Sarat Maharaj.

overshoot the “given.” It brings into being unforeseeable possibilities—that we cannot have anticipated or known or scripted beforehand. For our purposes, two moments—drawn from the Paleolithic and from today’s worlds respectively—serve to signpost this force that I call the “obscure surge.”

The Mind in the Cave³

What is the “Stone-Age mind” in the cave up to? Art History as a discipline has tended largely to classify the welter of Paleolithic data—marking, scoring, stippling, hand silhouetting by mouth-blown pigment to artifacts, rock and

cave paintings, and drawings, among other material—to install in its canon as Prehistoric Art. On the other hand, for disciplines tapping archeological and ethnographic studies, the paleo-archive tends to add up to forms of symbolic expression, shamanistic experience, cognitive-stuff, and the like. The tussle between whether the mind in the cave is churning *aesthetic utterance* or *think-stuff* rumbles on with periodic swings of emphasis from one side to the other. The body of argument and evidence advanced for some of the world's earliest paleo-traces at Blombos Cave, South Africa sees in the data budding if not full-blown signs of a “symbolic or cognitive activity”: what the paleo-residues and ochre blocks from the site seem to record are scraps and segments, “proto-sentences,” of thought-processing. This tends to back up the view that Homo sapiens were already “modern before they left Africa” which, in this sense, should count as “the cradle of modernity.”⁴ It tends to put a spoke in the wheel of somewhat speculative, rhapsodic theorizing about the “making of modern man,” the “birth of art,” and the “birth of the human” sprung from the paleo-archives of Lascaux and related places—narratives not without a Eurocentric tinge.⁵

An earlier response to a version of this account sought to dampen its scope. Details of the exchange do not concern us here. The point mooted was that limited samples made it less plausible to extrapolate conclusively that the activity at Blombos was on par with a full-fledged cognitive system. Was it not more likely that the markings, scorings, crosshatchings were “just doodlings”⁶? The phrase used to couch this apparent downscaling and caveat struck a chord. I found it both arresting and resonant. Perhaps unwittingly it highlighted a species of activity that does not ostensibly count as either “art” or “thinking”—an all-over, runaway activity, the urge to press beyond the “given.” It evoked something of a directionless scattering, an indeterminate flux—the mind perhaps crouching to test its bearings but not, as it were, poised for imminent “purposeful” expression. This is an apparently meaningless, “mindless” state—not entirely dissimilar to an “engine throb-
bing away at idle” or, to update, like a self-sustaining computer processor or communication circuit ticking over but not engaged by any program. To mirror its feel, I have chosen describe it as, to use James Joyce’s word, Monkeydoodling.⁷

The state of “idling” doggedly remains an undecidable condition. Anterior to any process that gets delimited and defined as “art” or “thinking,” it is neither the one nor the other, if not both at one stroke. A condition of oscillating

density, it teeters on the brink of “becoming art,” “becoming thinking,” but it stops short of lending itself to that kind of classification. As an “indeterminate flux,” it roughly parallels the back and forth of the Hominidization process. The latter is not so much about some members of the family of primates undergoing development to the point that they cross the threshold to become a version of the modern human. The “passage through” does not amount to an unwavering, “as the crow flies” trajectory from the nonhuman animal world to the “other” side. It seems to involve less of a decisive break, more of an uneven shuffle—trial runs, draft versions, pilot tests, nonsequential movements, and oscillating densities across the spectrum of “becoming human or leaving the nonhuman animal fold.” The process appears to be little more than “simply idling”—going nowhere in particular.

How do we read the paleo-archive across the Drakensberg range that “tails off” into the Blombos and beyond? Was it activity to wile away “idle hours,” a time-filler and time-killer, as some aesthetic responses have held? At odds with this sort of view that seemed to trivialize the material in a gush of “art appreciation,” we have studies of the paleo-data that show them as part of a “symbolic, thinking system,” a vast cultural-cognitive structure. This is exemplified in Davis Lewis-Williams’ meticulously attentive, rigorous endeavour. However, it is hard not to get the slight impression that in dispelling versions of the “idle hours” view, his serious analytical perspective does not end up somewhat elbowing out “art” from the story. The “state of idling” is quite another kettle of fish from the notion of “idle hours.” It harbors a sense of the free ranging and exploratory, with a momentum of its own—something that did not escape the artist Walter Battiss’s eye in his studies of prehistoric art, and in his art and art research practices that were fueled by it.⁸

With “idling” we have an activity that is reducible neither to cognitive-stuff, to a conventional notion of the thinking process, nor to Art. It touches on a kind of the “oscillating densities” that Duchamp saw as going beyond the “givens” of “art” and “thinking” by falling short of either. Its gist is in his poser: How to make a work of art that is *not of art*?

The next set of notes will try to relate the drift of the “obscure surge” explored in terms of the Paleolithic above to contemporary expressions akin to it through a look at Werner Herzog’s *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* and Christoph Winkler’s *Baader: A Choreography of Radicalization*.



Figure 2: Drawing adapted from Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010), © 2012 Peter John Mayers, Chauvet, Chamber of Lions.

- 1 T. S. Eliot, "What the Thunder Said," in *The Waste Land* (1922), part 5, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1321>. "Datta, dayadhvam, damyata" (give, sympathize, control): the fable of the meaning of the "thunder" is found in the "Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad," part 5, in *Sechzig Upanishad's des Veda, aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt und mit Einleitungen und Anmerkungen versehen von Dr. Paul Deussen*, ed. Paul Deussen (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011), 489. For an English version see also the *Ten Principal Upanishads*, trans. Shree Purohit Swami, W. B. Yeats (London: Faber, 1975), 119–58.
- 2 Sarat Maharaj, "Know How and No How: Stopgap Notes on Method in Visual Arts as Knowledge Production," *Geist*, no. 11-12-14 (2007/08): 127–37.
- 3 David Lewis Williams, *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and The Origins of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002).
- 4 See Christopher Henshilwood and Francesco d'Errico, *Tracsymbols Project 2010*, available at <http://tracsymbols.eu/news/2012/8/1/evidence-of-san-material-culture-in-south-africa-44-000-year.html>. See also Christopher Henshilwood, "The Origins of Modern Human Behaviour: Exploring the African Evidence," in *Combining the Past and the Present: Archeological Perspectives on Society*, eds. Nils Anfinse,

- Terje Oestigaard, Tore Saetersdal (Oxford: BAR International Series, 2010), 95–106.
- 5 Georges Bataille, *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art* (Milan: Skira, 1955).
 - 6 Steve Kuhn is a professor at Arizona State University. His comments on the findings are available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1753326.stm>.
 - 7 “Monkeydoodle 01” was a project at Goldsmith’s College of the University of London (“The Hamilton Joyce Duchamp” class), and occurred during the academic years 1985–2000. In reference to it see *Art & Design*, no. 43 (1994–95) and Sarat Maharaj, “Monkeydoodle: Annotating the Anti-essay ‘After History’ (Aesthetics and the Body Politics),” *Art Journal: Journal of the College Arts Association* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 65–71.
 - 8 Walter Battiss, *The Amazing Bushman* (Pretoria: Red Fawn Press, 1939).

Feminist Research in Visual Arts*

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This paper addresses the diverse methods and methodologies applied by various feminist art researchers and focuses on their eventual implications on artistic research in the field of visual arts in general. While it is widely accepted that there are no specific feminist research methods in any discipline, feminist methodology and feminist research practice in arts can certainly be discussed considering the common questions feminists ask, the positioning of the researcher within the process of creation and argumentation, and the intended purpose of the produced knowledge.

I already mentioned that one cannot distinguish any research methods specific to feminist research. It is important to stress that feminist research itself is considered a methodology in both humanities and social sciences. Moreover, one could easily agree with the statement that feminist art from its outset actually borrowed the already existing methodology from the social and humanist research context. However, one of the main aims of this text is to investigate what makes the specificity of feminist art research, or more precisely to investigate why feminist art is socially relevant and necessary in addition to already existing research in other more academic disciplines.

The political concerns of feminist artists are of course not unique to feminist art: they are concerned with understanding why inequality between women and men exists and with investigating the main reasons for male domination in society and culture. Thus, like any other feminists, feminist artists also deal with the questions of how to change this and how to achieve liberation for women by using quantitative and/or qualitative methods known from both social sciences and humanities.

I want to argue that it is urgent to look at the genealogy of feminist methodology and epistemology that is specific to the recent feminist art practices, because although feminist art has been around for half a century, there has been no substantial reflection on the specificity of the feminist research methodology in art. Today this prehistory of feminist research is even more relevant because ever since the first feminist art projects in the 1960s, research-based art became prevalent among feminist artists and comprises many diverse and unique examples of research projects that in different ways explored the relation between the personal and the political. Therefore I find it productive to explore and appraise the specific research processes that have been instigated through feminist art and I hold that they make a relevant basis for unique artistic thinking.

Besides the main political concerns of feminists, the artists using feminist methodology also deal with questions such as: How is a woman's gaze different from a man's? How does that difference influence the ways in which the two genders view the world? And how they view art? What constitutes obscenity and pornography? Where do they come from and what are their results? Are they always transgressive? What place do they have in art? How do we change inequality in the representation of women and the subsequent feminization of poverty? How do we achieve liberation for women in contemporary societies that do not share the same value system as the Western societies?

Ultimately I want to exemplify the cultural context as a relevant source for some culturally specific feminist art projects. Because feminism is not one unified project, I will ultimately propose to look at several feminist research projects by feminist artists from the Balkans in order to challenge the

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assumption of universality of feminist methodology and any unified theory of knowledge production in feminist art.

The arguments in the paper are divided into three different main parts:

- A general introduction to the history and relevance of feminist research in visual art.
- A discussion of the implications of feminist research agendas on artistic research in general.
- A description of the methods and methodologies applied by various feminist researchers—artists or curators in the field of visual arts—with emphasis on the specific cultural context in Balkan contemporary art.

Setting the Table: The Beginnings of Feminist Research

Undoubtedly Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* from 1974–79 was one of the first feminist art projects that based its results on profound research of famous, less famous, and until then completely unknown women from the past. Chicago selected thirty-nine renowned women from history and mythology and set a triangular table for them. The table rests on a porcelain floor inscribed with the names of 999 others. Lavish and elaborate sets were provided, with hand-stitched runners setting off hand-painted china plates.¹ However, even though the facts were double checked and cross-abundant references were made, the selection was arbitrary and made according the form of the table, or the personal familiarity of the artist.

For many years Chicago was criticized for some of the images being “reactionary and ‘essentialist’”, that is, it reduced women to their sexual and reproductive functions.”² The work was also criticized for her voluntarism and deliberate selective use of facts, but the fact is that she never claimed that her project covered the complete women's history. Recently her project was “rehabilitated” during the Brooklyn Museum's take on feminist art: the exhibition *Global Feminism* is where this seminal installation found its permanent home at the fourth floor of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.³

Many other feminist projects followed, but here I would like to mention only a few that already made it into most art history books: the project *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained*, 1977, by Martha Rosler; *Three Weeks in May*, 1977, by Susanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz; and *Weenie Count*, 1989–2005, by Guerrilla Girls. The interdisciplinary approach

toward art research applied in these projects mainly combined research methods from different disciplines and fields and pursued explicit activist engagement, thus turning statistics and analysis of data collected through interviews and statistics into powerful feminist tools. Important to mention is that although the projects were executed by women artists, they were actually easily distinguished from women's art of its time exactly because of their clear political messages and stances that were far from any essentialization of feminine aesthetics that was so clearly attacked in the crucial early essay by Linda Nochlin.⁴

In the context of this paper Martha Rosler's video project is relevant for a very specific reason: it actually mocks statistics and subjects to questioning this quantifying research method used by rationalist "macho" science as the relevant tool to analyze gender difference specificities because it is usually used to prescript the ideal measurements of female body. While Lacy and Labowitz in their project were concerned with the female body issue and number of violent attacks on women in Los Angeles at the time (thus imagining their project as a critique of the society's ignorance of the issue), Guerrilla Girls's project was conceived as an obvious institutional critique. The institutional critique did not target only the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York—one of the most powerful and prestigious art institutions in the world, where Guerrilla Girls pursued their research—but also art history as such, which in the project was metaphorically represented by the Metropolitan Museum.

On their famous poster from the project *Weenie Count*, the research question "Do women have to be naked to get into US museums?" was printed along with the research results: "Less than 3% of the artists in the Met. Museum are women, but 83% of nudes are female."⁵ Obviously this was one of the seminal cases of feminist research art projects where the research method and feminist methodology became not only the topic and content but also part of the art medium itself. The poster was not based on the usual art research of forms and colors but its main concept was made of the research stuff itself (the numbers and percents and the nude, which is one of the main targets as the most stereotypical representation of the female body in art history).

Contemporary art that today bases its artistic results on research processes owes a lot to such pioneering feminist works and long-term projects that not

only were some of the first to focus on art for social change but that also tried all possible methods known from various academic and scientific disciplines, and even tried to overcome their limits with severe criticism of being embedded in the ideologically constructed system of social hierarchies.

Ghosts: Local Experiences of Feminism and Gender Difference in the Balkans

When I started my career as a curator and writer (back in the early 1990s), many of my colleagues—predominantly the male curators but also women—claimed that feminism was not necessary any longer because according to them all goals of feminists of the first three waves were already achieved. Moreover, for some, post-feminism did not bring anything radically new, and one should have aspired to newness in either the personal or the political realm. I could not agree less and in most of my projects since the very beginning I tried to question the limits and potentials of the feminist agenda of artists from different cultural and generational backgrounds, as well of different genders.⁶

While living in the Balkans, most of the time I personally faced the huge gap between theory and practice, and even though theoretically I did manage to conceive and curate several projects with recognizable feminist agendas, the conundrums surrounding their realization made me sustain in the demanding and uncertain role to which I voluntarily subscribed, first as a curator and later as a theorist and researcher in the history of contemporary art.⁷ For example, in my PhD research project, *Gender Difference in the Balkans: Archives of Representations of Gender Difference and Agency in Visual Culture and Contemporary Arts in the Balkans* (Visual Cultures Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2001–06), I addressed the specificity of feminist and gender-focused art in the Balkans and its intertwining with nationalism.⁸

I was concerned with the emergence of a specific *grammar* of becoming feminist and the artwork that locates a certain voice—makes a difference between “who is speaking,” which becomes irrelevant, and “the speaking itself.” Claire Colebrook describes a difference between the *grammar of the being* and the grammar of becoming. At first, she identifies the *grammar and logic* of subject as tied to certain ways of speaking:

The very concept of the subject is tied to a strategy of being and essence, rather than becoming. And this is because the subject is not just a political category or representation but a movement of grammar [...]. The concept

and logic of the subject as such, then, demands or provokes a movement of thought, a specific temporality and, ultimately, a strategy of reactivism, recognition, and being (rather than becoming).⁹

Majoritarianism is affected by becoming-minoritarian and the mere possibilities of becoming-minoritarian shape majoritarianism. There are many restraints that culture imposes on normal subjectivity in a form of biopower and these restraints are mainly suspected and disavowed in *becoming*. “Becoming here is a means to get ‘outside’, which is perhaps what Deleuze and Guattari meant in their insistence of becoming-woman.”¹⁰ “However, as feminists know, each discourse of feminism is a multiple proliferation of a variety of discourses. Most of these aim to open discussion, investigating the gaps and holes in the discourse of ‘humanity’, essentially ‘manity’ or more correctly ‘majoritarianity.’”¹¹ Becoming is about negotiating the discursive constitution of subject, but it should not be forgotten that discourse is corporeal “because we are enfleshed versions of the speech that constitutes us from culture without and from self-regulation or identification within [...]. In order for there to ever be a potential for actual becoming, the potential of the body we are now must be recognised.”¹²

Even though the history of feminist art in the Balkans is shorter and not very diversified or informed by Western feminism, I researched many known and unknown examples that are scattered and isolated in the past in personal artists’ archives, but that are still relevant for the contemporary turn toward research in feminist art in this region. For example, the works of the most recognized and long-term determined feminist artist from Croatia, Sanja Iveković, prove how feminist art, since its very beginning, relies on concrete research of history, political events, and societal relations. However, Iveković’s position and role of researcher is always boldly embedded in her research and she is often both the subject and object of the research, something that in the academic world one is usually advised to avoid. Her albums of photographs and newspaper cutouts such as *Double Life* (1975), *Tragedy of a Venus* (1975), *Sweet Life* (1975–76), *Diary* (1975–76), *Before and After* (1975–76), *Eight Tiers* (1976), *The Black File* (1976), and other series from the same period based on Iveković’s personal research into a artist’s own archive became tokens of feminist art in ex-Yugoslavia.¹³

Perhaps even more intriguing from the perspective of the influence of popular and media imagery is Iveković’s video *Personal Cuts* (1982) linking image,

face, and event. The video shows the close-up of a woman, the artist herself cutting holes into a black stocking that covers her face. Each “cut” reveals a part of her face and also a short sequence of the Yugoslavian state television documentary program *The History of Yugoslavia*. The structure of the video somehow recalls a diary in which the “subject” is *becoming*, is revealed, and is thus rendered the visible alongside the historical political events. The personal and political are interwoven and reciprocally determined through putting side by side the subject—the artist who pursued the research—and the images that were results of the artistic research of the historical documentary archive of Yugoslavian state TV excerpts. Therefore, the personal “diary” cannot be considered and understood without the state “diary.” The title suggests that each of the historical events cuts a hole through the body of the subject, a wound in the personal that is therefore constructed as a result of this “tattooing” of media images that at the end unravel the hidden historic “silkworm cocoon.”

Feminist Research in the Macedonian Art Context

In contrast with Croatia, where there were many social scientists, humanists, and art researchers who were not only women but also declared feminism their agenda in the late 1960s and since, on the Macedonian art scene it was only recently that the number of exhibitions by women artists noticeably increased and that some groundbreaking research projects were initiated. However, among the women artists there are rarely any who mention the problems of being a woman in the profession of art or who develop their concepts based on long-term feminist research.¹⁴ It has to be mentioned that even though there have already been several group and solo projects and publications realized around the issues of gender difference, the main problem that repeats all over is the fact that these initiatives often sound very different from the final results of such projects so that at the end of the day all of them often have difficulties in conveying any critical message about the power structures and division of labor within society and end up as naive projects about a woman’s body and its representation.

This is difficult to understand when taking into account the fact that until recently there was no single female artist teaching at the local Faculty of Fine Arts (currently there are only three, which is about 10 percent of all faculty), although the students are mainly women. If the arguments about inclusion and exclusion from the teaching or managerial teams seem to be predictable and not enough to convey the idea of the gender troubles in the

art and curatorial world in the Balkans, this text emphasizes not only the problems of gender in the arts and curatorship, but also its wider reaching social, economic, and political issues as they are related to art production.

In 1996 I was invited to curate “Liquor Amnii 1” in the Turkish Bath Cifte Amam in Skopje. It was the first collaborative women’s group exhibition in Macedonia and included five women from Boston and five from Macedonia, each of them having different views on the topic and on feminism in general. Due to the size of the project and its feminist theme (amniotic fluid as a metaphor for the relation between the mother and the child), it was the first time that I experienced directly the complexity of the curatorial position of a feminist curator.

As might have been expected, the project was greatly affected by the male, chauvinistic, bureaucratic tactics of the director of the festival and of other men involved in funding and organization (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia and the Deputy of Ministry). This specific situation provoked me as appointed curator in such difficult circumstances (besides the funding and administration even the venue of the exhibition, a dark, abandoned, half-ruined area of a Turkish bath, was not very friendly) to reflect on this issue with a three-dimensional display within the space of the exhibition that consisted of a long, unraveled strip of accounting paper, indicating the figures of money spent beyond our control. It appeared as a very long navel cord and ran from the main entrance and through the dark tunnel. Its title, “With Special Thanks,” referred to the inscriptions of the names of all men who had helped or obstructed the project (I interviewed the artists and collected their “favorite” men’s names too), which had been written on the paper with green fluorescent pen and illuminated with dark ultraviolet light. The fluorescent names appeared to be floating in the dark, seemingly endless tunnel.

These people (mostly men) were not directly participating in the exhibition, but had affected the entire project with their positive or negative social presence during its completion, as ghosts/guests/parasites that appear when you don’t expect them just to remind you that it is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between “us” and “them” (like in the Paul Auster novel *Ghosts*), that your own image is defined by their continuous gaze in the dark. The Turkish bath made a perfect context for critical questioning of the male gazes, and of control of power, body, and discourse. In the text for the

catalogue I also addressed the difference between the women artists from the Boston artist-run space Mobius and the Macedonian artists exactly in terms of the self-awareness and readiness to address gender and feminist issues: while the works of the American artists emphasized both the feminine and feminist themes, the Macedonian artists hardly bore any references to any feminist agenda.¹⁵

In the context of the international project for art and theory “Capital and Gender” (2001, Museum of the City, Shopping Mall, Skopje) I invited twelve female artists, four male artists, and two couples, as well as ten theorists and curators, hoping to initiate a critical and fruitful debate about the most urgent issues in the Balkans: the social and economic changes in relations between the genders in the transitional period.¹⁶ The complex but rapid changes in the visual look of the main shopping mall, going from almost complete absence of public advertisements to great surfaces of oversized billboards with objectified female bodies, made a perfect venue for a profound critical inquiry into the effects of the neoliberal capitalistic strategies of consumerism on gender relations.

One of the direct provocations for the project was the marriage of the offspring of the families of two local entrepreneurs, which was crowned with a typical nouveau-riche wedding spectacle that took place in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje (1998). The fact that for the first time such a private party took place in a public museum and thus marked a new era for the great merging between capital, gender, and art was even more provocative because of its resonance with the famous analysis of marriage that Gayle Rubin published in her article “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex.” Rubin based her analysis on Claude Lévi-Strauss’s “general theory of exchange,” in anthropology better known as alliance theory.¹⁷ Rubin concluded that such systems of oppression are not based upon sex but upon gender, a classification that is attached to individuals by their culture and society. Although initially based on the biological sex division, this classification is developed through many cultural and societal confining models.¹⁸

The impetus for the project “Capital and Gender” was the failure of the communist project for claiming equality between genders that was emphasized by a kind of strong revival of patriarchy in the recent transitional years—a shifting toward conservatism and right-wing and neoliberal politics. The

forty-five years of communism obviously did not succeed in the wider and more constructive distribution of the official gender politics of the time when taking into account the easy ride given with respect to all requirements for cutting off the preexisting positive social and economic policies related to the laws of health insurance, child care, and pregnancy leave pushed by the EU Committees as conditions for the future inclusion in the EU. In order to be included in EU, it was so easy to sacrifice hard-won rights that one cannot but conclude that the relations among men and women never changed substantially, that the old hierarchy was haunting and in a form of boomerang returned to society and societal structures through the new economic structures the very first moment when communism was dissolved through the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Aside from a few incidental and superficial provocations by some local sexists, the discussions ignited by “Capital and Gender” hardly continued in the local art and cultural circles after the project ended. Even though this project that gathered more than thirty participants (artists, curators, art managers, and theorists) turned successful in terms of the exhibition attendance, its theoretical part, the three-day conference, was attended mostly by women and most of the male participants did not show up to the theoretical sessions. In fact, right after my project there was a very strange retort in the context of the local criticism of feminism and feminist artists that treated this phenomenon as an import of Western feminist theory and art practice that to me sounded as if it were a claim that the Balkan patriarchy did not need feminism because feminism was interpreted as a capitalistic imported product.¹⁹ Such a superficial communistic misconception of feminism only emphasized the fact that local research and debate on feminism was necessary and urgent.

The issues of politics, war, and globalization, which generally are attributed and interpreted as typically male power games, still suppress any serious attempts for conscious discourse of women within the local environment. Women in Macedonia, be they artists, curators, or from other professional backgrounds, have a long road ahead of them and a great deal of other fights if they are to arrive to the stage where they will be able to discuss the event of becoming woman and their female subjectivity.

A very well known phenomenon is that Balkan female artists, when selected and curated by foreign curators, are usually put in an obsolete theoretical framework when it comes to the questions of ethnicity and gender, and that

the female writers and curators were either not consulted or when invited did not want to go against the grain by discussing this topic. This has do on the one hand partly with the Balkans not being ready to deal with gender issues but on the other hand with the West not being ready to hear even the existing voices discussing these issues within the domestic art scenes. In fact, I want to argue that one of the roles of the women artists and curators from the Balkans is definitely to locate the difference between female art and art through rigorous research, aware and critically engaged with the questions related to gender difference and the urgent need for refurbishing the feminist agenda.

One of the rare examples of an art exhibition dealing with gender issues in Eastern Europe and the Balkans was the exhibition “Gender Check,” curated by Bojana Pejić (a Serbian curator who lives and works in Berlin).²⁰ However, it is important to mention that within this project it was obvious that the emphasis of this exhibition was put rather on analysis of representation of gender roles in art rather than on works with an explicit feminist agenda. The abundance of female nudes painted by male artists confirmed the already known fact: that socialism had an ambivalent approach toward women.

While socialist rule advocated equality between genders, art and culture perpetuated the old patriarchal visual regimes of representation. Therefore it is no surprise that the transformation of the former socialist societies and economies into neoliberal capitalist systems so quickly swept out gender equality based on an ambivalent, even biased and fragile agenda. Feminism thus became time and again an urgent issue that in art based on feminist research has manifold aims and prospects.

* I dedicated this paper to Manal, the Saudi woman who was arrested for driving a car according to the still existing harsh laws in Saudi Arabia that forbid to women from driving. The global petition in solidarity and for her release, “Drop Charges Against Saudi Woman Arrested for Driving a Car,” started to be circulated on June 1, 2011, at <http://www.change.org/petitions/free-saudi-women-drivers-immediately>. In just a month, the petition collected over 75,000 signatures and pushed the Saudi government to release Manal and the other arrested women, but the law is still in effect.

1 Marcy Sheiner, “Review of Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago’s Dinner Party,”

- in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, ed. Amelia Jones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 264.
- 2 Ibid.
 - 3 "Global Feminisms," exhibition co-curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, Brooklyn Museum, March 23–July 1, 2007. See http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/global_feminisms/.
 - 4 Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 147–58. The text is also available at <http://www.miracosta.edu/home/gflore/nochlin.htm>.
 - 5 See Guerrilla Girls's website, <http://www.guerrillagirls.com>.
 - 6 "Self and Other" (1994), exhibition at Yildiz Sabanci Cultural Centre, Istanbul; "Liquor Amnii I-II" (1996–97), Convergence X Festival, Providence, Rhode Island; "Bodily Fluids" (1997), exhibition at CIX Gallery, Skopje, Macedonia; "Capital and Gender" (2001), exhibition at City Shopping Mall, Skopje, Macedonia; "Art Under Construction" (2006), exhibition at the Foundation of Women Artists/City University, London.
 - 7 I mainly refer to a very specific language coincidence that directly affected the reception of the profession of curator among women in Macedonia and in other Slavic countries. The sniggering addressed to me in private and in public was due to the use of the word "curator" itself because in my mother tongue, Macedonian, the word sounds vulgar and "dirty" (the first syllable, "kur," is the slang word for "penis").
 - 8 Suzana Milevska, *Gender Difference in the Balkans: Archives of Representations of Gender Difference and Agency in Visual Culture and Contemporary Arts in the Balkans* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010).
 - 9 Claire Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming: Strategy, Subjectivism, and Style," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 117–18.
 - 10 Patricia MacCormack, "Perversion: Transgressive Sexuality and Becoming-Monster," *thirdspace* 3, no. 2 (March 2004): 27–40, http://www.thirdspace.ca/articles/pr_3_2_maccormack.htm.
 - 11 Ibid.
 - 12 Ibid.
 - 13 For more comprehensive insight into Sanja Iveković's works, see the texts by Silvia Eiblmayr, Bojana Pejić, and Nataša Ilić in *Sanja Iveković: Personal Cuts* (Vienna: Triton, 2001).
 - 14 Hristina Ivanoska's *Naming of the Bridge "Rosa Plaveva and Nakie*

- Bajram*” is one of the rare clearly feminist projects based on research of the archives from the Ottoman period in Macedonia.
- 15 Suzana Milevska, “Female Art through the Looking Glass,” *n.paradoxa*, no. 7 (July 1998): 38–42; Suzana Milevska, “Women Are Different, Aren’t They?,” in *Liquor Amnii* (Skopje: Skopsko leto, 1998), 5–6.
 - 16 For more info on “Capital and Gender” (January 26–30, 2001, City Shopping Centre, Skopje) visit <http://www.scca.org.mk/capital/projects.html>. The project included a solo exhibition of Marina Abramović and installations, digital works, and performances by Huseyin B. Alptekin, Luchezar Boyadjiev, Maja Bajević, Zdenko Bužek, Violeta Čapovska, Danica Dakić/Sandra Sterle, Marina Gržinić/Aina Smid, Hristina Ivanoska/Yane Čalovski, Slavica Janešlieva, Kai Kaljo, Zoran Naskovski/Jelena Jocić, Tanja Ostojić, RASSIM, Dejan Spasovik, Ana Stojković, Igor Toševski, and Tatjana Vujinović.
 - 17 Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210. In her article Rubin uses the established anthropological and socioeconomic theories (namely those of kinship systems and Marxism) to explain the development of sexual oppression in society through marriage and circulation of women between fathers and husbands. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s “alliance theory,” no matter what the choice, the woman becomes a passive link in the chain that is formed based on economic offer/demand coupling.
 - 18 Later Judith Butler developed a gender constructivist theory that was based on similar assumptions but that was followed by more complex argumentation in psychoanalytic terms. In that respect see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).
 - 19 “One of the reasons is that I repeated the mistake made in Bratislava two years ago when to Katy Deepwell, the editor of (N)Paradoxa [sic] or what was the name of that magazine, and the goddess (mind the language) of the female resistance against masculinism and machismo) [...]. Bratislava inhabitants still remember my crucifixion as a result of my hubris to contribute and confirm the credits of postfeminism with this discovery of relativism. But I actually then have only asked for such relativism to be engaged according to the reality (including the social) that is my factual surrounding. And I said that the thesis of Gablik and Lippard are not of any importance for me, as a subject of the Macedonian reality,

they have no meaning if I don't question them critically and put them in the context. How can you dare, she told me, destroy and 'un block' those authorities. Here it is, I said, because they are not my discursive argument, they do not live my reality, but if I act catachrestically than I realize the function and meaning of my cultural context. Forget it. I didn't convince her [...]. I thought 'a foreigner,' what does she know about my reality—as many of the foreigners that come and talk at little in cafes and then publish a study (for big honoraria) about Macedonian reality in some established world magazine for which we fall of and argue about ('take our eyes' for is his morbid expression).” Quoted from Nebojša Vilić, “Is there an outcast behind any thong?,” *Forum* (July 27, 2011): 111. The debate continued during the following three months in the issues 108, 109, 110, 111, 112 of the same weekly magazine.

- 20 “Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe,” exhibition curated by Bojana Pejić in 2009–10 at the mumok: Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. For more comprehensive analysis of the differences between Western feminism and Eastern feminists in art see the texts by Edelbert Köbb, Rainer Fuchs, Agnieszka Morawinska, Boris Marte, Christine Böhler, and Bojana Pejić in *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2010).

Fictional Faculties

I have always had a problem with professors and with the teaching process because, like Socrates, I don't really believe in the scholar system that has been implemented by academia. There is an ongoing process by which students are not really asked to acquire knowledge but rather to digest formulas that were created outside of the dynamic of interaction and experimentation. Gilles Deleuze reminds us that that may apply to art schools:

Aesthetics suffers from a wrenching duality. On the one hand, it designates the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience; on the other hand, it designates the theory of art as the reflection of real experience. For these two meanings to be tied together, the conditions of experience in general must become conditions of real experience; in this case, the work of art would really appear as experimentation.¹

Experimentation is probably the key here. And it implies that theory should be only one of many tools that are offered to students, without preconception regarding what they might be able to come up with. As an example of what should be avoided, I have the memory of an old teacher in Cameroon who conceived of his job as a totalitarian exercise. His students were not allowed to express any personal ideas, and the only definition of goodness that worked was the one instituted by the professor. There were good artists and bad artists and good artists were those whom he would decide were good artists. So I had problems with professorship until I started to teach, when I discovered in the process of disseminating knowledge that the professor is not the only problem: the student might be a problem too.

I almost got fired after teaching my first course at the University of California, San Diego. I was hired to conduct a seminar on sociology of art. I found

it logical, for a start, to establish a mutual understanding among teacher and students about the subject we were supposed to deal with during the three months spent together: art. I asked to the students—PhD students—to describe their definitions of art, which seemed to me quite natural. Most of them came up with quotes from Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Gombrich, Roland Barthes, etc., and after the first round, I didn't hear anything that came solely from them. In order to underline the situation we were facing, I told them that there might have been a misunderstanding, but I didn't hear *their* definition of art; instead, they were dropping names I had never heard of. Coming from Paris and from a French education, I thought this was an obvious joke and that everyone would burst out laughing, but not at all. A couple of my students complained to the dean, asking who that professor was who had never heard of Barthes and Panofsky.

After we passed that first step, another hurdle was awaiting us, when I was asked to give my definition of a contemporary artist. My answer was: "I select artists with whom I can have a drink after the show." There is no need to describe the reactions that I had to face. Still, after we had passed that moment of stupefaction, we were able to deconstruct that simple sentence for a couple of sessions, because they understood that that drink was at the heart of whatever concepts we were to deal with. Contemporaneity, as such, is just a big basket into which we can throw whatever is conceived during our time, which does not mean that just anything would satisfy our own personal notions of the contemporary, especially as applied to art. There are so many contemporary expressions that I could not describe them all. Moreover, I am not interested in all of them. I guess the notion of contemporaneity has to do with sharing the same time, not just in that we are living in the same time—because some people who are living right now give me

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Njami

the feeling that they belong to other times and spaces. I would not call them my contemporaries. I call contemporaries those with whom I can exchange, discuss, and have issues, and with whom I share a kind of common understanding of what is going on.

But let's go back to my problem with universities before we head further. I recall a young Senegalese artist who was attending the Academy of Beaux-Arts in Paris. He came to me one day with a sad face and said: "Sir, I am blocked in my practices, there is something that I don't get in what I am learning. Maybe I am not good enough for that school." My answer was simple: no art school in the world is producing good artists. The academy, when fulfilling its task, gives tools—it doesn't make artists. Becoming an artist is not something one can learn; if it were, we could all become Picassos. I forgot about that problem until I bumped into the young artist again. He was coming back from vacation in Dakar and his expression was quite different compared with the last time we had seen each other. The first thing he told me was that he understood that *he* was not the problem. The schooling was the problem. He said: "I have found what my problem was. For two years, I have been working on models—live models—and I could not draw them. There was something about their aesthetics that I could not master. And then when I went back home, I just discovered that the canon of beauty, or the canon of lines and forms that the Beaux-Arts wanted to teach me, had nothing to do with what I knew. I looked at my mother, and she was not thin—she was kind of an African Mama. I looked at the neighbors and all the notions of beauty, of forms, of aesthetic shifted in my head and I realized that it's all about cultural subjectivity. And that the notion of aesthetic that was displayed in Paris was something completely sociological and something completely linked to European art history and namely to French art practices."

Therefore I think that when we want to transform subjectivity into an indisputable truth we become liars. The problem with universities is that students are coming to classes in order to get some truth when of course we know that there is no such thing. Therefore we should assume that we are just building fictions, and that maybe the greatest form of reality is fiction, as far as human sciences are concerned. Even somebody very knowledgeable in the sciences, such as Leonardo da Vinci, was at first a forger of fictions. We should be humble enough to admit that whatever knowledge we are trying disseminate is just a form of fiction. This might be one way

to balance that strange relationship between the student and the professor, with the tricky hierarchy that it supposes. The professor is the one who is supposed to know, and therefore, who holds the power to tell the right from the wrong. The student is a passive being who is there to benefit from the experience of his mentor.

So this kind of power relationship that you cannot avoid in the university is something with which we should be very careful. The very question of teaching, *I guess*, is to try to give an answer to what Ernst Bloch called “the unconstructible question,” which is the very question of the “us”: How do we deal with us-ness, or with knowing that there is no “we” without an “I,” and that those many “I’s” would lead to a multiplicity of different “we’s”? The lyrical illusion of a global or universal “we” is a challenge we do not have the means to achieve. What we are left with is an incomplete “we” that can be contradicted by any other one. Therefore, any time we are expressing what we think could be the truth, we must bear in mind those other infinite truths that are out there. One of the things I found interesting in the Luav University system is the fact that the institution enables the student to have a different kind of relationship with the so-called teachers, by inviting outsiders with whom the master/pupil relationship is not yet constructed. And furthermore, those visiting professors are not only theoreticians but also practitioners. That gives an opportunity to a student to have different kinds of formats, and to realize that whatever the professor is saying might be contradicted, or at least presented, according to another point of view.

I have engaged in an experience in a couple of countries in Africa, called “portfolio reading.” This portfolio reading was an interesting exercise both for the professionals I invited to review the works and for the photographers who were not familiar with this kind of exercise. The group included photographers, curators, and museum directors. The photographers, of course, were really impressed to be confronted with such high-level professionals who, they thought, could change their careers. After two sessions, one of them came to me: “Mister Njami, I am a bit confused. This great curator from this Dutch museum had this reading on my images, so I started to think about it and even saw stuff that I could change in my practice. But then this other great curator from this German museum told me the contrary, and then this other told me something else, so what should I believe?” What was I supposed to answer? It was not about believing or not believing, but about making sense of what was given with a critical gaze.

And that critical gaze—which is probably where Academia’s job is to be found—cannot be acquired without what Deleuze called the “toolbox.” In the teaching process the only thing we can do is provide the students with a toolbox, and then it’s up to them to manage the different elements they were given, to know when they should use the hammer and when they should use the rubber. But we have to provide those tools and then help them to use them, so that they might even contradict us and say: “Listen, I think that what you are saying makes no sense, has no validity.” I think that as long as we are able to do this—what Jacques Rancière called “sharing of the sensitive”—I don’t know if the university will be better, but at least the relationship between the master and the slave, the master being the professor and the slave being the student, will be a bit balanced and maybe we will come up with different results. For what is the sensitive if not a form of subjectivity? An individual fiction? To share a fiction means to help the other to construct a fiction of his or her own.

The university I dream of is a space that contradicts reality, because it is the space where one is confronted with what I would call “uselessness.” What I mean here is that students should be able to experience things and thoughts that are not displayed in the *real world*. That utopia dear to Ernst Bloch that allows one to go beyond oneself and beyond any market (since we’re talking about art) dictating the trends and fashions. Because in that utopia, whatever is produced would not be for sale, but would represent a unique experimentation, just like in some laboratory where the final product is always to be adapted further. I am talking about collective fictions, impossible scenarios that would allow us to think the *unthinkable*.

Still, we have seen a lot of new merchandise flourishing in recent years that seem to me contradictory to the notion of *uselessness* in the form of a new set of PhDs offered by academia to artists. Maybe I am too stupid to grasp the subtleties implied in these new programs. I remember that when I was teaching in San Diego, a colleague of mine invited me to attend one of his creative writing courses. I went, of course. But I could not quite understand what was going on. I tried to imagine James Joyce or Samuel Beckett in the room, but it simply was not working. What is the aim of those new curricula? Are we trying to set standards available to everyone to become a writer or an artist? Do we have a magic formula to produce geniuses?

The other thing I have problems with is research in art practice. I remember the famous quote attributed to Picasso: “I don’t search, I find.” I was under the illusion that the process of being an artist, of being a creative being, was to be involved in permanent research, so I didn’t know that one needed to be in a faculty or in some university to be able to practice that research. I thought the studio would be enough, the street would be enough, the sky and the weather would be enough; I even thought that the Italian pavilion 2011 would be more than enough. So I think that the ideal university—and of course I am probably mistaken for there are necessarily other possibilities—should be a fictional space, which admits its *fictionality*, and where whatever is performed is referred to as a fiction. As if there were no reality and as if any reality could be changed by another one. If there were a permanent reality, then my fiction wouldn’t work, but since we are all subject to creation of all sorts of fictions all the time, we have to admit the inherent contradictions comprised in the exercise. Fiction is a space of misunderstandings, and represents, in fact, the main mode of human relationships.

I do believe that a space of what I would call *positive misunderstanding* is a space of creativity and imagination. It figures in the in-between, a neutral no-man’s-land into which everyone can insert a genuine expression. The in-between is the space where discussion can take place, and where we can play with misunderstanding, because again it is a space where we are sharing the same sensitivity. Therefore only with my fellow, sharing the same contemporaneity as me—which means the same time and space—can I have a discussion that would be productive. The university should be a space of experimentation. I see that Iuav University is kind of striving for that. If the university should be only a theoretical space, which means pure abstraction, then I am not sure we should not close them forever. Maybe the aim of that fictional space is to last just one minute. But the most important thing is to remember that the learning process should be playful and joyful, as Friedrich Nietzsche used the expression *The Joyful Wisdom*. If we forget that, we might find ourselves in that trap that saddened Ernst Bloch: “We are poor, we have unlearned how to play. We have forgotten it, our hands have unlearned how to dabble.”²

- 1 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 260.
- 2 Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 10.

Curating in the Twenty-First Century

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Édouard Glissant explained to me when we met for the first time, that there can actually be multiple ways of coping with globalization in terms of curating in the twenty-first century. We can simply reject globalization, retire in a sort of a local discourse, and avoid the possibilities of global dialogue. As a result, obviously, the potential for a global dialogue is lost. The other option is to surrender or succumb to the homogenizing forces of globalization, which is even worse. And then there is the third way, which he recommended, which is this idea of *mondialité* (there is not a word in English, as “mundiality” would be the literal translation). *Mondialité* is finding a way of engaging with the global dialogue, which produces difference every day, and I think that it is the way we should go in terms of exhibitions-making. If we think of Glissant’s poems and museum studies and his invention of the Museum of Martinique, which has remained unrealized, we might find an amazing inspiration for curating, and that’s why I would like to dedicate this paper to him.

I would first refer to a drawing he once sent me by e-mail, which is actually called *The Archipelago Is a Passage and It’s Not a Wall*, where he’s talking about his own archipelago of Haiti, Cuba, Martinique, and Guadalupe. We will see later how this relates to the exhibition. Yona Friedman was another key inspiration for me in terms of curating beyond the masterplan. Friedman was questioning very early on, even in the 1950s, the idea of the architectural masterplan. Curators have not questioned that until rather recently. Usually the curator is still the person who writes a top-down masterplan, and usually a top-down masterplan goes alongside a top-down checklist, which is usually closed months, if not years, before the exhibition starts. My exhibitions have hardly ever had a checklist until the day they open, and usually the checklist does evolve until the very end. And I believe Friedman

has been a great inspiration for that: making us think about how to bring in several organizations, about how we can actually have different shows within a show, and about how we can invite people to curate shows within the exhibition and not control them. It is not by coincidence that curating in French is called *commissariat d'exposition*. I have lived in France for twelve years and I was always called *commissaire*—that is, a policeman. It is a very uncomfortable profession, and Friedman helped me in trying to question it.

“The best of the world is when anything happens, you have the right to your own utopia,” as states a work of Cedric Price, another very essential influence on my practice as a curator. I was introduced to him by Richard Hamilton and Rita Donagh. In actuality, he is not a utopian architect. Price’s preoccupation was really time: the passing of time, the speed of seasons, the changes of weather, the growth of intelligence, the aging of the body—all very interesting things in relation to the medium of the exhibition. Price’s key idea, which has always inspired me, is the idea of *The Fun Palace*, one of his most influential projects, thought it was never realized. Developed in the early 1960s, the idea was to build a mechanistic shipyard that would look like nothing on Earth from the outside (that is what Price told me). Price wanted to built a lot of zones of silence and contemplation into this traveling stage. He wanted the activities to be designed for the site, to be experimental, to be expandable and changeable. And it very much resonates with what John Cage called the music of uncertainty. I must say that “Utopia Station,” which I did with Molly Nesbit and Rirkrit Tiravanija, was very much influenced by Price’s idea of *The Fun Palace*. We could also talk about Oskar Hansen and his idea of process, which he developed, but that would probably go beyond the time-frame of his exhibition.

Peter Fischli, David Weiss, Christian Boltanski, and I thought—since I had only books in my kitchen—that we should get rid of the books and put food into the kitchen. This episode marks my curatorial debut. The exhibition lasted for three months and had thirty visitors, so it was not a public success, but it became a rumor. Lots of artists joined the project over time, including Richard Wentworth, who doubled the sink and called it *World Soup*. We had Boltanski projecting a candle, while Hans-Peter Feldmann thought it was boring to do an exhibition only in the kitchen. He wanted to exhibit in the fridge, so we had an exhibition within the exhibition: the fridge exhibition included marble eggs and feathers with visitors exploring the fridge of the show. And this kind of intimate exhibition was the first exhibition I did. For me every show has to be like “The Kitchen” show, with the excitement of beginning.

For me, in particular, the idea of making exhibitions in very small environments is very important, especially in relation to the practice of curating in the twenty-first century, which has on the contrary a lot to do with very large curatorial projects. The venues for which I am being proposed as curator, and for which all curators are being proposed, are bigger and bigger. So many museums have expanded, and museum architecture has become more and more monumental. It is very interesting that if you go to nineteenth-century museums—for example the other day I was looking at the museum in Winterthur and at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen—they are very often tiny spaces. The Boijmans has spaces that are no bigger than my kitchen. More and more in contemporary museums, there is a sort of standardized size—there are no longer small spaces. As a curatorial continuum, every year or every second year since “The Kitchen,” I have done a house-museum exhibition.

The last show of this kind that I curated was held in Federico García Lorca’s house in Granada. In a similar way to “The Kitchen,” I invited artists to this tiny house, and nothing has really changed. Rivane Neuenschwander installed a typewriter; Gilbert & George lied in bed covered by a type of bird that was in the park outside the house; under the bed was a little micro-theater by Bestué and Vives; Christina Iglesias doubled the room with organic growth and a cast of the room in the room. The exhibition started with Cy Twombly telling me in a meeting in Rome that it is important that we bring poetry together with visual art again, and his work *Verde que te quiero verde* is basically a drawing he made in homage to Lorca. Franz West participated with a sculpture, which is a monument for Lorca. We must also

remember that obviously Lorca died very tragically, having been assassinated near the house, which is also the last house he inhabited. In his work placed in the kitchen, Pedro Reyes gathered all the verses of Lorca's poetry that use the word "water." Neuenschwander provided an alphabet, and visitors were invited to write their own poems. Anri Sala realized a photographic homage to Lorca, and Sarah Morris presented a painting of a tile, very much connecting the Lorca house to other buildings in Granada. Koo Jeong-A did a replica in a smaller size of Lorca's suit. Philippe Parreno's homage to Lorca consisted of a breath of air that is forever cast into the glass. So these house exhibitions are somehow archipelagos or, rather, "kind of" one island.

At a certain moment I started to be invited to do bigger exhibitions. My first bigger exhibition was with Kasper König in "The Broken Mirror." After having spent a great deal of time in intense dialogue with artists, König was one of the first museum professionals I met. From him I learned the craft of curating, how to do a book, and how to do an exhibition. He has done so many visionary large-scale shows. When we met he proposed that I make one of these large-scale shows in collaboration with him. I was very young at that moment. Suddenly, I went from the small "The Kitchen" exhibit to to working with a space of thousands and thousands of square meters. I then reacted to that in a sort of dialectic of big and small. After "The Broken Mirror" show had opened, I went to Paris and I repeated "The Kitchen" in a hotel room, because by that time I had become more nomadic and I no longer had an apartment. I lived in hotels. So I transformed a hotel room in Paris into my exhibition venue and I invited seventy artists. It was a big exhibition, but in a hotel room of ten square meters. That is where Glissant enters into the frame: Alighiero Boetti had told me to read Glissant—and he had also told me that I had to be less slow. So when I read Glissant, I started to think that maybe the large-scale exhibition could be an archipelago. We tried this out for the first time with Hou Hanru, on the occasion of "Cities on the Move," an exhibition that took place at the Secession building in Vienna. The show was very much focused on Asia and the amazing artists and architects from that continent, as well as on cities and their permutations in Asia. It was the 100th anniversary of the building, and we wanted it to become a hub, a *relais* from where you could go all over the city and find other fragments of "Cities on the Move."

Then, with the late Josef Ortner, the visionary founder of museum in progress, and his partner Katrin Messner, we did the "The Billboard Project."

The exhibition became a traveling show, because, really, literally, every museum in Europe wanted to have an Asian exhibition. Almost none of these Asian artists and architects had shown and it became an incredible traveling circus. We felt that we could apply Glissant's idea; we could actually play the game and enter the global dialogue, but we came up with a virus, which would actually shift the system and each time have a very different show. So "Cities on the Move" was completely different each time; it was not a show that has to go from A to B to C, but it became very much a timeline of growth, of organicity, of change.

The year after Vienna, the show went to London. Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren did the exhibition design, and they said, "In the middle there must be a chamber of torture of architecture," so they wanted to really show this extraordinary, apocalyptic aspect of the sprawling architecture that exists all over Asia. Throughout the space there was a prowling serpent of Chen Zhen made out of lots and lots of cars. So the exhibition was really between an apotheosis and an apocalypse: on the one hand it was a very optimistic Asian moment in the 1990s, and on the other hand there were very apocalyptic moments described by artists and architects. It was also the beginning of the idea of architecture as production of reality and shows. In the 1990s, when the show went to the Hayward, we invited Shigeru Ban to do a paper-tube pavilion. "Cities on the Move" was an exhibition in permanent transformation; it was not a representation of a city, but it became City, a performative space. It is important to remember the collaboration of Cedric Price and Surasi Kusolwong, which realized an implicitly participatory zone with lots of magazines: a sort of a lounge, which included all of the magazines of Asia, which at the time were not connected to each other. Cedric Price and Surasi Kusolwong worked on this kiosk with us, and we linked all of the magazines to each other. We connected Seoul to Tokyo, to Beijing and Shanghai. It is obviously interesting because it was not only a polyphonic exhibition of an archipelago, but also a "polyphony of cities" in Asia and no longer a quest for an absolute center. If in the twentieth century New York famously stole the avant-garde from Paris, again in the quest for an absolute center, in the 1990s it became clear that we had hundreds of cities existing as centers of the avant-garde.

Now obviously there are many different ways in which curating in the twenty-first century may happen, and I always felt that Joseph Beuys talked

about an expanded notion of art (*der erweiterte Kunstbegriff*). Art never follows curating; curating has to follow art, and if curating follows art then an expanded notion of art necessarily leads to an expanded notion of curating. And it was in conversations with artists of Beuys's generation—like Alighiero Boetti, Christian Boltanski, and Gilbert & George—that it became clear to me that we needed an expanded notion of curating for our time. Boetti told me that we needed to really go beyond the museum, we needed art in new forms. He used to say: "It's very boring, we are always invited to do the same things, to do Biennale exhibitions, gallery shows, museum shows..." So that's where the dialogue with museum in progress with Josef Ortner started, and led us to produce for example a piece with tens of thousands of puzzles, which were like a planetary exhibition of Dante Alighieri carried all over the world. We also produced Douglas Gordon's *Cinema is Dead, Raise the Dead*: large-scale electronic paintings—computer-generated paintings by artists—which cover entire buildings.

After "Cities on the Move," I started to think a lot about what could be an archipelago-esque large-scale exhibition, and at that point Julia Peyton-Jones and I started our collaboration at the Serpentine Gallery in London. We believe that it is a kind of an interesting thing, because if one thinks about the 1990s, the promiscuity of collaboration between curators was the big change in our generation. I think our pioneers—like Harald Szeemann, for example—were very much curators on their own, while in our generation there have been permanent constellations of collaborations. So it was only logical that one could extrapolate the collaboration spirit of the epoch to the way of running an art institution—Julia always says: "One plus one is eleven!" It is incredibly interesting when two people run an art institution together: it creates a dynamic, and since the Serpentine is a small space, we started to think it would be very interesting if instead we used the biggest space in London by having an exhibition at Battersea Power Station. We also decided that we wanted to introduce Chinese artists at the exhibition: there had never been a show at that time in London on Chinese art and architecture of the new generation, so we occupied the space with artists and architects for the occasion of the exhibition "China Power Station." Huang Yong Ping, for example, was inspired by these spaces and created his first video installation, where one can see animals watching a video of themselves. Marcel Broodthaers said that we usually create exhibitions where there is only one possibility surrounded by other possibilities, and if we invite the artists to do things in unexpected circumstances—in a

kitchen, or in a gigantic power station—then works are born in a completely new form and concept. Gu Dexin, a very fascinating artist of the Chinese avant-garde of the 1980s—did one of his last installations at this exhibition by using tons of apples to produce a million-apple cider wall, which filled the space of the Battersea Power Station with the smell of cider. Another important aspect is related to the way the moving images of many Chinese filmmakers were presented in the gigantic spaces of the Battersea Power Station; they were sort of raining through the roof. In thousands of square meters we could show long sequences of installations and, since artists could have many screens, it was possible to develop a kind of a promenade, a space one could walk through. Among different documentary films, we exhibited Qiu Anxiong's animation films, and the pavilions of Toyo Ito, initially created for the Serpentine Pavilion, became the shop and café of the exhibition.

The next exhibition that somehow tried to become a traveling show, in the sort of spirit of “Cities on the Move” as a complex dynamic system that would grow, was “Indian Highway.” We felt very urgently, and very paradoxically as well, that London had completely neglected contemporary art from India—there had not been any shows of Indian art, and there had not been any focus on it. Along with the Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, we invited Indian artists and architects to actually develop an exhibition, which would start in the Serpentine and then become an ever-growing exhibition. We invited M. F. Husain to exhibit his paintings outside, and Nikolaus Hirsch—who is not only the Dean of the Frankfurt Städelschule, but who also has an architecture practice both in Frankfurt and in Delhi—to develop the exhibition's display of *Indian Highway*. It was Richard Hamilton who once told me: “We only remember exhibitions that also develop a display feature,” so I have always had an inclination to invite artists and architects to develop display features for exhibitions. Moreover, it is interesting to notice—if we look at few examples such as the wall painting of N. S. Harsha, Sheela Gowda's architectural space within the space, and Dayanita Singh's particular urban wallpaper—that even ten years earlier, with “Cities on the Move,” the topic of the city was present. Ranjit Hoskote, poet and commissioner of the Indian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011, said that maybe the concept of the city is connected to the big roots of India. The Raqs Media Collective said something similar, i.e. to focus not on cities, but on what happens between the cities. This can be related to what happened in June 2011 in Perugia, where Stefano Boeri launched his amazing *Festival of*

Knowledge, which was a “festival of knowledge production about the city”; more and more of the architects and urbanists say that what is interesting is not the city, but rather what is interesting is what is happening in between geographies—it is the roots, the song-lines, the pathways, and what happens between the city and the countryside in all these blasts and diffusions. So out of this logic we said that it is not an exhibition about Indian cities, but it is about the Indian highway, about what is happening in between. And that also leads us to the “Edgware Road Project.” If you think about the Indian highway, the road, it can become interesting that we declare an entire street an exhibition; exhibitions can become a form of urbanism. That is interesting because at the beginning of my practice I was very inspired by Yona Friedman and Cedric Price and by their idea of urbanism, which I brought it into the art world and into exhibitions, and now I think more and more that it is important that we think of curating as a form of urbanism.

Carsten Höller and I have a plan to build a city together in Tunisia, and this curatorial project is meant to be a new town. At the Serpentine, after having explored China and India, we wanted to focus on the Middle East. We decided not only to question that notion of the Middle East, as a lot of artists are very uncomfortable with that description, but also to try to find a neologism that describes the region.

After the Battersea Power Station project, we came up with the idea of taking over an entire street, and that is why we started the collaboration with the Edgware Road in London, located near the Serpentine Gallery, just a few hundreds meters away. The Edgware Road has layers and layers of history involving the Middle East. Egyptian film has had a very important presence there in the form of an Egyptian cinema, and there were many links to Beirut, along with many restaurants and other spaces with connections to the Middle East over many decades. So we decided to invite artists like Susan Hefuna, Wael Shawky, and others to actually develop a residency in Edgware Road. The artists would spend time, map the Edgware Road in relation to Beirut, Cairo, and other cities, and little by little this project will become an exhibition. For the moment, it is a residency. Sally Tallant, who is the Serpentine’s Head of Programmes, has been very much driving this project, along with an extraordinary team. A good example to call up is Marwan Rechmaoui, an artist from Beirut, with his mappings of Beirut and of the Edgware Road.

We can say that the aforementioned projects are about knowledge production. Similarly to when I do a show in a house, like the Lorca house, artists come and work there, and reconvert spaces. Another example that comes to mind is the “Utopia Station,” which was a hybrid work space, or the hybrid work space of the 1st Berlin Biennale we constructed for documenta X of Catherine David, where we invited Christoph Schlingensief. What I really wanted to stress here is the idea of the hybrid work space. The Edgware Road program was a hybrid workspace, while obviously the Serpentine Gallery’s core exhibitions continued nearby in the white cube, where numerous shows were organized with prominent artists such as Matthew Barney, Jeff Koons, Philippe Parreno, Inside/Outside, It Started to Snow, Konstantin Grcic, Klara Lidén, and Nairy Baghramian, to give a few examples.

And last but not least, it is worth it to introduce the experience of the Serpentine’s pavilions. Julia Peyton-Jones had a wonderful idea in 2000 to invent, with Zaha Hadid, the pavilions. The idea is that every summer, we add a wing. Usually once architecture is built it is frozen, but in this case we add a new wing every summer. Julia Peyton-Jones and I started to collaborate in 2006, and since then have co-curated the project. The first one we did together was with Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond. I had invented an idea of “marathons” in Stuttgart and also in Zagreb: the idea was to map a city by having interviews, events, and discourse nonstop for twenty-four hours. This idea did not launch very well, because when we did the first marathon in Stuttgart, the then new museum leaked tragically—somehow at two o’clock in the morning I was just about to have a conversation with Ute Meta Bauer when we were inundated and suddenly rescued from the flooded building.

The “Marathon Format” soon developed into a very regular activity, occurring every summer in London, and now also in other cities of the world. With Rem Koolhaas, for example, we did a twenty-four-hour nonstop interview marathon: a portrait of London with artists and architects. Many marathons were organized under the project “Experiment Marathon,” like the poetry marathon in SANAA’s pavilion or the manifesto marathon in Frank Gehry pavilion, which played on the idea of the Hyde Park Corner, the proximity to Hyde Park Corner, free speech in our neighborhood, and questioning others’ statements and manifestos in the twenty-first century. Tino Sehgal states that manifestos are a very masculine thing, a twentieth-century thing, while the twenty-first century is more about conversation.

However, they are somehow manifestoes and, as Tom McCarthy says, “if the manifesto is a defining form” it is interesting because we can revisit it almost like a broken bicycle wheel. At the end, there were seventy artists presenting manifestos of all kinds, from the worlds of literature, design, science, philosophy, music, and film.

The marathon that has the most to do with the topic of the conference prose was organized in 2007 with Olafur Eliasson in Kjetil Thorsen’s pavilion, which is designed as a laboratory. The idea of the “exhibition as a laboratory” is something that has always played a big role in my activity. I believe that we need laboratories for the twenty-first century. We once did an exhibition called *Laboratorium* with Barbara Vanderlinden, where the entire city of Antwerp became a lab. With Olafur we declared the pavilion a zone of laboratories, inviting about sixty practitioners to do experiments in public. For example, Simone Forti did scores that were performed by Gill Clarke, and Cerith Wyn Evans did a choreographic experiment; there were many science experiments and obviously experiments can fail when you move an experiment from one place to the next. Talking about failure nowadays, I think, is extremely relevant. Some of those experiments produced very unexpected results. Marina Abramović did several experiments with visitors; Spartacus Chetwynd revisited Buckminster Fuller’s experiments at the Black Mountain College with geodesics; Peter Cook (who would say “my suitcase is an experiment”) unpacked his suitcase, like someone who has just arrived, placing the contents on the table as an experiment; Pedro Reyes started to literally rope in the entire audience, who then encountered huge problems freeing themselves; and Thomas Saraceno and Tris Vonna-Michell developed a lecture as a kind of experiment. There were many scholars, Gustav Metzger’s experiment with metallic ropes, experiments involving animals, and conversations with animals. Fia Backström also performed an experimental lecture. There was a *séance* as an experiment, and the idea of color as an experiment: Are there color theories for the twenty-first century? Jonas Mekas revisited the Andy Warhol Factory by analyzing it as a zone of experiment; the collaboration with John Brockman and EDGE led to the “Formular of the 21st Century.”

More about the marathons is available on the website of the Serpentine Gallery, and for those linked to science, it is published on the EDGE website and on John Brockman’s site for the scientific experiments he curated, involving a number of contemporary scientists and biologists like Armand Le

Roi and Steve Jones, as well as Lewis Wolpert. At some point in the middle of the science experiments of John Brockman, we invited John Baldessari to do his wonderful experiment: to transform a glass of water into a glass of wine, and back into a glass of water. And maybe mention of this experiment is a good way to end...

Art as a Thinking Process: New Reflections

In what sense is art, in itself, a “thinking process”? In what ways can or should this process be institutionalized in art academies—how should it taught or learned? How is it or its instruction related to instituted forms of knowledge, in the sciences and in the humanities?

It seems that now is a time for such questions, not simply in Venice, with its own distinctive intellectual traditions, but also following a long series of discussions about *artistic research* or *research-based art* that has taken shape especially in Europe, in part in critical response to the Bologna Accords, and in part in terms of the new role visual arts and artist institutions have come to play in a larger globalization of knowledge and of thought outside of European national art schools. In particular, starting in the 1990s, several European networks have grown up, linking together older national academies: at first in Britain and Scandinavia, not only to debate, but also to help institute programs in artistic research. It is in this context, then, that questions of art as “thinking process,” and so of thinking in art and thinking with or through art, are being raised again.

In 2001, in Oslo, Norway, I had an earlier occasion to reflect on such questions.¹ I then tried to connect them to a sometimes bitter debate over the nature and field of “contemporary art,” which started to take shape in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War. What would it mean to define “contemporaneity” in this art, not in the familiar terms of “medium” or “post-medium,” “institutional critique,” “Conceptual art,” or “site or non-site,” but rather in terms of a certain picture of the activity of the artist as a kind of “experimenter” rather than as an avant-garde “transgressor”? What would it mean to see this activity as an activity of thinking, in and with other fields, working in multiple historical sequences and within particular techno-social

dispositifs? But in sketching this portrait of “thinking in contemporary art,” I was drawing on an earlier attempt on my part, starting in the 1990s—the moment when contemporary art was taking off—to work out a way of doing theory adapted to the new and globalizing situation.

At first primarily with architects, in architectural schools as well as through a ten-year global itinerant architectural symposium called “ANY,” I had tried, in the work of Gilles Deleuze, at once to isolate and to put into practice a certain picture of “thinking in art”—a picture that would be neither didactic (where art just illustrates a given theory) nor romantic (where art is the preserve of an element rebellious to all thought), but rather more a kind of connection, interference, and resonance. Deleuze had himself written little about architecture. But, at this time, notably in the Architectural School at Columbia University, then in the process of instituting paperless studios, there arose new readings and uses of Deleuze, more in the studio than in the traditional historical research courses, involving how one “thinks in architecture”—e.g. using new kinds of topographical diagrams rather than traditional axonometric drawings, themselves geared toward new kinds of *research-based* urban intervention. No doubt today theoretical discussion in the Architecture School at Columbia University has migrated away from this moment of studio discussion and experimentation toward the three areas of media studies, exhibition practices, and renewed political debate, thus increasingly crossing over precisely with “contemporary art” and its institutions. But it is perhaps worth recalling a few aspects of the image that Deleuze had tried to work out and develop starting in the 1970s along with Félix Guattari, as to what “thinking in art”² is—the peculiar nature of its investigations and research, and its relations with sciences, technologies, and philosophies.

John
Rajchman

What then is thinking in art? What is it to think “in painting” or “in cinema” or, for that matter, “in architecture”? In the first place, it is not a matter of method or of methodology. For in the process of thinking in art, in its research, and in the ways it is learned, there is nothing like a “science of method.” That was already a key theme in Deleuze’s study of Marcel Proust in the 1960s, updated in the 1970s, in which the question of the “image of thought”³ was first formulated. For the search or research (for lost time) undertaken by Proust’s hero is one where “ideas always come after,” through unexpected encounters with things that cannot be recognized in habitual ways, an endless learning process of unraveling signs for which there exist no known codes, eventually leading up to the peculiar intelligence of ideas and related signs in art. Deleuze would go on to elaborate the “image of thought” he had thus found in Proust in many ways—the best known today is no doubt that of that of the *rhizome*.⁴ His picture of the “process of thinking in art,” Proustian or rhizomatic, was thus that of a process spreading out in different directions, forever shifting and adjusting to fresh encounters and relations, advancing in fits and starts, with many moments where one cannot see how to go on. It was thus something that had to be undertaken each time anew, since there were no preexisting rules or paths for it; and yet, precisely for this reason or in this way, it was connected to larger conditions and institutions or knowledge or technical apparatuses. Thus, although thinking in art or research in art is not ordered by method, it nevertheless is related to knowledge, technology, in this sense “media.” We thus find a second aspect of Deleuze’s image of thought. Even or especially in its realist, documentary forms or in its archival investigations, thinking in art is a singular process that cannot be reproduced or imitated as such; it is something that must be learned without a Masters or Master-Discourse, often tied up instead with forms of fiction or depiction that make visible things that we do not normally see. The way it is learned is thus not a simple matter of becoming educated, enlightened, cultivated, *gelernt*—in fact too much such “culture,” too much “cultivation,” can smother it. Indeed, vital to the process of thinking in art, and in its forms of research, is something raw and wild, given by things one cannot quite identify or see or say, creating a kind of blindness or muteness combined with a sense of an inchoate necessity that causes or forces one to think—or rethink—often opening up in the process new unanticipated relations with others. There is, in other words, a fundamental “illiteracy” in the processes of thinking in arts, which in turn is precisely part of its appeal, as when Antonin Artaud declared “I write for illiterates.”⁵ One is thus at some distance from the Kantian dream equating “Knowledge” or

“Aesthetic Judgment” with “Emancipation” through literate or enlightened publics or public spheres—or what Johann Fichte would call “aesthetic education”⁶ (and the national institutions that formed it). One consequence, recently elaborated by Jacques Rancière, is that one needs another picture of emancipatory politics itself as a zone of activity for which there preexists no instituted knowledge or fixed *territorialization*. In the processes of thinking in art it is then better to say, with Deleuze, that “the people is not given, is missing,”⁷ and is created along with the search or research, and so is inseparable from a kind of popular (yet not populist) “ignorance,” found in those moments when people start to see things and talk in ways no expertise could have foreseen. There is a sense, in other words, in which the process of thinking in art is fundamentally “extra-territorial”—or, to use Deleuze’s own idiom, thinking is always “deterritorializing” in an “absolute” way, one from which there is no way back.

How then might this picture of thinking in art then be used or put into practice? One way is in relation to the work of particular artists and the ways they engage in thinking in and through their art. Often in approaching the work of a great artist one has a stimulating sense of proximity to such “ignorant” or “unlearned” ideas, such singular investigations of things that cannot be recognized in the usual ways—an intuition which one can then try to start to elaborate, formulating the particular problems or questions it poses. That is precisely what Deleuze himself tried to do across many cases in his study of cinema, in relation to the larger questions of what an “image” is (and its role in this new “mass industrial art,” growing up in tandem with new psychology or neurology as well as philosophy). The resulting picture of “having ideas in cinema” was in turn suggestive not simply for filmmakers, but also for many contemporary artists—in a remarkable way, for example, in the work of certain artists, and artists groups, working in India today.⁸ At the same time, we find this approach to thinking in art in another way in Deleuze’s study of the “logic of sensation”⁹ in Francis Bacon, working in his famously cluttered studio, doing “violence” to cliché images at once on the canvas and in our brains—what Alain Badiou would later present as an attempt to extract, along many lines once, a new picture of “the violent form of thinking that is painting.”¹⁰

Reflecting on this notion and practice of “thinking in art,” I tried in my own way to extend it to artists and to art forms and art practices that Deleuze himself had not written about. Let me briefly mention two: Richard Serra

and Xu Bing. For Serra, a visceral way of thinking in art, starting early on and accompanying him through all the developments in his work and related research, is drawing—drawing as a way of “having ideas,” as he puts it, later elaborated in another way through his films (or “filmic drawings” or “filmic research”). Drawing is then already a way of “thinking with one’s hands,” found in all art. But in his sculpture, we find another kind of thinking, what he came to call “thinking with one’s feet” imposed by his massive steel structures. We then see that the relation between thinking with “hands” and “feet” is intended to defeat the usual “eye-hand” gestalt, which had so long dominated painting, and through it, sculpture, in another kind of space closer to what one sees, notably, in certain Zen gardens. Serra’s “process of thinking,” in other words, was his peculiar way of giving us, at least for a moment, a vital sense of another body, another brain, another *field*, in which one “thinks with one’s body,” not just with one’s brain or mind, not just with one’s eyes and cognitive object-recognition. It thus involved “aesthetic research” or investigation carried out different ways—in film as well as in drawing—in a kind of experimental zone, outside the frame of testable laboratory hypotheses that in much current neuroscience often focused on repeatable recognition skills (or on the search for a brain module of “art cognition”), closer instead to Deleuze’s own picture of “vital ideas” and “lived brains” plunged into the zones of “illiteracy” from which thinking and research in art derives.

Drawing and thinking are connected in another striking way in the research and the work of the contemporary Chinese artist, Xu Bing. We see it in particular in his attempt in the 1980s to adapt the practice of sudden or paradoxical Chan-Buddhist enlightenment, regarded as a “process of thinking,” to the new situation of *shu* (books, learning, writing) after Mao, which had confronted his generation of artists with a peculiar form of “illiteracy,” an “awkward relation to writing”; we find that this sense of illiteracy developed new forms, following his move to New York, in a larger process he came to call “ignorance as a kind of nourishment.”¹¹ Even for the next generation of Chinese artists, living in different “globalized” circumstances, Xu Bing holds on to his idea that each artist, in a given situation, must, through research, find his or her own peculiar “way of thinking.” It thus poses a particular pedagogical question for Xu Bing, tied up with the larger question of what should be taught now in Chinese art academies, which were based on nineteenth-century European models and then transformed by Mao’s idea of “art for the people” and the Cultural Revolution. While the problem of

abstraction so central for Serra has little role in Xu Bing's thought or work, nevertheless in different times and circumstances, they each were involved in the larger question of "art as a thinking process," connected in striking ways in the whole question of "drawing." One thus finds, without any influence or "dialogue," a kind of intersection or resonance in practice and idea, tied up in part with the "spatialization" of Zen or Chan Buddhist thinking, outside the old and increasingly provincial teleological story of modernism whose crux would lie precisely in a "formalist" theory of abstraction. For the kinds of history and historical investigation involved in such encounters—yet to be written, still in the making—there is then an institutional face and problem: how do we provide for those vital (and "illiterate") zones of thinking, outside the demands of state or market, working in the new, extra-national ways of cross-encounter opened up by what is now called globalization?

How then should we formulate this pressing institutional question, at the heart of much of the current discussion or debate about art as a thinking process? Artists do research, undertake investigations, read and talk, look and make. But where and how does such thinking take place, where and how is it learned? How is it related to work done elsewhere or at other times? In part, it is a problem of institutions and their "outsides." In what sense does "the process of thinking" in art transpire outside already instituted Knowledge? Does it, for example, require retreating off into sanctuaries of free thought in a grand withdrawal or "exile" from the great "Empire of Capitalism,"¹¹ to use Paolo Virno's term? It seems that this Romantic picture of an outside of all institutions already proved untenable in the failed search for "autonomous spaces" of free labor and thought outside the "hegemony" of the Italian Communist Party in the 1960s; why should it work better in a period of so-called post-Fordist immaterial labor where the grip on life is so much more encompassing? But on the other hand, is it then a simple institutional question of issuing certificates of a new kind of expertise within existing art schools—a new kind of specialization, the skills of a new "medium"? If one then looks instead at the actual practices of the so-called pedagogical turn in contemporary art (for example, the failed art-school project unitednations-plaza that was intended to start in 2006 during Manifesta 6 in Cyprus but that was then staged in Berlin two years later), one often has the impression of a kind of substitute formation, which, in the absence of any sustained research project or agenda, tends to recycle ideas invented elsewhere, according to the calendar of biennial projects and panels, each compendious

“brainstorm” supplanted by the next one, orchestrated by “curator-catalysts” and their momentary research teams. Are there then other ways of envisaging the process of thinking in art outside of instituted knowledge, outside of the institutions and “disciplines” of knowledge? Apart from (or at least as part of) the issue of special degrees for research-based artistic expertise, are there ways to encourage and reinvent those spaces at once inside and outside of academies, universities, museums, and exhibition practices, in which the process of thinking in art can live? That is perhaps then the institutional question of art as a process of thinking.

What models do we have for it? One example is the short-lived research-project Michel Foucault set up in the 1970s, called the Group for Information on Prisons (GIP), part of a larger attempt at the time to set up “transversal groups,” operating without avant-garde popes or manifestos, publishing small research journals, leading to academic publications like *Discipline and Punish*, which themselves, in turn, were together regarded as a toolbox for further agitation or “struggle.” Foucault thought this kind of research belonged to a larger shift of the “function of intellectuals” from the “universalist” writers such as Émile Zola and Jean-Paul Sartre toward “specific intellectuals” working within particular *dispositifs* of knowledge, as with Robert Oppenheimer, the atomic bomb, and the larger military-industrial knowledge complex of which it was a key part. But Foucault was in fact rather different from Oppenheimer, and the question of information was posed in another way, following the expansion of the notion of technology itself to include *dispositifs*, cutting across different forms of knowledge, taking shape in different institutions, requiring new kinds of research. Thus the aim was not to simply collect or offer information about prisons nor to “let the prisoners speak,” but rather to set up spaces in which they might actually be “heard,” spaces where new ways of seeing and speaking about prisons might be invented, which neither prisoners nor observers could create on their own—such was the “outside.” We know, however, that Foucault himself was eventually disappointed with this creative or experimental aim in his research, entering a sort of crisis period after 1976, filled with new experiments and hypotheses, notably surrounding “bio-power” and “neoliberalism,” still with us today.

Foucault’s group, of course, was not an artists’ group, even if many writers, artists, and filmmakers took part in one way or another—that was part of the idea: to set up a space of exchange outside instituted disciplines,

formulating larger questions that belonged to no one domain, focused on the workings of *dispositifs* of seeing and saying underlying many different practices, found in many different institutions—“multi-linear ensembles,” as Deleuze would call them. The exchange was thus not at all like a nice liberal “inter-disciplinarity” in which artistic research might function as an added expertise or new discipline. On the contrary, it was about the creation of extra-disciplinary spaces and de-disciplinizing experiences from which new questions might come—new diagrams of the way things work, outside of usual institutional habits, and leading to new inventions. That was just why the exchange—or new *partage*—remained “outside,” even if it didn’t in the end lead to changes Foucault had hoped for. But how then might this research experiment be adapted to the institutional question of art as a thinking process? How, in particular, might it be extended to art institutions, like academies or museums, or to artistic or curatorial research?

It is instructive in this regard to look back at Jacques Rancière’s objection to Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological approach in this light, forming part of larger attempt to adapt and extend Foucault’s research model into the questions of the 1990s, after the Cold War, when “contemporary art” was taking shape. Bourdieu had focused on two great “public” institutions in France, the school and the museum, and in each case, he tried to show that what was presented as republican or aesthetic universality was in fact governed by the particularity of an underlying *habitus*, tied up with class relations, part of a “field” to be shown through detailed sociological investigation.¹² Rancière took exception to the presumptions of this new “sociologist king,” maintaining that such practices or habits had, precisely, no outside, forming a closed field rather than a *partage*, interrupted, especially in the arts, by new acts and groups—notably with the “dis-identifications” of the new ideas of art (or of its “expanded fields”) that took shape in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in New York—but going back to a long history of breaking away from “academism” that runs through the entire history of modern art.¹³ More generally, he argued, while there in fact may exist no completely free or emancipatory institutions in art or in knowledge (and so of “aesthetic education”), there perhaps exists no institution that can completely rule out in advance those “acts of emancipation” that interrupt its *habitus* in opening its “field” to the outside of other possibilities, making room for the “part of those with no part.” It is then precisely through such acts, disrupting habit or consensus, opening the field, making room for the “part of those who have no part,” in which the process of thinking in art lives and

new kinds and “ideas of art” become possible. Armed with this notion of *partage* and its disruptions, Rancière would go on to put it into practice increasingly in relation to “contemporary art” that was taking shape in the 1990s—a new kind of itinerant, intruding “amateur” within it.

But in the period in which he thus took up—and started to be taken up by—“contemporary art,” a number of changes in the larger field in which it operates were underway. 1989 was not only the takeoff point for exhibitions and discourses of neoliberal “globalization”; it was also, at the same time, a moment when “Europe” became a new idea, and, therefore, “Asia” itself became something of a European invention.¹⁴ At the time there was much talk in the arts about “nomadism,” “hybridity,” and being “in between,” along with attempts to undo the Eurocentrism of the story of modern art or the search for “other modernities.” In many ways, the nineteenth-century European art school (adopted after the Meiji Reformation in various forms in Asia) was a national school; and the “enlightened” or “learned” public that schools and museums would form was, in practice at least, largely a “national” public. To the questions of thinking or research outside institutionalized knowledge or practice was thus added a new and territorial or geopolitical dimension, no longer reducible to higher “cosmopolitan” sensibilities of a given learned or aesthetically educated national public, but found rather in the ways particular cities (such as Paris, capital of the nineteenth century) had functioned as “laboratories of deterritorialization” in which artistic thinking and *partage* lived, of which the nation was only a violent or exclusionary “reterritorialization”—Paris, but also Berlin, Moscow, New York, then postwar Rio and Tokyo, with Dada and then Fluxus ever moving from one to the other. The question of the “illiteracy” of thinking in art then assumed a new sense of being outside the national “monolingualism” of learned or literate publics (and related philosophical traditions), working instead with “minor languages,” foreign or untranslatable into any given language, opening onto new ways of seeing and other kinds of images, appealing to an illiterate “people” not yet enclosed in any nationality. With the rise of new zones of wealth (themselves reflected in auction, collecting, galleries, etc) outside the old modernist Euro-American avant-garde axis, the “centrality” of such experimentation for the “periphery” has eroded. Today there is no one city to which one can go, in fact or in one’s dreams, as one once went to Moscow or Paris or New York, to encounter new forces and discussion vital to “thinking in art.” Even Rancière is obliged to constantly leave Paris to find it. At the same time, the shift of geography affects the larger fate

of research, especially in the “humanities” or “liberal” education, as universities trying to “globalize” their curricula at the same time as museums their collections, rekindling questions of whether the old philological or hermeneutic models of the grand story of the West unfolding from Greek Antiquity through a grand universal “learning-process” can survive the loss of the European imperial power that supported and transported them. The question of the process of thinking in art, its relation to institutions of learning and models of research, is taking place within this situation. In part it is an institutional question: Can institutions now provide for this kind of extra-national, if not de-territorialized, space of connection and exchange, outside the older frame of modern or modernist histories? How can we set up networks or laboratories to provide for it and so to better articulate the new questions it poses within a now increasingly global field? Perhaps this remains an important and unresolved question for art as a thinking process. In any case it is one that I am now still trying to better formulate and to develop in practice as in theory—part of an ongoing philosophical research.

- 1 See John Rajchman, “Thinking in Contemporary Art,” *Institute for Research within International Contemporary Art*, http://www.forart.no/index.php?option=com_iarticles&Itemid=28&year=-1&author=John+Rajchman.
- 2 Deleuze develops the idea of “thinking in art” in two critical studies, of cinema, and also of painting, in his study of Francis Bacon (see notes 9 and 10 below).
- 3 Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 94.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 3, 374.
- 5 Antonin Artaud, *Collected Writings*, trans. Victor Corti (New York: Riverrun Press, 1987), 167.
- 6 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*, trans. Reginald Snell (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954).
- 7 For a development of the theme “the people is missing,” see Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 215.
- 8 In a current exhibition of new Indian artists, curated by Sandhini Poddar, we see the role of Deleuze, film culture, taken up in artist research groups, collectives, and institutions. See *Being Plural Singular* (New York: Gug-

- genheim Publications, 2012). Deleuze's own lecture to filmmakers in 1987 gives a sense why. "What is the Act of Creation?," in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006).
- 9 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2003).
 - 10 Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin, "Preface to the French Edition," in *Francis Bacon*, vii.
 - 11 "Ignorance as a Kind of Nourishment," in *Qishi Niandai*, eds. Bei Dao and Li Tuo (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2008). The "Forest Project" evoked at the end of this essay is currently being re-engaged in Brazil as part of the São Paulo Biennial. On the questions of SHU in contemporary Chinese art and "illiteracy" in Xu Bing, see Wu Hung, *SHU* (New York: China Institute Catalogue, 2002).
 - 12 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004).
 - 13 Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. John Drury, Corrine Oster, Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 197.
 - 14 On the turn to a new "contemporary" idea of art in New York in the 1960s and 1970s as a moment of dis-identification see note 1.
 - 15 See Wang Hui, esp. the title essay in *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). The idea of "the nation state," in effect a poisoned gift of several centuries of European and American "research," would be brought into question in the wake of 1989, when Asia as well as Europe became a new idea.

Thinking Through

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What do we mean when we talk about “thinking through the visual”? Is it maybe the very operation of translating thinking between different types of orders, methods, materialities, and clusters, which provokes a new and creative way of understanding and developing new thinking? In that case, the point is that these translations contain an element of misunderstanding, due to the very impossibility of fully rendering a chain of thinking, of moving it from one mode to another. This might sound abstract, but if we think about the optical phenomenon that occurs when we put a stick in a glass of water, and see the shape seemingly change, we might get an idea of what I’m trying to describe.

Artist David Hockney describes years of visual research in his magisterial *Secret Knowledge* (2001). In it, he proves through experiments how famous changes in how artists were seeing and understanding the world during the European Renaissance in fact were results of a new tool: optical lenses. The artists very often got these lenses from bishops in the Catholic Church, many of whom during those days were interested in magic. And indeed, to see a full representation of reality appear on a wall thanks to a lens does have some magic about it. As Hockney rightly states, the only new aspect of art through the advent of photography was the ability to, through chemical means, fixate such an image on a glass plate or on paper.

We tend to forget that the Renaissance magic, however, is not so much connected to visual art (apart from the lenses trick) as to the beginnings of science. Remember the famous visionary Giordano Bruno, the Dominican monk who was burned for heresy in Rome in 1600, and whose ideas about an infinite universe seemed to predate the theories of astronomers by 300 years. He got all of his knowledge through his use of kabbalahs and “Egyptian” magic!

Therefore, I would like to use the Swedish artist and spiritistic medium Hilma af Klint as a test case, and as a kind of prototype for a researching artist. Hilma af Klint was born in Stockholm in 1862, and was trained as a professional artist at a time when women artists were not as common as they are today. She specialized in portraits and landscape painting, showing a keen eye and precise powers of observation. However, I wouldn't be discussing her today had she not also been a spiritist medium, with a complete faith in how one can, by putting oneself into a trance, gain access to the spiritual unconscious. Beginning in the 1880s, but in particular in the ten years preceding her first esoteric painting in 1906, she along with her small group fellow artists/spiritists was receiving messages, which encouraged her to be totally open-minded and to carefully depict her given knowledge about the inner secrets of world and nature. Her clear, mathematical mind would need these ten years to learn humility, according to the spirits, in order not to paint how she imagined something, but to paint what she actually saw. In af Klint's vocabulary, spirits guided her hand, until she became experienced enough to make her own decisions.

The results—1,022 esoteric paintings—are amazing. The often very large paintings don't resemble anything her contemporaries were doing. Sometimes she is compared to Wassily Kandinsky or Piet Mondrian, since they too were influenced by theosophy, but in my view there is a big difference. Kandinsky and Mondrian made an analytical, step-by-step transition from figurative painting to abstract painting. For Hilma af Klint, such categories are not relevant.

There is an unfinished series of drawings/paintings, probably from around 1917, which shows clearly how she quite literally thought through the

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Sandqvist

visual. She seems to have waited until she clearly saw the exact, esoteric construction of some particular problem in how universe is constructed, and didn't continue until she saw this clearly. Her esoteric diaries, of which there are more than one thousand, describe in her very clear and regular handwriting all spiritual messages, and also include instructions for not-yet-executed paintings and her own spiritual travels, providing fascinating reading as the reflective, written part of her visual research.

It seems clear to me that Hilma af Klint tried to understand what kind of message or knowledge her own esoteric paintings presented. As in the case of Bruno, her research methods were occult, or magic, a knowledge system that might seem alien to modern scientists or artists. But if we accept occult knowledge as a specific kind of understanding on par with other systems, we will find that it is just as coherent.

Af Klint seems to use several different ways to obtain occult knowledge. For a long period, at least between 1896 and 1910, her main tool was the séance. As a medium, in trance, af Klint received messages from a number of spirits. Some of these seem to present persons from various reincarnations, while others were characters resembling angels. When she, in the mid 1930s, refers to these events, she simply calls them "the voice."

Before 1906, the main message from this "voice" seems to be to prepare af Klint for her future task—to reveal the secrets of the universe through painting. She is instructed not to doubt so much, and also to transform herself into as finely tuned an instrument as possible. Since she is a professionally trained painter, she is asked to put her skill into the service of "the High," and to paint the origins of life, the structure of the universe, and the secrets of human destiny. The spirits will help her to carry out their message. Between 1906 and 1910, this is basically what af Klint was doing. Every painting was listed according to a rather simple system, which resembles experiments carried out in a lab (numbers in different series, and dates, e.g. "group IV, nr 2, 8/10 1907," or "Sjustjärnan, nr 5, Series WUS, Jan-Feb 1908"). Af Klint was also instructed not to show any of these works to anyone outside a very small circle of friends, called the Friday group.

Then there was a pause for approximately four years, until af Klint started her next series of occult paintings. This time, the paintings were not a result of receiving messages/noting results, but of af Klint's growing capacity to

see and understand the mystic secrets of nature. Somewhere in the period between 1910 and 1913, she became clairvoyant. She comments in her occult diary (or, rather, journal): “It is not easy to make a mediumistic portrait with little gnomes constantly irritating you.”

Between October 1914 and December 1915, af Klint made fifty-five large occult paintings, belonging to the series SUW (The Swan), UW (The Dove), and Pictures for the Altar, group X. One can see in the way the paintings have been created that af Klint was working as quickly, and with no difference in technique, as in her earlier, guided paintings. The works, shifting seamlessly between abstract and figurative, have a great inner coherence and logic, and seem to depict a reality hidden for most of us, partly with symbols, partly with careful observation of structures necessary for creating life (The Dove, nr 1, group IX, series UW, for instance has as a main structure something which very much resembles the DNA spiral).

Af Klint continued to receive impulses for occult paintings until her death in 1944. But after her move to Dornach and Rudolf Steiner in 1920, she changed her way of working to paint watercolors in wet-in-wet techniques according to the anthroposophical instructions.

Then, and in particular in the 1930s, af Klint began to understand and analyze her previous work, and in particular the “mediumistic” works she made between 1906 and 1908. Methodically, she tried to decode the paintings, writing lists of what every sign and symbol meant. She continued to use her occult knowledge system, which meant that she watched and listened, and waited until the secret was revealed to her. Sometimes she received a message from The High, instructing her not to reveal too much, but rather to keep quiet. But slowly and patiently, as a scientist, she continued to decode her own work.

Af Klint does not seem to have read much theosophical or occult literature. She followed Dr. Steiner’s lectures in Dornach in the 1920s, and wrote that she listened to a lecture by the theosophical leader Annie Besant in 1908, but her personal library contains almost no occult literature, and hardly anything theosophical, apart from some Swedish journals. In her diary she notes that she didn’t read Helena Blavatsky’s classic *Isis Unveiled* until 1943, in spite of friends’ recommendations. This means that she developed her occult paintings and the connected “diaries” or journals with no access

to the pictorial and theoretical sources that were so important to Kandinsky or Mondrian. Needless to say, she had no contact with or knowledge of any of the early abstract painters.

I would say that Hilma af Klint is just as much a prototype for the visual artist/researcher as Giordano Bruno is the prototype for the modern scientist. As a footnote I can mention that Hilma af Klint decided that her esoteric work must not be shown until twenty-five years after her death, since she assumed that the world would not be mature enough to understand them. She died in 1944. In 1969, the world, in shape of the director of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, was not yet ready. Only in 1985 was her work shown to a larger audience within the exhibition "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract painting 1890–1980," at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Since then, there has always been at least one Hilma af Klint painting being shown in exhibitions all over the world. Their message has remained obscure. A careful reading of af Klint's diaries might help us understand what she considered to be the meaning of her work.

The Institutional Conscience of Art

Our current artistic decade is filled with an excess of rhetoric dealing with crisis, precariousness, and change, but most of all with challenge. One of the challenges in today's art world pertains to the Bologna Accords that came into effect twelve years ago as a reconstructive trajectory for rethinking and reformulating higher education in Europe. The gradual implementation of the Bologna framework slowly but surely made very clear that the introverted, romantic, pre-democratic, and non-dialogic master-pupil model of master-class education had definitively come to an end in most European countries.¹ The master-pupil model had to make way for a course-based, modular program while leaving the dominant art-historical canon behind. Because of the deconstruction of the boundaries between art education, science, and the domain of art practice—boundaries that were clung to in the former model for the sake of the principle of autonomy—curricular space is claimed now for novel components in the program such as critical studies, contextual studies, collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, experimental productions, and above all for communicative and curatorial competencies. What becomes abundantly clear is that today artists should be able to present and contextualize their projects.

The implementation of the Bologna Process in higher art education signifies a real paradigm shift in the process of reflection upon art production as such. Thinking in terms of creation, creative capacity, studio, and talent is no longer accentuated. At the core of the current discourse are artistic constructions and interdisciplinary activities that, going “beyond the studio,” seem to be able to occur anywhere if they can adequately connect or respond to a given or required context. Topical visual art, then, should most of all be “research-based” and “context-responsive.” This renders

art the freedom to deploy a range of contexts such as architecture, design, film, history, biology, sciences, technology, and philosophy.

Such a clear-cut focus on research-based and context-sensitive visual art has given rise to the concept of artistic research. Yet, the concept of artistic research in itself has raised many questions during the past decade, accompanied by intense and heated debates.² What form of research could the domain of visual art produce? Does the rhetoric of research include novel practices, or does it exclude and/or marginalize certain practices? Could the dual pair of art versus not-art be substituted by the opposition of research-based art versus non-research-based, creating a novel mechanism of exclusion?³ Or does a research discourse and its vocabulary point to an already existing practice that could be accommodated in an academic architecture focused on knowledge production through a process of translation? And last but not least, what does the concept of artistic research mean in the setup of a graduate school for fine art? How does an art education institution function while having to focus on artistic research skills and the capacity to issue academic MA and PhD degrees in accordance with the Bologna Accords?

The role and signification of the academization of visual art served as an especially important starting point for the collaborative project “A Certain Ma-Ness,”⁴ initiated by Sint-Lucas Academy Brussels and MaHKU (Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design) in 2008, and which ultimately resulted in three projects. In addition to “A Certain Ma-Ness,” the subsequent projects “Becoming Bologna” and “The Academy Strikes Back” came into being as successors in a series of collaborations. “A Certain Ma-Ness” had at its core the following three questions:

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1. What does the current academization and thinking in terms of research competencies mean for the student in art education? Can these competencies be charted in a clear and distinct way? During the “A Certain Ma-Ness” conference and exhibition (VCH De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam) the so-called Dublin descriptors (being able to cope in a research environment; problem-solving attitude; well considered in dealing with complexities; communicative skills; and independent learning), which had been established for dealing with such questions, were critically evaluated. Those competencies are, as Mick Wilson rightly observed, not only applicable to MA education, but in a certain sense also to the BA and PhD level of education. That underscores, Wilson believes, that the MA degree in fine art is in fact the least defined academic degree precisely because of its lack of clear criteria for distinction.⁵
2. What does the Bologna Process mean for the didactic role of the lecturer? That was the leading question in the follow-up project “Becoming Bologna,” a collateral event of the 2009 Venice Biennale consisting of a series of research interventions (Iuav University of Venice) and a symposium. Central questions during “Becoming Bologna” were: “What is the specificity of the didactic strategies developed because of the academization of art education?”; “How is a research-based curriculum designed?”⁶ and “How could the research competencies be judged adequately?” In his keynote lecture at the opening of the symposium, Daniel Birnbaum emphasized the agonistic components characterizing the situation around the current art academy curriculum: “An asynchronic moment when the old academy, the modernist model, and their deconstructive after-images live side by side in a world increasingly driven by market interests.”⁷ It is precisely this situation that is most challenging for developing an—agonistic—research-oriented curriculum, a curriculum not taking artistic research as a fundamental point of departure, but considering the constructive and ultimately insoluble tension between the various perspectives on art education as a possibility to remediate different views. This is a development that could be compared to some extent with the earlier introduction of new media in art education: only a small group of artists started becoming actively specialized in new media, but the rise of new media did affect that other visual art media, because of a certain remediation, such that those other media began to be understood in different ways.⁸

3. What do the novel forms of didactic interaction mean for the art academy itself? During the concluding conference, “The Academy Strikes Back” (Sint-Lukas Brussels) this question was tackled from the perspective of the graduate school as research environment and sanctuary for artistic thinking. In that context, Renée Green presented her “Spheres of Interest: Experiments in Thinking and Action,” a graduate seminar and lecture series at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) encountering issues dealing with meaning, engagement, and function in an adaptation of an invisible college.⁹ The goal of Green’s series was to provoke students to imagine unfamiliar forms of perception and creation through

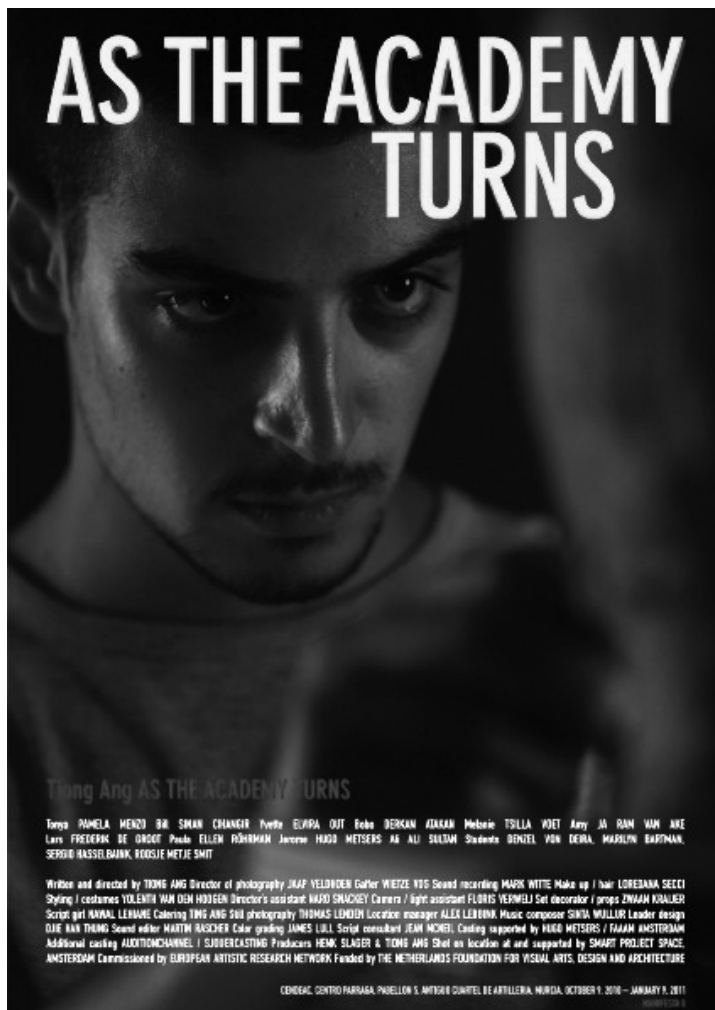


Figure 1: Tiong Ang, *As The Academy Turns*, poster for Manifesta 8, 2010.

exposure to challenging ideas related to different forms of contemporary and historical creative production and conception. “Spheres of Interest: Experiments in Thinking and Action” makes clear that artistic research as an institution within an institution can have a catalyzing effect: it generates working bases, nodes, and networks with others in order to be able to think and create beyond corporatized social networks.

The various responses emerging from these three conferences emphasized various challenging educational elements, such as a clear connection between artistic production and critical studies, a curriculum with chiefly dialogic interactions, a focus on public space, and a laboratory-type curriculum experimenting with both novel forms of presentation—for example contextual studies and curatorial studies¹⁰—and various forms of communication as “agonistic forms of address” (Chantal Mouffe). The latter points to forms of artistic communication as being aware that the public sphere is no longer, as understood in Jürgen Habermas’s *Theory of Communicative Action*, a single entity, but rather is viewed today in a pluralistic sense. In line with this, Mouffe speaks of “a fragmented diversity of public spheres that involves intersecting and conflicting elements.”¹¹ Thus, a topical artistic communication continuously resists the political rhetoric of a striated public space by developing counter-hegemonic practices that, rooted in the awareness that each hegemony is contingent, urge the critical questioning of any dominant hegemony. At the same time, these counter-hegemonic practices substitute an awareness of consensus by awareness of dissensus and, in so doing, contribute to the aesthetic imagination of multitudinous and pluralist forms of smooth social spaces and public spheres.

Yet, when looking at the present situation of European art education, one also notices a dramatic devaluation, since the critical autonomous space of art as once put forward by Theodor W. Adorno seems to have evaporated in the practice of many art academies. No more than a zone of “Temporary Autonomous Research” now remains—a fleeting experience of freedom in a world drowning in iconography of visual culture and the opportunistic rhetoric of the creative industries. One-dimensional strategies of signification seem to directly derive their implicit structure from the formatting effect of the late-capitalist ideology of a free market system.

One could argue that the propensity to format for the sake of a cognitive capitalism is the drawback of the Bologna Process. All that Adorno once

seriously warned against, including an instrumental reason and a quantification of quality, for example in the form of the so-called ECTS (internationally exchangeable study credits), seem to be intrinsically connected to some extent with the current rhetoric of artistic knowledge production in a terminology including standardization, efficiency, and quantifiability. People are afraid that, in the development of this process, both nonconformity and the belief in a process-based and reflective model of education will be erased. For example, Tom Holert argues, “The problem is, once you enter the academic power-knowledge system of accountability checks and evaluative supervision, you have either explicitly or implicitly accepted the parameters of this system. Though acceptance does not necessarily imply submission or surrender to these parameters, a fundamental acknowledgment of the ideological principles inscribed in them remains a prerequisite for any form of access, even if one copes with them, contests them, negotiates them, and revises them.”¹²

But by no means is this all that is in play. Established curatorial practice has effected an unexpected stretching or shifting of the notion of the academy. Recently, more and more exhibitions have been organized that are characterized by a curatorial paradigm qualified by notions such as “the expanded academy” and an “educational turn in curating.” Is this perhaps the direct or indirect consequence of how art academies have lost track of their initial tasks, such as being able to offer a speculative space, a space accommodating a reflection that is able to withstand any quantifiable results? These exhibitions seem to view the academy as a relic, an odd space at the threshold of modernity that is able to give rise to the differentiation of art and to conceive an alternative modernity in the form of a deregulated multitude of practices.

An obvious example of this can be found in the curatorial concept of the “A.C.A.D.E.M.Y” project of the Antwerp Museum for Contemporary Art (M HKA) and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.¹³ In addition, the 2006 Manifesta planned a biennial consisting primarily of a temporary art academy project in Cyprus. Unfortunately, because the views of Manifesta were incompatible with those of the local authorities, that Manifesta 6 program was never executed. Eventually, part of the Manifesta academy project was realized by Vidokle, one of the Manifesta 6 curators, at the unitednationsplaza in Berlin. During the panel discussion “Art Education Today”—a project running parallel to the Frieze Art Fair 2007—

Vidokle reported on the Manifesta academy project. According to him, the current educational turn is related to how the role of visual art is in the process of transformation with regard to the spectator and the public.

The paradigm of the public exhibition was formulated at the time of the French revolution in the eighteenth century. From that point onward, and thus also in our day, exhibitions have had to contribute to a critical, social awareness and to a conscious sense of citizenship. Vidokle argued that the American artist Martha Rosler in particular has demonstrated in her work that the traditional art audience has disappeared over the last two centuries. At the same time, art seems to have adopted the role of entertainment for the masses in their leisure time. That makes it increasingly difficult for art to have an impact on society. Yet, in spite of the end of consensus on the function of public space today, both artists and curators still want to have the eighteenth-century sovereignty that once was given to art. In stressing that desire, they develop exhibitions demanding attention for more effective models and include the concepts of education and participation in the form of experimental academies that attempt to offer spaces of possibility.

Much has been published on this development by the British theorist Irit Rogoff. Rogoff also views the focus on the concept of the academy as a consequence of the rise of technocratic reason in education and the accompanying fear of this development: “The fear that is repeatedly expressed about this process is that all individuality and possibility for a longer-term, more processional, reflective and less outcome-bound model of education will be lost. Certainly the specter of the extreme bureaucratization and increasingly result-oriented culture overtaking British higher education is hardly an encouraging one for the fearful Bologna sceptics in Europe. Rather, the academy is a question regarding how we may know what we don’t yet know how to know.”¹⁴ It is here, in the aim of accessing this complex aspiration, that we need to change our vocabulary—to swap knowledge transfer, knowledge assessment, professionalization, quantifiable outcomes, and marketability for another set of terms and another set of aspirations. During “The Academy Strikes Back” symposium, Rogoff emphasized once more that “creative practices of knowledge”¹⁵—a description she believes more adequate than “practice-based research”—do not cede to the endless pragmatic demands of knowledge protocols: outcomes, impact, and constant monitoring.

In the light of such instrumentalization, the above-mentioned Bologna framework—or the introduction of the Bachelor-Master (BA-MA) system in art education—could ultimately have a positive and restraining effect. If a curricular, module-based model must be introduced in European art education, this also necessitates a reconsideration of the specificity of art education. Such a reconsideration will relocate the discussion about the academy to where it belongs: within the institutional framework of art education. In my view, this does not need to lead at all to a homogenizing embedding, as some conservative critics fear; on the contrary, this could result in claiming space for a form of differential thought enabling a rethink of the somewhat hackneyed concept of autonomy as committed or temporary research autonomy.

For the art academies this development implies that they should manifest themselves particularly as experimental laboratories, as speculative spaces where urgent discussions and cultural productions take place. We know by now—certainly since Walter Gropius—that art cannot be taught,¹⁶ but nevertheless we could generate at least an experimental, laboratory-type situation where constructive impulses could then occur, giving an indirect shift in the creative process. How could we establish situations for channeling and encouraging new energies and questions in a group of participants of whatever size and experience? Such an experimental situation could be brought about, Charles Esche says,¹⁷ if the art academy environment could navigate the following three parameters:

- Anti-specialism: the academy resists specialization and disciplining.
- Anti-isolation: the academy maintains an open dialogue with both its artistic and non-artistic environments.
- Anti-hierarchic: the academy refrains from establishing hierarchic differences between its various media, disciplines, and discourses.

An academy characterized by these perspectives will inherently have the capacity to critically assess any adoption whatsoever of the curricular structure of the university model. But although it is true that the introduction of this new model ends the disciplinary and qualitative arbitrariness of the feudal monopoly position of the professor, the new danger is indeed that it will be entirely substituted by a quantifying control system—the bureaucratization of the ECTS bookkeeping.¹⁸ At the same time, the university education machine seems to be specifically focused on knowledge produc-

tion, while, as mentioned above, the academy is directed toward the open freedom of the laboratory situation giving room to a productive artistic process of thought.

The creation of a space for freedom of thinking is the core task of the art academy, which, as Rogoff rightly states, has been illustrated by all exhibition projects of art academies. Apparently, art academies were close to losing sight of that, because of neoliberal enthusiasm and the homogenizing rhetoric of the creative industry. Due to the reconsideration and rethinking of art academic education enforced by the Bologna rules, art academies should now articulate their core task anew.

In the academy special of the magazine *frieze*, Okwui Enwezor argues that: “The task I see for art schools lies in reconciling the experimental, radical practices of the individual artist with the unruly, unpredictable, asymmetrical relations that constitute the world in which such art is fashioned and realized.”¹⁹ From this perspective, it seems likely that the art academy, on account of its curricular reformulation incorporating the “freedom-of-thinking” space, is soon going to be the only location in the cultural field where innovative processes with regard to production, reflection, and presentation will be generated in the next decade.

One prospect for that development lies, I believe, in the PhD research—the “third cycle”—connected with the Bologna Accords: that is to say, in doctoral research like “Temporary Autonomous Research” without any need to be led by the formatted models of the established scientific order. This will be a form of research not swayed by issues dictated by the late-capitalist free market system and knowledge commodification; in short, this will be an authentic research that comes about through an artistic necessity entirely independent of the rhetoric of socioeconomic relevance.

In the development and realization of such a groundbreaking form of research, Scandinavia plays a prominent pioneering role. In that context, the doctoral programs offered, for example, by the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and the Malmö Art Academy are constructive and inspiring models for many European art academies. These programs present artists with an intellectual sanctuary where they can reconsider their artistic motives and strategies for a number of years.

The net result of such a doctoral program appears to be a quality impulse with regard to art education and artistic practice, since the participating, mostly mid-career artists get the opportunity to concentrate for a number of years on questions and issues intrinsic to their artistic practices. In offering a novel, experimental sanctuary for pure, temporary autonomous artistic research, the doctoral research environment seems to be able to function anew as a maxim for the art academy in itself. That component, therefore, should be stressed specifically in all PhD-related discussions. During the “As the Academy Turns” symposium,²⁰ it came to light that it is of utmost importance that artistic PhD research not only be able to navigate the persistent issues of the changing paradigms of art education, but also to fulfill the role of the conscience of the art academy as an institution.²¹ Art education must also be aware of its responsibility regarding the various forces at play in the field of visual art and culture. Specifically in our day, when the art academy seems to lose its main core because of the animation of neoliberalism and the homogenizing rhetoric of the creative industries, it seems urgent that the academy focus on the reformulation and actualization of its original task—that is, to supply novel and different forms of visual thinking and critical consciousness based on a committed autonomy.

- 1 This development was charted for the first time by Ute Meta Bauer in the publication *Education, Information, Entertainment: New Approaches in Higher Artistic Education* (Vienna: Edition Selene, 2001).
- 2 One of the first European conferences devoted to “Artistic Research” took place in Amsterdam in 2003. The contributions of Jan Kaila, Gertrud Sandqvist, Mika Hannula, Sarat Maharaj, and others, along with a report of the discussion, are published in *Artistic Research* (Amsterdam: Lier en Boog, 2004).
- 3 Tom Holert, “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis,” *e-flux journal*, no. 3 (2009), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/40>.
- 4 This collaborative project consisted of three parts: an exhibition and a symposium in Amsterdam (“A Certain Ma-Ness,” VCC De Brakke Grond, March 2008); a series of research interventions and an expert meeting (“Becoming Bologna,” collateral event to the Venice Biennale, Iuav University of Venice, June 2009); and a concluding exhibition and symposium (“The Academy Strikes Back,” Sint-Lukas Brussels, June 2010). Reports on the projects are published in *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 5 (Summer 2008): 8–9.
- 5 Mick Wilson, “Uncertain Ma-Ness,” *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic*

- Research*, no. 5 (Summer 2008): 33–40.
- 6 Alan Jenkins and Mick Healey, *Institutional strategies to link teaching and research* (York: The Higher Education Academy, 2005). In the report, three clear strategies are distinguished: (1) Teaching can be research-led (learning about others' research); (2) Teaching can be research-oriented (learning to do research: research methods); and (3) Teaching can be research-based (learning in research mode: inquiry-based).
 - 7 Daniel Birnbaum, "Sites of Experimentation," *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 8 (Winter 2009): 7–11.
 - 8 In my curatorial essay "Research-based Practices" (catalogue, 7th Shanghai Biennale, "Translocalmotion," 2008), I defend the hypothesis that the current interest in research-based art—similarly to the role of media art in the 1990s—will remediate and redefine other artistic disciplines and domains.
 - 9 Renée Green, "Hail the Invisible College/Reason's Sense of Humor," *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 9 (Summer 2010): 16–24.
 - 10 For the Doctoral Program of the Finnish Academy of Fine Art in Helsinki, I developed the program unit "Contextual Studies." This program focuses on investigations and analyses of the various contexts to which artistic production relates, and is influenced by ideologies, histories, and current conditions of cultural, social, political, and economic frameworks.
 - 11 Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2007).
 - 12 Tom Holert, "Looking for Agency in the Knowledge-based Institution," *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 8 (Winter 2010): 41.
 - 13 "Academy: Learning from Art," M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium (September 15–November 28, 2006). "A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.: Learning from the Museum," Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands (September 16–November 26, 2006).
 - 14 Irit Rogoff, "Academy as Potentiality," in A.C.A.D.E.M.Y, eds. Angelika Nollert et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver Verlag, 2006), 9.
 - 15 In Rogoff's view, creative practices could be better described as processes by which knowledge becomes a-signifying knowledge. Irit Rogoff, "Practicing Research/Singularising Knowledge," *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 9 (Summer 2010): 41.
 - 16 Florian Waldvogel, "Each One Teach One," *Manifesta 6: Notes for an Art School* (Autumn 2006): 21–27, <http://manifesta.org/manifesta-6/>.

- See also James Elkins, "What Do Artists Know?" *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 8 (Winter 2010): 27–30.
- 17 Charles Esche, "Include Me Out: Preparing Artists to Undo the Art World," in *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)*, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2009), 105. See also, "Epilogue," in *Agonistic Academies*, eds. Jan Cools and Henk Slager (Brussels: Sint-Lukas Books, 2011), 85–94.
 - 18 During the conference "The Academy Strikes Back" (Brussels, 2010), Dieter Lesage rightly states: "If Karl Marx could say that capitalism was better than feudalism, if Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in their worldwide communist bestseller published by Harvard University Press could say that Empire is better than the nation-state, then one can say that Bologna's 'academic capitalism' is better than Europe's former academic feudalism." Dieter Lesage, "On Supplementality," *MaHKUzine: Journal of Aesthetics*, no. 9 (Summer 2010): 26.
 - 19 Okwui Enwezor, "Schools of Thought," *frieze*, no. 101 (September 2006): 142.
 - 20 The project "As the Academy Turns" was as a collaborative project part of Manifesta 8, Cendeac, Murcia, Spain (October 9, 2010–January 9, 2011). It consisted of a series of research statements of twelve European doctoral researchers, Tiong Ang's soap opera, and a three-day symposium devoted to institutional strategies and their links to education and research. The entire project (with the contribution of Matts Leiderstam, Frans Jacobi, Hito Steyerl, Sarat Maharaj, Marquard Smith, Jan Kaila, Denise Ziegler, Tuomas Nevanlinna, Magnus Bartus, and Tom Holert, is published in *MaHKUzine: Journal of Artistic Research*, no. 10 (Summer 2011).
 - 21 Conducting artistic research can never be a goal in itself. The researchers and their projects should relate in such a way to the structure of art education that a natural contribution can be made to the research environment mentioned above. The Dutch academic model of the AIO (researcher in training), in which the researchers yearly teach advanced BA students/MA students, could work as a catalyst in this context. Discussing advanced research projects (such as the MaHKU research projects by Irene Kopelman and Jeremiah Day) turns out to be constructive for the artistic process of thought and the contextualizing capacities of the students involved while a form of research-based education is implied. See Henk Slager, "Knowledge under Tutelage," *Metropolis M*, no. 3 (2010): 17–18.

Art as Occupation: What Happens to Knowledge?

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In my view, an art academy, at the moment, is a site of occupation, in a different meaning of the word. Why occupation? It is not so obvious. I started thinking about this when I found a tiny quote, actually a footnote, in a text by a group that calls itself the “Carrot Workers Collective.” This quote simply acknowledged something very simple, namely the fact that the European Union has changed its language so that every time it wants to write the words “employment” or “labor,” it instead writes the word “occupation.”

The words “labor,” “work,” and “employment” have disappeared from the official language, and now they are talking about “occupation” instead. This seems like a very tiny and totally trivial shift of vocabulary, but I think actually it is not trivial at all, since work and occupation are completely different things. Work is an instrumental relationship, meaning that one is not doing it for its own sake; either one is doing it to earn a wage or to produce something such that one has a product at the end of the day—but one is not doing it for its own sake. Whereas occupation is different; occupation is something that does not necessarily hinge on any result, that does not necessarily have a conclusion. Most importantly, an occupation is something that many people think contains its own gratification, meaning one can do it just in order to be distracted, or to keep oneself busy. It does not necessarily mean that one is going to get paid at the end of the day, or that there is any remuneration attached to it, or that it is seen as a potentially never-ending process. So that is one meaning of occupation: occupation is something that, in many cases, presents an end in itself.

Somehow we can say that this is the first meaning of occupation, but there are obviously other meanings to the term, for example the meaning of military occupation. I copy-pasted a JPEG image from a blog that is called “oc-

cupation.blogspot.com,” and I have no idea what it is actually showing: it is a very mysterious activity, in which a helicopter is either dropping a house on the ground or taking it away—we don’t really know. In any case, it refers to the fact that occupation, in its military sense, relates to constructing a very complicated architecture—a very complex space is being developed, which I and other people have been calling “3-D sovereignty,” referring to extreme power relations. So military occupation is of course something that is imposed from the occupier to the occupied, and the objective is, many times, expansion—spatial expansion—but also a stranglehold, neutralization, and the quelling of autonomy of the people who are being occupied.

What does this mean in the context of art? If we start speaking of occupation instead of work, in this context additional complications arise. What happens then to the *work of art*? Is it going to be an *occupation of art* or an *art of occupation*? I think that yes, it does partly transform into an occupation, because what used to materialize more or less exclusively as an object, or a product, which was an artwork before, now tends to appear as an activity, a performance, a process, a form of research, or a production of knowledge. The traditional work of art in its form as object has been largely supplemented by these occupational forms of the former work of art. If we combine that with the meaning that we have already established, then we could say that art as an occupation is process-based, and that it is also usually unpaid and potentially endless, as well as assumed to in itself offer gratification, keeping people busy and distracted. This is one aspect, and only one aspect, of the practice of art in many rather affluent countries. It becomes a quite popular occupational scheme, and the idea that it provides gratification and that it requires no remuneration is also quite accepted in the cultural workplace.

This also applies partly to art education, and this is where the art academy comes into the picture, because there are more and more post-graduate and even post-post-graduate programs where people are in a sort of occupational purgatory, a buffer zone for artists. You remember that message saying “buffering” on YouTube and other video sites, when data is downloading. Well the art academy is a zone of indefinite buffering. It is not yet a site of work, and it is still a place of education, so it is some sort of in-between space. And education as a whole tends to take longer and longer, creating its own occupations, which creates processes rather than works. It creates knowledge, engagements, and relationships, as well as more educators—people who are often involved often in such processes themselves. It also creates mediators, as well as in many cases guards.

And once we get to guards we can also apply the second meaning of “occupation” to everything I’ve listed—the military meaning, the meaning of the creation of a complex space of occupation that is a territory of segregation and of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. Which means that the architecture of occupation is not only bent on keeping people busy while not paying them, but also predicated on keeping out certain people, on withholding forces, on cutting off and barring access and slashing funds. These are also additional meanings of “occupation,” which apply not only to art education but also to the art sector as a whole, as is now evidenced in the UK, the Netherlands, and many other places.

Thus, to see art as an occupation generates two meanings that are seemingly in opposition, but that in fact in a very paradoxical way relate to each other when it comes to art education. Art education, on the one hand, works as an educational scheme for everybody who is involved in it (students, teachers, administrators, and so on), which essentially produces a process that keeps itself busy, and which is potentially endless. On the other hand, the art academy can also very quickly be subjected to the more military aspect of occupation—it can very quickly become a site of occupation in the sense of being deprived and subjected to endless bureaucratic checks, of being hollowed out, excluded, undermined, over-controlled, deserted, starved, and basically stuck. Since occupation means both, it means both incomplete inclusion and total exclusion. It is managing access and flow, bringing about very paradoxical results. In many cases there is too much artistic occupation, which is sort of running on empty, and, on the other hand, there is an architecture of occupation

that manages to completely shut down the infrastructure we need for art education and art production.

Let's look at another example. It is courtesy of Google Images, and is one of the prime examples of everything I am talking about. It is the figure of the intern, which may not apply that much to art education but does apply to any other venture related to art, such as galleries, museums, or artistic projects. Wherever you go you will have interns, and if you Google "intern," what you get is a picture that shows an unhappily smiling girl sitting at a counter behind a thick glass pane, with a sign stuck to it that reads: "Hello ;-) I'm a new intern."

This heartbreaking situation really for me represents the structure of this occupational architecture, meaning that she really is stuck behind the glass panel, looking for ways to communicate toward the other side, trying to smile, trying to put on a friendly face, and trying to produce her own subjectivity. Also, if you think about the term "intern," it is very interesting since it also refers to internment and confinement, to detention, which may be voluntary or involuntary, and this is also echoed by the feeling that she really is locked up behind a glass pane. On the one hand she is inside labor—she has to work constantly—and on the other hand she is excluded from remuneration, excluded from payment, stuck in a space that includes the outside and excludes the inside simultaneously. As a result she has to work in order to sustain her own occupation. Another girl I found on Google was named Justine, which gave me the idea that one could read the Marquis de Sade's famous novel *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, about the total degradation of a young female, as a metaphor for the contemporary fate of the intern.

Now there is one short passage in my paper that I am going to present as bullet points. Art is not only a site of occupation, but also in many cases an occupational activity, meaning that it tends to invade whole lives as well. Art is something that spills out of its traditional zones of activity and starts invading lives by transgressing the boundaries of what formally has been called artistic autonomy. The avant-gardes of the twentieth century were trying to dissolve art in life, but now it is actually the other way around: life is quickly dissolving within art, and this phenomenon is invading more and more territories. Life is subjected to widespread aestheticization, and the border between art and life, which was so violently attacked by avant-gardes, has by now been trampled under, but by capital interests—and from

the side of art, not from the side of life. The division of spheres of life (labor/leisure, art/non-art, domestic/productive labor and the division of labor as such) has collapsed within senseless multitasking and the fusion and confusion of professions, occupations, and activities, all understood as ends in themselves, not means.

The following is a quick checklist for one to check whether one has been occupied by art, and my guess is that the answer will be “yes” to one or another of these questions, or actually to all of them.

- Does art possess you in the form of endless self-performance?
- Do you wake up feeling like a multiple?
- Are you on constant auto-display?
- Have you been beautified, improved, or upgraded, or have you attempted to do this to anyone/anything else?
- Have your feelings been designed, or do you feel designed by your iPhone?
- Or, is access to art (and its production) on the contrary being withdrawn, slashed, cut off, impoverished, and hidden behind insurmountable barriers?
- Is labor in this field unpaid?
- Do you live in a city that redirects a huge chunk of its cultural budget to funding a one-off art show?
- Is conceptual art from your region privatized by predatory banks?
- Has your rent doubled because a few kids with paintbrushes were relocated into that dilapidated building next door?

Of course this last question relates to something that many of us who have lived in larger cities are familiar with. Especially in Berlin, it is obvious that art is a tool for the gentrification of certain areas, and in those cases it is really connected to spatial occupation, because initially buildings are left empty, and are not open to new uses, occupied by security companies that try to keep them off-limits. But then artists slowly try to invade the buildings in order to make photos that they try to sell as coffee-table books. Once that process happens—when an area is aesthetically gentrified—then the real-estate-based gentrification will start, by artists moving into that area, thus raising rent and so on. So, on that level, occupation has a very spatial meaning that is connected to art practices. This is the only example I will really go into in detail, because all of the other ones are sort of obvious.

I'll now return to the question "What should an art academy be?," because I think that until now I have been talking about the current state of art education as a state of occupation. After all I said, there can only be one answer to this question, which relates to the third meaning of the word "occupation" (definitely not something that I have come up with myself, because it has happened many times during recent months and years). This meaning is to occupy the art academy. To occupy it in any sense, in any dimension—to appropriate it, to inhabit it, to take back what has always been yours. To occupy the gallery, the white cube, the black box. To fill it with exchange and encounter. If activities there are going to be free anyway, then have sex, for Heaven's sake, rather than engaging in a boring production of knowledge. Then go to work. There is no time to lose. Do it now.

A Technical Efflorescence

Perfume is the most portable form of intelligence.

—Luca Turin¹

Ideas spring from deeds and not the other way around.

—Carlo Pisacane²

Sleep brings counsel. I sleep, therefore I think.

—Jean Dupuy³

A degree is present in the musical scale that renders perceptible that which, within the tonal system, is known as the fundamental tonality as well as the modulations of a piece. This degree, the seventh, changes name when it is in a particular position with respect to the tonic, or rather, the first, fundamental degree of the scale. Named subtonic when found at the distance of a degree, it is called “leading tone” when at the distance of a semitone, that is, when at such a distance as to gesture toward the tonic. If the English term for this degree clearly carries the idea of a “leading toward,” it is nonetheless in the sixteenth century vernacular of the Italian musical theorist and composer Gioseffo Zarlino that the degree was defined as “sensibile,” varying only slightly in the French word “sensible.” Able to perceive the note that gives its name to the tonality, this exponentially sensitive degree, in turn, offers itself to the perception of the listener. The listener perceives this sound endowed with its own existence, in the act of recognizing what is in turn perceiving on one’s own behalf. A specific position within one of the possible musical orders of the world of sound, a note is named “sensibile” after the intensity—the degree—of its relation to the sensible. It is not by chance that this particular degree of the scale, defined by nothing more than its ability to perceive and be perceived, something like a proneness to

perception, bears the name it does. Temporal figure of the sensible itself, the seventh degree of the scale borrows the term used to name the phenomenological existence of the world.

It is in relation to the space of production of the sensible—in which the work of the artist locates itself as in an imaginal space that neither coincides precisely with the subject nor does it precisely coincide with the object—that the questions animating the contemporary debate must find a place. Only on the level of a reflection able to embrace the modalities with which the sensible comes into being is it possible to exit from the dead end of a reasoning divided by the doing and a doing that chases after theoretical support, seemingly in relation to theoretical formulations that boast of preceding it, but which, in fact, follow. The relatively recent lament against a curatorial discourse that, like an unnecessary falsetto, seems both superfluous and aprioristic with respect to the work of art is nothing but the demonstration of the widespread perception of this erroneous priority.

For some time now we have endowed ourselves with spaces designated to the transmission of techniques and knowledge. The transformations of their place-names and organization reflect, when not epistemological, at least paradigmatic leaps. When we decide to pay attention to the institutions and to their organizing canons, it is primarily these transformations, as a respectable genealogical tradition teaches us, that we should watch out for. The entry of the visual arts into universities has occurred at different moments and at different latitudes, but without doubt, has been much more frequent in recent years. Without touching, in the brief space of this text, on chronology and comparison, it is enough to note here that while art academies and the spaces designated to the teaching of music have, at different moments,

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increasingly earned the title—variously inflected according to different languages and orders—of “institutions of high culture,” the visual arts have made a breach in the university system, becoming a subject taught even at the highest degree of studies. This regained position of the arts within the halls of knowledge *par excellence* must first of all be understood, beyond the idea of simple contact, as a beckoning toward a renewed articulation of the relationship between art and thought.

It is well known that the term “art” in use today derives from the Latin translation of the term *techne*, which Aristotle defined in the fourth century BCE, in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as a veritable technical *knowledge*, or rather, as a knowledge reasoned and ordered toward production, all the while different from mere work, consigned to its own fulfillment without any skill of methodical articulation, as well as from any purely speculative knowledge. However, what we today intend as art has not only gradually lost this sense of technique over time, but it has also come to individuate a manner of doing, which speculative thought has paradoxically come to consider as antithetical to reason itself. Returning art to thought and the legitimacy of thought to art, and understanding the terms with which this relationship plays itself out, are among the tasks that thought is giving itself.

If a return to an aware relationship of the arts to knowledge is in progress—as the frequent self-interrogation concerning the precise significance of artistic research or the more or less specific nature of artistic thought demonstrates—this very process accompanies a debate that has long been focal and involves what has been variously inflected as the relationship between thought and that which exceeds it. Having reinforced itself in relatively recent times—the modern era—to the point of standing out behind the banners of nineteenth century idealism, the subject, which has vacillated over the course of the twentieth century, has rapidly found itself being discussed within a thought of the limit—a thought which, in turn, beckons at the limits it is itself running against. Reflections concerning the indetermination of these limits, from the fraying of the borders of the face of Emmanuel Levinas’s *Totalité et infini*,⁴ to the idea of indeterminacy brought forward in Cage’s poetics—in a different area which nonetheless had great impact on the visual arts of the sixties—are nothing but various inflections of a mutual problem.

On the other hand, if a philosophy that declares itself oriented toward objects has recently been spreading, taking the name of speculative realism and aimed at restoring the possibility of thinking an absolute in thought, it is once again in response to the phenomenological project—of which this new realism shifts the accent toward the correlated, namely the object, which it pushes itself to think of as a facticity that it inflects as an absolute.⁵ What this recent approach is lacking, in response to the phenomenological project, is precisely the contribution that the consideration of images is able to give and which, instead, has recently been conceived of in the terms of what has been named as a “phenomenotechnique” in Emanuele Coccia’s brilliant text *La vita sensibile*.⁶

Rather than a thought on the phenomenon, it is a technique of the phenomenon, a technique of production of the sensible, that the author proposes as central to life—which, upon closer inspection, he proposes as living itself; a living that is not a human privilege, inasmuch as it identifies itself with the production of the sensible in which every animal partakes, just to different degrees. The real is not always already the sensible. It must become so and does this through images—be they carried by media in their visual, arithmetical or other fashion. From this new perspective, the sensible ceases to be an event within the subject lacking the ontological depth to individuate its own reality, holding itself simultaneously beyond the object and on this side of the subject. It is precisely insofar as it is other, with respect to the subject and the object, that makes it possible—in the author’s words—to conceive of a theory of knowledge that does not reduce itself to a theory of the subject. Gifted with its own reality independent from both the body of which it individuates an afterlife and the conscience it has not entered yet, the sensible regains the thought of intentional species. “The truth and the substance of the Cartesian trilemma,” Coccia writes, “are threatened by intentional species. An intention is a sliver of objecthood infiltrated in the subject, hindering the passage from the *cogito* to the *sum res cogitans*, if not for an ontological leap. Viceversa, it expresses the subject inasmuch as it is projected toward (to the letter, *aimed* at) the object and external, not psychic, reality. If it is thanks to these *species* that we can feel and think, every feeling and every act of thought does not demonstrate the truth of the subject nor its nature, but rather, precisely, the existence of a space in which subject and object suddenly blur.”⁷ In this new light, it therefore becomes possible—paraphrasing Maurice Merleau-Ponty—to think of a primacy, no longer of sensation, but of the sensible on sensation itself.

José Ortega y Gasset developed a step toward the acknowledgment of a mode of being that individuates the manner in which things and people have of existing beyond their own closed worlds—at an ontological level independent of the act of perception—was developed by José Ortega y Gasset during a period to which writings such as his brief text “Essay on Esthetics by Way of a Preface” belong.⁸ Here, the author writes about the “I” as “executant reality.” “There is a whole class of verbs,” writes Ortega y Gasset, “in which the first and obvious meaning is the one expressed by the first person.” There is an executant reality in my desire, an inner movement that identifies the differential tenor of my own desiring. The first person of the present indicative that Ortega y Gasset refers to is not my intact and closed “I,” but a certain form of “I” that can be said to be in me, be it of a man, of a thing, of a situation. In the words of Ortega y Gasset, “‘I’ means, then, not this person as distinct from another, nor, even less, people as distinct from things, but rather all things—men, things, situations—inasmuch as they are occurring, being, executing themselves [...]. Naturally, while my act—seeing the cypress—is taking place, the cypress is the object that exists for me; what ‘I’ may be at the instant is for me an unknown. On the one hand, then, ‘cypress’ is the name of a thing; on the other, it is a verb [...]. I will have to find a way to force the word ‘cypress’ with its nominal value, to become active and erupt, assuming that of a verb.” The verbal mood of everything in Ortega y Gasset indicates a way of being that exceeds the substance and coincides with what can be called its performative character.

In the Spanish philosopher’s aesthetics, the thought of the phenomenon—though already emancipated from the correspondence between the inside/outside and physical/psychic couplings—is not yet resolved in the ironic inversion of the terms suggested by Coccia. It is not by accident that the “Essay on Esthetics” takes the form of a preface and has a literary component, J. Moreno Villa’s *El pasajero*, rather than an image as its subject. Not that literature does not belong to the sensible—on the contrary. It is however the thought of the specific nature of images, and in this, essentially, the thought of the technique that allows them to be, that makes it possible to reorganize the terms of the discourse by relocating the sensible dimension to a position that not only is not derivative with respect to thought itself, but that is also autonomous from the act of perception.

A further indication of an experience that is placed beyond the subject, and a further step along the path at issue, reaches us from the Deleuzian re-

flection concerning the direction from which, and toward which, problems proceed. The “I” that asks the question, in Deleuze, is already dissolved from that which, when questioned, speaks through it. It is in the *Je fêlé*—in a fractured and fissured me—that what I question thinks itself in my own thinking. “For the I has the rights of an unconscious without which it would not think, and in particular would not think the pure *cogitanda*. Contrary to what is stated by the banal propositions of consciousness, thought thinks only on the basis of an unconscious, and thinks that unconscious in the transcendent exercise. Consequently, far from being the properties or attributes of a thinking substance, the Ideas which derive from imperatives enter and leave only by that fracture in the I, which means that another always thinks in me, another who must also be thought.”⁹ For Deleuze, the problem does not proceed from abstraction of the hypothesis, nor can the idea be reduced to a proposition of conscience or a representation of knowledge. If the reality sensed by Ortega y Gasset hints at a space found beyond the object and on this side of the subject, and the Deleuzian *Je fêlé* appeals to an existence of problems on this side of conscience, neither one position nor the other articulates the medial space that Coccia instead considers as that where a supplement of being, something like an additional potency of Averroic memory, can exert itself. Ontologically empty, the space of media is characterized by its own ability to “not be that which it is able to receive.”¹⁰ It is in this that the image—those beings endowed with something like a micro-ontology—can linger; forms beyond their own bodies that have not yet become spirit. Thought itself, in light of such an articulation, is read as the psychic life of the sensible: a life that the sensible cannot live without first having been sensified. “A large part of the phenomena that we list as spiritual (it is enough to mention dreams and fashion, words and art),” *La vita sensibile* reads, “not only *presuppose* some form of relation with the sensible, but are possible *only* thanks to the ability to produce images and to be affected by them.”¹¹ It is thus a technique of phenomenon, which sees us intent in the constant production of sensible. And “the *media*—be they the objects or natural organs or artificial reality—represent a sort of natural technique that allows for the transformation of the world into phenomenon, into sensible reality, image. In fact, every act of knowledge, every form of experience, is for any living being, that which is born from the relationship of contact and of continuity (*continuatio*) with this intermediary space, it is the result of a medial contiguity.”¹²

Thus, a sort of technical efflorescence is generated within this medial space.

Something like a fraying of the world of any closed entities that we could say are oriented toward creation, if we wish to read the idea of a diffused technical knowledge in light of the reflections of George Canguilhem—not accidentally, the teacher of Gilbert Simondon, author not only of the studies on individuation that would become dear to Deleuze, but particularly of the 1958 text on the way of being of technical things.¹³ In an intervention on the relationship between technical activity and creation¹⁴, held in Toulouse on February 26, 1938, Canguilhem described his project of situating technique within a philosophy of creation. Technique—which, in precritical experience, constitutes the correlative of perception, just as art constitutes the correlative of science in the reflected experience—identifies an attempt at freedom on the part of the unsatisfied ends from the perception of the real. If it is impossible to draw the dividing line between primitive machines and the organs supported by life, the machine will therefore be understood as nothing but the product of a universal effort of organization that human conscience, at a certain point, fuels with its very results. However, no theoretical knowledge can be enough in itself to produce, insofar as true action consists in creating—by modifying—a path that does not preexist us. We create for the sake of knowledge and not vice versa, by way of a backward genesis in which potency does not exhaust itself in the act, but rather, is its consequence.

- 1 Luca Turin and Tania Sanchez, *Perfumes* (London: Profile Books, 2009), 262.
- 2 Carlo Pisacane, “Testamento politico di Carlo Pisacane” (June 24, 1857), in *Saggio sulla Rivoluzione* (Bologna: Libreria Treves, 1894), 267.
- 3 See the Italian “Il sonno porta consiglio. Dormo, quindi penso.” Jean Dupuy, July 8, 2012.
- 4 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l’extériorité* (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961).
- 5 See Quentin Meillassoux, *Après la finitude: Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006) and the brief preface by Alain Badiou.
- 6 Emanuele Coccia, *La vita sensibile* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).
- 7 Ibid., 25.
- 8 José Ortega y Gasset, “Essay on Esthetics by Way of a Preface,” in *Phenomenology and Art*, trans. Peter W. Silver (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 133–44. For the original language passage see José Ortega y Gasset,

- “Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo,” in *Obras completas de José Ortega y Gasset* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1964), 247–60.
- 9 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 199–200. For the original language passage see Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003 [1968]), 256.
 - 10 Coccia, *La vita sensibile*, 63.
 - 11 Ibid., 18.
 - 12 Ibid., 77.
 - 13 Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubier, 1989 [1958]).
 - 14 Georges Canguilhem, “Activité technique et creation,” in *Communication et discussions* (Toulouse: Société Toulousaine de Philosophie, 2ième série, 1938), 81–86.

We Are the Board, but What Is an Assemblage?

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1. We Have Gathered

The papers are circulated. The meeting begins. The friendly jocular man announces goodwill and affability to all gathered. We are variously assembled around the table where we have met many times. Our job is to give good “governance” to the conduct of research through the practices of the arts. We are the board of a graduate school somewhere. We have our papers. The papers announce ponderously and self-importantly the details of our ongoing project to steward and negotiate novelty and insight and wonder into existence. It is often that we have assembled here in partnership and stakeholding, and it is often that the conversation advanced and receded over the same dreary shoreline: tidal recurrent daily grind of wetness, breaking stones to sand, and then retreating once more to claim an ocean’s innocence at merely finding some tired grains of salted dust about our edges. We speak sibilant sea-words gushing in, blowing hard, washing out, racing, fretful, round about and back: We wash away the true gods of stone and sound and wear words down to shine as old coins that mirror us, glamored at our own glinting where Caesars once shone.

There is a small cranky man among our number. Stammering a little and seeming volatile, his voice wanders, now intense and now sullen, first faintly and then loudly, only to trail off again in half-heard breathy sighs. Indulgent in the salty sea-wet air, the small fat man issues a kind of melancholic self-important singing that lilts out as a great unheeded song of “organization.” These are the songs that hum through the corridors of inaction and advancement. Lullabies and alibis in sweet harmonious collegial laceration.

A. There Shall be Pronouncements on the Nature of Things

The questions of art and education have been prominent on the agendas of a

great many art practices, exhibitions, platforms, research projects, networks, publications, and conferences across Europe for the last decade. Indeed, this is a global debate as evidenced by the wide distribution of projects that seek to rework the discursive turn in recent art practices with reference to the perceived deficits of public life, political culture, and engaged citizenries. The complex interweaving of these issues is apparent in the emergence of a debate on the Bologna process and the doctorate award in the arts on the pages of *e-flux journal*; in the emergence of a discussion about the possible establishment of a private art school within the orbit of *Frieze* magazine and art fair; and in the presence of the same artists and curators simultaneously within the formal apparatus of higher education and within the counter-institutions of various “freeschools,” “school-as-exhibition” platforms, and other experimental autonomous education platforms. These conjunctions are indicative of a moment of recalibration in the terms of art education, but they bring us very quickly beyond the internal dynamics and self-referential politics of the art academies, independent art schools, and art faculties within universities. They bring us into the larger space of the restructuring of the state in terms of its engagement with culture and education; of the various counter-hegemonic mobilizations of the disenfranchised, of students, of cultural workers, and of activists against these restructuring agendas; of the reduction of policy discourses to a single dominant economic instrumentalist and positivist register; of the seemingly irresistible logic of neoliberalism as the discourse of “commonsense”; and of the concomitant evacuation of “public-ness” of any complex political meaning in favor of reducing public culture down to the eviscerated terms of visibility, publicity, and celebrity.

Against this backdrop we are faced with the question of the specificity of art and its immanent educational praxes: What can or what should an art

Mick
Wilson

education be if it is to be attuned to the intrinsic modalities of art as opposed to the extrinsic protocols of a disciplinary apparatus? In simpler terms, what should art education be like if it is to be determined by the requirements of art and not by the priorities of some other system or practice?

2. Kafka, *mon aide mémoire amoureux*

We, the assemblage, have just concluded the recruitment process necessary to extend a contract by approximately ninety days. We have administered ourselves the processes of administering necessary to extend the administrator's time as administrator. We especially wish to hold him here for the longest possible time because his wit has often outwitted the witlessness of the administration and so enabled us to do things that should not be done: to organize, to communicate, to orchestrate, to exhibit, to manifest, to exceed our boundaries and make contact with surfaces unseen outside. He is a dangerous man because he knows the ropes. He unbinds us from them.

The small cranky man intones accusations as *aide mémoire*: "Because of administering this process we have been without an administrator for much of this reporting and administration period. We estimate that this process utilized the resources of seven person-work-days: There was the paperwork generation: the requisitioning form, the role description, the advertisement, the interview, the interview criteria, the clearance and approval of the interview criteria, the interview personnel, the clearance and approval of the interview personnel, the associated paperwork, the review of applications received, the short-listing, the clearance and approval of the shortlisting criteria, the clearance and approval of the shortlist, the associated paperwork, and the correspondence with Harm and Retribution (including time spent seeking access to a new protocol governing research staff recruitment that differed from the one previously published by Harm and Retribution: the outdated protocol which we had followed only to learn later—after that half-day's work was done—that it is a redundant protocol: the new 'secret' protocol being that which applies)."

The *aide mémoire* intones further the litany of the damned: "Two work days were spent as two members of staff attended a one-day workshop with Harm and Retribution in order to achieve 'certification' and so allow that these staff may conduct interviews. Three people gave a half-day each to administer the interview process. The recruitment process culminated in a correspondence with Harm and Retribution where we were instructed to

give the rationale for not creating a longer term renewal of the contract. And in this epiphany, in this joyous moment, we were instructed that absence of funds was not an acceptable rationale. This confuses us because the very first forms we had to complete demanded that we articulate the source of funds to cover the extension of the post otherwise—and this much was made exquisitely clear—there would be no extension of the post.”

Another cranky man in the assembly indicates an irritation at this detailing of the details. However, the small cranky man cannot resist one final twist of the tale. “All this of course is in addition to the time spent working on the external work that provides the income stream that covers the extension of this post. And this external work brings with it a lot of administration.” For these and related reasons some interruptions and delays have been experienced in our work.

B. On The Contrary Sir, I Think You'll Find That In Fact It's Very Different From That

Perhaps the boldest challenge and response to these questions—as to what should or should not drive art education—is the claim that art is an inherent propensity of the human being; and that it cannot be drawn out into the world by any technique, rhetoric, or apparatus; and that this whole tangle of debate is doomed to self-regarding self-reproduction that makes no contact whatsoever with the essentially unrepresentable moment of art. Art cannot be taught, and even its conditions of possibility cannot be constrained or facilitated by any organizational practice, curricular innovation, or formulated technique save for the simple condition that the makers of art may derive some good from the encounter with the artworks of others and perhaps also from the processes of judgement and dialogue that arise out of that encounter. This is pretty much an axiom for a great number of professional art educators who take their pay from the academies and the art schools but who are deeply skeptical about their institutional mission not to mention their institutional logic. This makes for some pretty difficult tensions in the day-to-day operations of the art school apparatus, not to mention some absurdly extended meetings marked by tediously repetitious performances of “self,” “oppositionality,” and “radical alterity.”

What is perhaps most remarkable in all this, is that it seems that in some degree—“we”—and in this instance I mean those of us engaged in the education of artists within the Western art nexus—are to some degree invested

in part of this proposition. We see the education of artists as something that is not—in its essence—about teaching technique, rhetoric, or content. Rather it is about providing access to exemplary modes of doing the *art thing*. These exemplars are not to be imitated and reproduced, but they provide metaphorical templates for the elaboration of a “personal” practice—a modality of doing the *art thing* specific to the given individual. There is a profound knotting of the art thing with the educational prioritization of the individual. This typically occurs in a manner that (while ostensibly critical of the commodity culture of capital) is utterly consonant with the ideological construct of the atomized “individual” elaborated in consumer culture, liberal democratic rhetorics, and humanist credos. This yields just one more layer of contradictoriness in an edifice that knots contradictions upon other contradictions repeatedly.

Another layer of this edifice of contradiction is provided by the pragmatics of actually existing teaching and learning practices whereby art education generates various transformative encounters between teachers and students that engender experiences of liberation, coming-to-voice, and profound saliency for the *individuals* involved. But the very same conditions also often produce egregious unfairness, evasion of responsibilities’ disempowerment and clientelist reduction of students to petitioners, and prejudicial and preferential treatment of some with an attendant chronic lack of care for others.

A further layer of contradiction comes into view when the artist-teacher is considered in the context of the political economy of art production, art markets, artist career structures, precarious labor, over-production, and self-mandated exploitation in pursuit of opportunity and advancement. The teaching role is for many seen as a necessary evil serving to resource an artist to pursue a practice that is un-resourced or under-resourced by the existing dispensations within the art system. The pragmatics of survival are a recurrent thematic of the informal discourses of arts educators in the early stages of their art education career. But this thematic tends to subside from the artist’s discourse later in a teaching career as it becomes increasingly difficult, perhaps even painful, to avow the contradictory impulses and flows of affect in play when one wants to be paid for work but cannot get paid for the work that one wants most to do. The outcome of this paid-for work is often the generation of yet other artists competing in the crowded economy of early stage career opportunities. At this point, yet a further layer of contradiction enters the narrative as the question of public subsidy for art and

artists shuffles into view with the whole drama of ambivalence about state action and intervention in the field of culture.

3. So What Shall We Do Next?

We, the assemblage, have before us a question. If it takes 180 days to administer a 90-day extension of the administrator's role, how many years ago should we have begun the process of extending ourselves beyond the date of our imminent collapse? Someone should draft a discussion document and a scenario with a provisional model of expenditures.

"Perhaps we should take the whole matter as a matter of strategic priorities? What if we attach the future resource plan to the contingencies of the entire reorganization of the sector? What if we consider the restructuring that is taking place in the conversation about restructuring? Perhaps we could identify some criteria and then produce some judgements? There will be resource implications of course, but perhaps we could take these as an addendum to the matter at hand deferred for say, perhaps, ninety days or so?"

It is the warm avuncular man who is plying the mist around the seashore today—a white whaler of a man—marooning serene and rendering all waters becalmed. So still and calm, his smile beams generously into the giddy company. "We should have a meeting after this meeting to take this serious business forward, and we should tie it all up in a knot with every other imponderable so that we may ponder more, indeed, ponder deeply and at length."

C. Images, Thinking and Unthinking

Rather than itemize these contradictions further, and rather than claim an objective truthfulness for the images mobilized in the previous paragraphs, I would like to propose that we accept that these images are more than mere clichés. I am proposing that these constitute a quick, but useful, approximation of a bad-consciousness that inhabits a great deal of the art educational apparatus. This is "useful" in the sense that it brings into view something of the lived experience of the operational worlds of the art school. The art educator who reads these lines, and does not recognize herself in them, will (I hazard) recognize several colleagues. And perhaps this is the more important dimension of these images—they are the images that we work with, not of ourselves necessarily, but of many of our colleagues.

4. The Board Has Managed to Make Witless Myth

The months have passed and the waters have washed in and out a few more times. Small cranky man and smiling warm man have each to different errands erred themselves away, floating off distractedly on eddies and currents to yet wetter climates. We have assembled ourselves to review and renew and make a damn good go of it. And we are managing just fine.

D. We Are Completely Different, You and I

The theme of *alterity* has played greatly in the late decades of the twentieth century in cultural theory and criticism and in philosophy, art, and literature. From the *alterity* of artistic and philosophical discourses, of experience and reason, to the great “others” of psychoanalytical and anthropological discourses, the theme of *alterity* has had a rich and varied career in intellectual and cultural work. It has emerged in many guises from identity politics to queer theory, from agonistic counter publics to radical democracies, and from altermodern theorization to alterglobal mobilization. It seems reasonable to hazard that the function of *novelty* within the cultural and philosophical discourses of modernity is analogous to the function of *alterity* within the genealogically related cultural and philosophical discourses of contemporaneity. It is a theme that gathers to itself the promise of divergence and dissent, the appeal of the alternative and the counter-dominant, and the hope for rescue and redemption from the endlessly reproduced global order of the same. It is a theme that can play on the register of an individual cultural undertaking and on the register of the world historical and on all intermediate scales. In the pursuit of the *sui generis* as an end-in-itself, and by whatever means necessary, it is a heartlessly unrelenting romantic theme.

It is then a theme that is doubly inscribed within the constitution of contemporary art. In its contemporaneity art pursues alterities everywhere and anywhere that they may be found. In its *artliness*, in its contradistinction to other modalities of experience and production, contemporary art is—in a partial reversal and partial *détournement* of modernity’s anti-aesthetic legacy—alter-aesthetic. Contemporary art prioritizes its own constitutive alterity vis-à-vis other ways of doing, making, and being in the world.

The qualifier “radical” pertains to the “root” or “essential,” the more primary nature or underlying source of something. The term has a rich use in political nomenclature to designate the extreme formations or the purer strains of political tendencies—“radical feminism,” “the radical wing,”

“radical democracy,” and “radicalist.” It also has a broader cultural application in notions such as “cultural radicals” or “grassroots” organization. “Radical alterity” is a term with which to conjure an otherness *in extremis* or in the lexicon of philosophy of science and epistemology—the “incommensurable.” In Lyotard’s lexicon one would speak of the “*differend*.” Radical alterity is that which cannot be comprehended within the dominant’s terms and that which resists thematization within the available dominant lexicons and metrics. It does so in a way that sets up a profound block to translation or metaphorical incorporation into the terms of the dominant.

One might think of radical alterity as, on the one hand, a greater degree of otherness, but, on the other hand, it may also be read as that mode of otherness that exceeds a simple difference in degree and becomes a difference of kind—a profoundly other kind of otherness that lies beyond the merely other. Of course radicality has a broad semantic field and connotes a positive valuation in the sense of the more essential, the more authentic, the more primary, and so forth. There is of course a potential semantic tension between radical, understood as more primary and more pure, and alterity, with the sense not of a singular field of difference centered on some primary and given sameness but rather understood as a displacement of any centrism (ego-, ethno-, logo-) in the attending to the multiplicity of differences and othernesses that persist beyond the rule of any self-same. The term “radical alterity” is used here, mindful of this semantic tension. It may be that the way in which art is posited as a moment of radical alterity activates precisely this kind of paradoxical tension.

5. An Assemblage Is a Disassembly: An Avowal Is a Disavowal

The papers are circulated. The meeting begins. The friendly jocular man announces goodwill and affability to all gathered. We are variously assembled around the table where we have met many times. We feel love, a family romance.

E. A Polemic with My Two Faces

There is a target for this polemic and there is inevitably a risk in having such a target. The risk is that one may caricature, reduce, misrepresent, and ultimately misrecognize one’s target in the very act of polemicizing against it and in seeking rhetorical mastery. It will be important therefore to attempt to resist the pull of polemic toward reduction and to avoid the rhetorical sleight of hand that makes of one’s target something bloodless, depriving it

of real life without landing a single blow. The reader will have to make her own judgement as to the success or failure and as to the sincerity or cynicism of the attempt.

The target for my polemic is a twin-faced Janus-like target. In one of its faces this target is the argument for the irreducible specificity of art and artist as forms of radical alterity with respect to the contemporary institutional, social, political, and/or cultural order. In the other of its faces it is the legitimizing of compliance with the contemporary institutional order by means of an appeal to the persistence of art as anyway already instituted elsewhere: "We will make do with this unhappy state of affairs here in the institution and cope as best we can without attempting to revolutionize or overhaul the institution, because we already accept that art will persist in its own specificity elsewhere, and we will merely keep open a few gaps in this institution where that art might leak through and escape out into its native habitat elsewhere."

5. An Avowal Is a Disavowal: An Assemblage Is a Disassembly

The papers are circulated. The meeting begins. The friendly jocular man announces goodwill and affability to all gathered. We are variously assembled around the table where we have met many times. And we are managing just fine with and without you.

Biographies

John Aiken is an artist, born in Belfast. He studied at the Chelsea School of Art, London, and at the British School at Rome. Until recently he held the Slade Chair at the Slade School of Fine Art at University College London, and was also director of that program (2000–10). He is currently Chair Professor of Fine Art and Director of the Academy of Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong.

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Carol Becker is a professor of the arts and Dean of Columbia University School of the Arts. Prior to this appointment she was Dean of Faculty

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Franco “Bifo” Berardi is a contemporary writer, media theorist, and media-activist. He founded the magazine *A/traverso* (1975–81) and was part of the staff of Radio Alice, the first free pirate radio station in Italy (1976–78). He was involved in the political movement of Autonomia in Italy during the 1970s, before he fled to Paris, where he worked with Félix Guattari in the field of schizoanalysis. Currently he teaches the social history of communication at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan, and he is the founder of SCEPSI—European School for Social Imagination.

Jeremiah Day graduated from the art department of the University of California at Los Angeles in 1997 and lived and worked in Los Angeles until moving to Holland in 2003 to attend the Rijksakademie. Day is presently pursuing his doctorate with VU Amsterdam and MaHKU Utrecht. He is represented by Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam, and Arcade, London.

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Hongjohn Lin is an artist, writer, and curator who graduated from New York University with a PhD in Arts and Humanities. He has participated in international exhibitions such as the Rotterdam Film Festival (2008), the Asian Triennial in Manchester (2008), and the Taipei Biennale (2004). He was the curator of the exhibition “Atopia” of the Taiwan Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale 2007, co-curated with Tirdad Zolghadr for the Taipei Biennial 2010. Hongjohn Lin is currently a professor at the Taipei National University of the Arts.

Sarat Maharaj was born and educated in South Africa during the apartheid years. Once Professor of History & Theory of Art at Goldsmiths College, London—where he is now Visiting Research Professor—he is currently Professor of Visual Art & Knowledge Systems, Lund University and the Malmö Art Academies, Sweden. He was Rudolf Arnheim Professor, Philosophy Faculty, at Humboldt University, Berlin (2001–02) and Research Fellow at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (1999–2001).

Suzana Milevska is an art theorist and curator with degrees in Art History from St. Cyrill and Methodius University of Skopje and in Philosophy

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Hans Ulrich Obrist is currently Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery in London. Obrist is the author of *The Interview Project*, an extensive ongoing project of interviews. Since 1993 he has been in charge of the program *Migrateurs* at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, and he has been the curator for museum in progress, Vienna, since 1993 and of the Migratory Museum Robert Walser. Some of his projects are "Cities on the Move V" (Hayward Gallery, London); "Laboratorium" (Antwerpen Open, Antwerp); and "Sogni/Dreams" (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin).

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Henk Slager is Dean at MaHKU in Utrecht and a visiting professor of artistic research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. He was the curator of “Translocalmotion” (7th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, 2008); “Nameless Science” (Apex Art, New York, 2009); “As the Academy Turns” (the collaborative project Manifesta, 2010); “Any-medium-whatever” (Georgian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 2011); “Temporary Autonomous Research” (Amsterdam Pavilion, 9th Shanghai Biennale, 2012); and “Off-side Effect” (1st Tbilisi Triennial, 2012). He recently published *The Pleasure of Research* (2012).

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Mick Wilson is an educator, artist, and writer. He was the founding dean (2008–12) of GradCAM, Ireland, and recently became the first head of the Valand Academy of Arts, Gothenburg University. Recent research/art projects and collaborations include “The Food Thing: Curating and Research,” and “The Aesthetics of Duration” (both with Paul O’Neill).

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