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There's a worldwide revolution going on

AS MANY of you probably know, tonight we were going to unfold a program which we felt would be beneficial to the struggle of our people in this country. But because of events which are beyond our control we have -- we feel that it is best to postpone unfolding the program that we had in mind until a later date. [9](#)

Sunday morning about three o'clock, somebody threw some bombs inside my house. Normally I wouldn't get excited over a few bombs, but the ones who threw these not only aimed them in rooms where there -- where there was no one, but even in rooms where three of my daughters sleep. One daughter six, one daughter four, and one daughter two. And since I am, am quite certain that those who threw the bombs knew my house well enough to know where everyone was sleeping, I can't quite bring my heart to the point where it can in any way be merciful, or from now on compromising, toward anyone who can be that low. Especially when I heard on the news today that Joseph, a brother that I found in the garbage can in Detroit in 1952 -- that's where I found him [*Laughter*] -- made the statement that I had bombed my own house.

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Now you see, this doesn't surprise me, because I know that since many of us left the Muslim movement, its intelligence and its morals have gone bankrupt. Both its intelligence and its morals have gone bankrupt.

And now they are using the same tactics that's used by the Ku Klux Klan. When the Klan bombs your church, they say you did it. When they bomb the synagogue, they say the Jews bombed their own synagogue. This is a Klan tactic. And to me -- I'll tell you why the Black Muslim movement is now adopting the same tactic against Black people as has been up to now

the exclusive method of the Ku Klux Klan.

I want to point out, too, that I'm not talking about Muslims just to make white people happy. Because I don't believe in letting anyone use me against somebody else. I'm telling you these things because I have reached a point where I feel that Black people in this country need to know what's going on. And I'm talking about an organization which I had a hand in building, which I had a hand in organizing. I know its characteristics. I know its potential. I know its behavior patterns. I know what it can do and what it cannot do. One of the things it can do is bomb your house and try to kill your baby.

Before we get into it, I would like to point out also, as many of you know, last Tuesday, or last weekend, I was invited to address the first congress of the Council of African Organizations in London. They had a four-day congress on the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth and had invited me there to make the closing address and bring the delegates from the various African organizations that are situated on the European continent up to date in regards to the struggle of the Black man in this country in his quest for human rights and human dignity. And in conjunction with that invitation, I had gotten an invitation to visit Paris from the Afro-American community in Paris, which was sponsoring a rally in conjunction with the African community. And I was supposed to go there

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Tuesday also and address them and let them know the state of development or lack of development of our progress in this country for human rights, or toward human rights.

As many of you know, when I got to Paris, the man said I couldn't come in -- some man. French man! They gave me no explanation other than that they -- we have our own. They wouldn't let me phone the American embassy. And they tried to imply that the American embassy was behind it, which -- I told them that I didn't know de Gaulle had become a satellite of Lyndon B. Johnson. I knew that Kennedy had made a satellite out of Khrushchev and half of -- and Britain -- and half of these other countries, and I didn't think that France was a satellite of the United States.

Well, it made them angry because they like to be independent, you know -- or pretend to be independent. But they wouldn't let me in. They wouldn't let me phone the American embassy.

And later on, when I got back in London -- and by the way, when I got back to London there was about twenty different delegates who were delegates from about twenty different African organizations on hand at the airport, and they were going to raise hell if anything had happened other than what should have happened. As it was, I ended back -- I reentered England with no trouble and immediately got in telephone contact with the brothers and sisters who were in Paris. And they pointed out that they had encountered some difficulty, first from the Communist trade union workers. Now mind you, Communist trade union workers had prevented them from renting their hall, and when they went to get another hall the same Communist group had exercised its influence to prevent them from getting that hall.

Finally, when they did get a hall, evidently someone was strong enough to exercise influence over the French government. And I might add that while I was in custody

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of the French, every time I made a request, before they would say yes or no, they telephoned the French foreign ministry. So that they were taking their orders from someone high up in the French foreign ministry who did not want me to enter France.

And there's a reason for it. I don't blame them [*Laughter*] because -- and I told the parties there -- I said maybe my plane got mixed up and I was in South Africa, in the wrong country. . . . This couldn't be Paris, it must be Johannesburg. And they got red. And you know how they can get red. [*Laughter*] One of them was pink. [*Laughter*]

The same thing happened in England, as many of you probably read in the *Sunday Times* and the *Tribune*. There was a great fear in England concerning me speaking to the West Indian community. And because -- this is because England has a very serious color problem developing, because so many of our people are migrating there from the British West Indies. France, quietly as it is kept, has a very serious color problem developing because of the migration to France of our people from the French West Indies.

And with these people from the French West Indies, Black people going to France, others from the British West Indies going to England, coupled with the Asians who are coming from the Commonwealth territory, along with the Africans from French Equatorial West Africa [coming] into France, and the British possessions into Britain, there's a large, increasing number of dark-skinned people swelling the dark population of France and Britain. And it's giving them a great deal of horror of the world -- the only difference over there and over here being that no one of black skin in France has ever tried to unite the dark-skinned people together. Neither have they done so in England. So you can somewhat see what their fear is.

No effort has been made to unite the Afro-American community or the American Negro community with the

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West Indian community and then those two communities with the African community, and both communities with the Asian community. This has never been done, in neither England or France. But when I was in France in November just for a few days, I was successful in getting a few of the Afro-Americans who live there together, and they formed a branch of the OAAU, the Organization of Afro-American Unity. And as soon as they formed this branch, they began to work in conjunction with the African organization and became a power that had to be reckoned with. And this is what the French government did not want.

Also the same thing in Britain. The West Indian community is very restless, or rather, yes, restless and dissatisfied. And they too are trying to organize or find someone who can bring them together. And this has caused in England a great deal of fear, a great deal of concern. And the effect of it is that it makes them act in a very silly way sometimes.

Now, to leave that for a moment. As you'll recall, when I was in Mecca in September, I wrote back a letter which was printed in the *New York Times* in which I pointed out that it was my intention when I returned to expose Elijah Muhammad as a religious faker. ¹⁰ This is what I wrote. [*Applause*] Now, while I was in Mecca among the Muslims, I had a chance to meditate and think and see things with a great deal of clarity -- with much greater clarity than I've achieved from over here, entangled with all this mess that we are confronted by constantly. And I had made up my mind, yes, that I was going to tell the

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Black people in the Western Hemisphere, who I had played a great role in misleading into the hands of Elijah Muhammad, exactly what kind of man he was and what he was doing.

And I might point out right here that it was not a case of my knowing all the time, because I didn't. I had blind faith in him, the same as many of you have had and still have blind faith in me or blind faith in Moses or blind faith in somebody else. My faith in Elijah Muhammad was more blind and more uncompromising than any faith that any man has ever had for another man. And so I didn't try to see him as he actually was. But, being away, I could see him better, understand many things better.

And, well, when I came back to this country, as you recall, I was very quiet. I knew the best thing was when they tried to ask me questions about him, I ducked it. I didn't want to get involved. I didn't want to get into it. Well, the reason for that was this: The letter that I wrote was written when I was in Arabia, in September, whereas, after leaving Arabia I had gone into Africa. I had had an opportunity to hold long discussions with President Julius Nyerere in what is now Tanzania; with Jomo Kenyatta, the president of Kenya, the Republic of Kenya; long discussions with Prime Minister Milton Obote of Uganda; President Azikiwe of Nigeria; President Nkrumah of Ghana; and President Sékou Touré in Guinea. And the understanding that I had in conversations with these men is that they are great men. The understanding that I got broadened my scope so much that I felt I could see the problems and complaints of Black people in America and the Western Hemisphere with much greater clarity.

And I felt foolish coming back to this country and getting into a little two-bit argument with some bird-brained person who calls himself a Black Muslim. I felt I was wasting my time. I felt it would be a drag for me to come back here and allow myself to be in a whole lot of

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public arguments and physical fisticuffs -- knowing what I knew, and knowing that it would actually be more beneficial to our people if a constructive program were put in front of them immediately.

Many of you will recall that shortly after I came back, despite the fact that I said nothing about the Black Muslims, a wire was put in the newspaper under the name of Raymond Sharrieff threatening me if I were to say anything about Elijah Muhammad. Actually that wasn't Raymond Sharrieff's wire, that was Elijah Muhammad's wire. Raymond Sharrieff has no words of his own.

If you recall, when I was in the Black Muslim movement, I never said anything without saying Elijah Muhammad seems to believe thus and so, or Elijah Muhammad said thus and so. This is the way the Black Muslim movement is organized. Nobody makes any public statement unless it comes from Elijah Muhammad. And nobody makes any move unless it comes from Elijah Muhammad. They didn't do it then and they don't do it now.

So, when Raymond Sharrieff put that letter in the paper -- that wire, rather, in the paper -- that wire was from Elijah Muhammad himself. And he was trying to irk me into saying something so that a public hullabaloo would take place again because they wanted to jockey me into the same position I was in before I left the country.

Before I left the country, I had permitted them to jockey me into a position -- me and the good brothers and sisters who also had sense enough to leave from down there -- I was foolish enough to let them jockey me into a position where we were taking potshots at each other, so to speak, and it was known throughout the country that the Muslims in the temple were trying to do this thing.

So it put me in a spot where anybody could do it and then blame it on those foolish Muslims. And I was well aware of this. So, by staying away for four or five months,

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that ended. But when I came back, being quiet, they wanted the same thing again. They wanted some more hullabaloo so that it would appear that the Black Muslims were going to do this and the Black Muslims were going to do that and then anybody could do it and blame those fools and they wouldn't have sense enough to see it. You can understand that can't you? And when I say anybody, I mean anybody. But I know who those anybodies are. [Laughter]

I continue to concentrate, continue to ignore them and concentrate on trying to get the Organization of Afro-American Unity better organized. Because I knew that and I felt that what it had in mind would actually solve the problems of many of our people -- most of our people.

If you'll notice -- and, but despite the fact that I tried to keep quiet, on January 22 I came out of my house one night and they jumped me, on a Friday night, about 11:15. Now, I knew that they weren't out there waiting for me, because normally I wouldn't come out at that time of the night. So that when I did come out and ran into them and they did jump me, I knew then that they were casing my house. And frankly, I waited for them for a month. I'd sit around that house with my rifle; stayed up all times of the night just to get one chance to put somebody in hell. [Laughter] Just one chance. [Applause]

I warned my wife at that time that they were casing the house. Again, I know their behavior. And I also became more careful, wherever I would go and whenever I would go anywhere. And then to make it worse, when I went to Los Angeles a couple of weeks ago, they had gotten so insane that they chased me right down the Hollywood Freeway in broad daylight. Yes! Now, the thing that you have to consider about this is, the police were at the airport. The police knew what they were up to. In fact, the police arrested a couple of them in front of someone's home the night before. They knew all about it. Nothing was said in the paper. Now, imagine someone is chasing

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you down the Hollywood Freeway at eighty miles an hour and it doesn't get in the paper. No.

So later on -- that was on a Thursday. Friday I was in Chicago. I appeared on the Kup [Irv Kupcinet] show. And when I went on the Kup show I had about twenty police. There were twenty police out there guarding the station. It might seem odd, but the Muslims were there. And they even tried to attack the police, which was never put in the paper. They followed the police, because of that -- they act kind of nuts. And I'm so thankful that I'm out of there, I don't expect. . . . [Laughter] Because I was the same kind of nut. I was just as nuts as they were. If Elijah Muhammad had told me to go get somebody's head, I would have gone and gotten it just like that. And that's what's the matter with them. They're only following what I taught them how to do. So, I understand. [Laughter]

But despite the fact that they put on this performance, it was quieted down. Nothing was said about it. And then the night I was on the Susskind show, the David Susskind Show, those same persons were -- had surrounded the station. They had even almost strong-armed the police. The police didn't do a thing to strike back at them. They almost strong-armed them. Nothing was done about that. But while I was on the . . . show they had come to the studio and told Susskind that I wasn't going to be down there that night. And told him that I would never make it. But, again, I know how they do, and I, thanks to Allah, did something other than what they expected.

So, the next thing that irritated them and irritated them the most was this. And I've been doing it for a month, and nobody knew why I was doing it. You notice, I had shifted my attack from them to Rockwell and the Ku Klux Klan. 11 For the past month I've been beating on

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the Klan and beating on Rockwell and beating on these so-called right-wingers. You may wonder why. I sent a wire to Rockwell warning him if anything happened to Black people in Alabama that we would give him maximum retaliation. The press knew it. You heard nothing about it. Rockwell disappeared because he's scared of power like anybody else. Because they know that he has strength only as long as he's dealing with somebody that's nonviolent. Good Lord. [Applause]

Rockwell and his whole crowd agree only as long as they're dealing with someone nonviolent. The Ku Klux Klan and that crowd agree only when they're dealing with someone nonviolent. Citizens' Council and that crowd agree only when they're dealing with someone that's nonviolent. And you know it.

So, he cleared out. I went to Alabama. I went to Alabama purposely to see what was happening down there. While I was there, I wasn't trying to interfere with King's program, whatever it was. He was in jail. I talked, I spoke at Tuskegee. [Laughter] I spoke at Tuskegee Institute last Tuesday night, I think it was. There were over 3,000 students and others. And it was the students themselves that night who insisted that I go with them the next morning to Selma, some students from Smith. So I went. After giving it careful thought, I went.

When I got to Selma, the press began to bug me right away. And I wouldn't even tell them my name. I just ignored them completely. So they insisted that I hold a press conference. I didn't ask for a press conference. They insisted that I hold a press conference. Which was held. And while the press was there, the Klan was there. When you're looking at the cops in Alabama, you're looking at the Klan. That's who the Klan is. [Applause]

Knowing where I was, right then and there, I reminded Lyndon B. Johnson of the promise he had made to good, well-meaning Americans when he was running for president. He said that if he were elected he would pull the

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sheets off the Ku Klux Klan. Did he not say that? Yes, he did. So, here you've got Klansmen knocking little babies down the road with a . . . You've got Klansmen knocking Black women down in front of a camera and that poor fool Black man standing on the sidelines because he's nonviolent. Now, we don't go along with a thing like that. [Applause]

Well, it was then, in Selma, Alabama, in front of the face of the Ku Klux Klan that I demanded in your name, the Organization of Afro-American Unity -- could I make that demand in your name? [Applause] -- that since 97 percent of the Black people in this country had supported Lyndon B. Johnson and his promise, and now that his party has the largest majority that any president has had in a long time, Lyndon B. Johnson is obligated to the Black man in this country to put up an immediate federal commission to investigate the Ku Klux Klan, which is a criminal organization organized to murder and maim and cripple Black people in this country.

And, I pointed out that if Lyndon B. Johnson could not keep his promise and expose the Ku Klux Klan, then we would be within our rights to come to Alabama and organize the Black people of Alabama and pull the sheets off the Klan ourselves. [Applause] And we can do it. Brothers and sisters, we can do it. And the federal government won't do it. Since then, they've been talking about a little investigation of the Klan and the Citizens' Council and the Black Muslims and some of the others. But they're not going to do anything. The only way the Klan is going to be stopped is when you and I organize and stop them ourselves. Yes, that's what's out there. [Applause]

You may say, well, why am I so down on the Klan all of a sudden? I'm going to tell you why. And why did I shift my attack from the Black Muslims -- Elijah Muhammad and his immoral self -- to the Klan? Yes, he's immoral. You can't take nine teenaged women and seduce them and

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give them babies and not tell me you're -- and then tell me you're moral. You could do it if you admitted you did it and admitted that the babies were yours. I'd shake your hand and call you a man. A good one too. [Laughter] Any time you seduce teenaged girls and make them be child with adultery, make them hide your crimes, why, you're not even a man, much less a divine man. [Laughter]

So, and this is what he did. He took at least nine that we know about. And I'm not speculating, because he told this to me himself. Yes, that's why he wants me dead because he knew as soon as I walked out that I'd tell it. Nine of them. Not two of them who are suing him, but nine of them. And the FBI knows it. The law in Chicago knows it. The press even knows it. And they don't expose the man.

And don't let me get out of here tonight without telling you why they won't expose him. Why they're afraid to expose him. They know that if they expose him, that he has them all set. See, the Black Muslim movement, it was organized in such a way that it attracted the most militant, the most uncompromising, the most fearless, and the youngest of the Black people in the United States. That's who went into it. Those who didn't mind dying. They didn't mind making a sacrifice. All they were interested in was freedom and justice and equality, and they would do anything to see that it was brought about. These are the people who have followed him for the past twelve years. And the government knows it. But all these upfront militants have been held in check by an organization that doesn't take an active part in anything. And therefore it cannot be a threat to anybody because it's not going to do anything against anybody but itself. [Applause]

Don't you know? The way they threw that bomb in there they could have thrown it in a Ku Klux Klan house. Why do they want to bomb my house? Why don't they bomb the Klan? I'm going to tell you why. In 1960, in

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December, in December of 1960, I was in the home of Jeremiah, the minister in Atlanta, Georgia. I'm ashamed to say it, but I'm going to tell you the truth. I sat at the table myself with the heads of the Ku Klux Klan. I sat there myself, with the heads of the Ku Klux Klan, who at that time were trying to negotiate with Elijah Muhammad so that they could make available to him a large area of land in Georgia or I think it was South Carolina. They had some very responsible persons in the government who were involved in it and who were willing to go along with it. They wanted to make this land available to him so that his program of separation would sound more feasible to Negroes and therefore lessen the pressure that the integrationists were putting upon the white man. I sat there. I negotiated it. I listened to their offer. And I was the one who went back to Chicago and told Elijah Muhammad what they had offered. Now, this was in December of 1960.

The code name that Jeremiah gave the Klan leader was 666. Whenever they would refer to him they would refer to him as Old Six. What his name was right now escapes me. But they even sat there and told stories how -- what they had done on different escapades that they had been involved in. Jeremiah was there and his wife was there and I was there and the Klan was there.

From that day onward the Klan never interfered with the Black Muslim movement in the South. Jeremiah attended Klan rallies, as you read on the front page of the *New York Tribune*. They never bothered him, never touched him. He never touched a Muslim, and a Muslim never touched him. Elijah Muhammad would never let me go back down since January of 1961. I never went South, as long as I remained in the Black Muslim movement, again, from January of 1961, because most of the actions the Muslims got involved in was action that I was involved in myself. Wherever it happened in the country, where there was an action, it was action that I was

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involved in, because I believed in action. I never have gone along with no Ku Klux Klan.

And another one that he had made a deal with was this man Rockwell. Rockwell and Elijah Muhammad are regular correspondents with each other. You can hate me for telling you this, but I'm going to tell it to you. Rockwell attended the rally because Elijah Muhammad put the okay on it. And Sharrieff, the captain of the FOI [Fruit of Islam], and I had discussed it, wondering why Rockwell could come to our meeting because it didn't help us. But Elijah Muhammad said let him in, so he had to be let in. No one questioned what Elijah Muhammad said. Now, if you doubt that this is true, you get all of the back issues of *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper and you will find articles in it about the Ku Klux Klan actually praising him. Jeremiah interviewed -- I think it was -- J.B. Stoner for the Muslim newspaper, *12* and the old devil even gave him a contribution that he reported about in that paper. Sure he did.

When the brothers in Monroe, Louisiana, were involved in trouble with the police, if you'll recall, Elijah Muhammad got old [James] Venable. Venable is the Ku Klux Klan lawyer. He's a Ku Klux Klan chieftain, according to the *Saturday Evening Post*, that was up on the witness stand. Go back and read the paper and you'll see that Venable was the one who represented the Black Muslim movement in Louisiana.

Now, brothers and sisters, until 1961, until 1960, until just before Elijah Muhammad went to the East, there was not a better organization among Black people in this country than the Muslim movement. It was militant. It made the whole struggle of the Black man in this country pick up momentum because of the unity, the militancy, the tendency to be uncompromising. All of these images

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created by the Muslim movement lent weight to the struggle of the Black man in this country against oppression.

But after 1960, after Elijah Muhammad went over there in December of '59 and came back in January of '60 -- when he came back, the whole trend or direction that he formerly had taken began to change. And in that change there's a whole lot of other things that had come into the picture. But he began to be more mercenary. More interested in money. More interested in wealth. And, more interested in girls. [Laughter]

And I guess many of you have heard it said that his financial support comes from a rich man in Texas. I heard that while I was in the movement. I've heard it more since I left the movement. A rich man in Texas. You can look up, any of you can look up his name. But the FBI knows that too. But they still don't touch him. And never have I seen a man -- and this rich man who lives in Texas, by the way, lives in Dallas. His headquarters is in Dallas, his money is in Dallas, the same city where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. And never have I seen a man in my life more afraid, more frightened than Elijah Muhammad was when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I've never in my life seen a man as frightened as he was. And when I made the statement that I did, why he almost cracked up behind it because there were all kinds of implications to it that at that time were way above and beyond my understanding.

Now you may wonder, why is it so important to many interests for the Black Muslim movement to remain? But I told you, it has the most militant, most uncompromising, most dissatisfied Black people in America in it. Many have left it, many are still in it. The fear has been that if anything happened to Elijah Muhammad and the Black Muslim movement were to crumble, that all those militants who formerly were in it and were held in check would immediately become involved in the civil rights

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struggle, and they would add the same kinds of energy to the civil rights struggle that they gave to the Black Muslim movement. And there's a great fear. You know yourself, white people don't like for Black people to get involved in anything to do with civil rights unless those Black people are nonviolent, loving, patient, forgiving, and all of that. They don't like it otherwise. [Applause]

And there has been a conspiracy across the country on the part of many factions of the press to suppress news that would open the eyes of the Muslims who are following Elijah Muhammad. They continue to make him look like he's a prophet somewhere who is getting some messages direct from God and is untouchable and things of that sort. I'm telling you the truth. But they do know that if something were to happen and all these brothers, their eyes were to come open, they would be right out here in every one of these civil rights organizations making these Uncle Tom Negro leaders stand up and fight like men instead of running around here nonviolently acting like women.

So they hope Elijah Muhammad remains as he is for a long time because they know that any organization that he heads, it will not do anything in the struggle that the Black man is confronted with in this country. Proof of which, look how violent they can get. They were violent, they've been violent from coast to coast. Muslims, in the Muslim movement, have been involved in cold, calculated violence. And not at one time have they been involved in any violence against the Ku Klux Klan. They're capable. They're qualified. They're equipped. They know how to do it. But they'll never do it -- only to another brother. [Applause] Now, I am well aware of what I'm saying up here tonight. I'm well aware. But I have never said or done anything in my life that I wasn't prepared to suffer the consequences for. [Applause]

Now, what does this have to do with France, England,

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the United States? You and I are living at a time when there's a revolution going on. A worldwide revolution. It goes beyond Mississippi. It goes beyond Alabama. It goes beyond Harlem. There's a worldwide revolution going on. And it's in two phases.

Number one, what is it revolting against? The power structure. The American power structure? No. The French power structure? No. The English power structure? No. Then what power structure? An international Western power structure. An international power structure consisting of American interests, French interests, English interests, Belgian interests, European interests. These countries that formerly colonized the dark man formed into a giant international combine. A structure, a house that has ruled the world up until now. And in recent times there has been a revolution taking place in Asia and in Africa, whacking away at the strength or at the foundation of the power structure.

Now, the man was shook up enough when Africa was in revolt and when Asia was in revolt. All of this revolt was actually taking place on the outside of his house, on the outside of his

base, or on the outside of his headquarters. But now he's faced with something new. Just as the French and the British and the -- the French, and the British, and the Americans formed one huge home or house or power structure, those brothers in Africa and Asia, although they are fighting against it, they also have some brothers on the inside of the house.

And as fast as the brothers in Africa and Asia get their independence, get freedom, get strength, begin to rise up, begin to change their image from negative to positive -- this African image that has jumped from negative to positive affects the image that the Black man in the Western Hemisphere has of himself. Whereas in the West Indies and in Latin American countries and in the United States, you or I used to be ashamed of ourselves, used to look down upon ourselves, used to have no tendency

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whatsoever or desire whatsoever to stick together. As the African nations become independent and mold a new image -- a positive image, a militant image, an upright image, the image of a man, not a boy -- how has this affected the Black man in the Western Hemisphere? It has taken the Black man in the Caribbean and given him some pride. It has given pride to the Black man in Latin America and has given pride to the Black man right here in the United States. So that when the Black revolution begins to roll on the African continent it affects the Black man in the United States and affects the relationship between the Black man and the white man in the United States.

When the Black man in the Caribbean sees the brother on the continent of Africa waking up and rising up, the Black man in the Caribbean begins to throw back his shoulders and stick out his chest and stand up. Now, when that Black man goes to England he's right inside the English power structure, ready to give it trouble. When the Black man from the French West Indies goes to France, why the effect upon him of the African revolution is the same as the effect upon us here in the States by the African revolution. This is what you have to understand.

Now, up to now there have been Black people in France, divided. Black people in England, divided. Black people here in America, divided. What divided us? Our lack of pride. Our lack of racial identity. Our lack of racial pride. Our lack of cultural roots. We had nothing in common. But as the African nation got its independence and changed its image we became proud of it. And to the same degree that we became proud of it we began to have something in common to that same degree. So, whereas formerly it was difficult to unite Black people, today it is easier to unite Black people. Where formerly Black people didn't want to come together with Black people, but only with white people, today you find Black people want to come together with Black people. All they need is someone

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to start the ball rolling. . . . [Applause]

So this is what you have to understand. And as the brothers on the African continent lead the way, it has an effect and an impact upon the brothers here, upon the brothers here in the Western Hemisphere. So that when you find the Afro-American community in France uniting not only with itself, but for the first time beginning to unite and work in conjunction with the African community, this frightens old de Gaulle to death, because he sees some new problems in front of him.

And when the Afro -- and when the West Indian community, which is an Afro-American community in England, begins to unite and then unite also with the African community in England and reach out and get the Asian community, it's trouble for old John Bull. Trouble that he never foresaw before. And this is something that he has to face up to.

Likewise, here in America, with you and me. For the first time in our history here you find we have a tendency to want to come together. For the first time we have a tendency to want to work together. And, up to now, no organization on the American continent has tried to unite you and me with our brothers and sisters back home.

At no time. None of them. [Applause]

Marcus Garvey did it. They put him in jail. They framed him. The government -- framed him and put him in jail. Marcus Garvey tried.

The only fear that exists is that you and I once we get united will also unite with our brothers and sisters. And since they knew that my calling in life, as a Muslim -- number one, I'm a Muslim, for which I'm proud. And in no way has that changed, my being a Muslim. My religion is Islam. What's that? [Interjection from audience] Okay. Y'all sit down and be cool. [Laughter] Just sit down and be cool.

As a Muslim, when I left the Black Muslim movement, I realized that what we taught in there was not authentic

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Islam. My first journey was to Mecca to make myself an authentic Muslim. And to bring them there up to date on the problems that our people who are Muslims had. As soon as we established our religious authenticity with the Muslim world, we set up the Organization of Afro-American Unity and took immediate steps to make certain that we would be in direct contact with our African brothers on the African continent.

So the first step that has been taken, brothers and sisters, since Garvey died, to actually establish contact between the 22 million Black Americans with our brothers and sisters back home was done by two organizations. Done first by the Muslim Mosque, which gave us direct ties with our brothers and sisters in Asia and Africa who are Muslims. And, you know we've got to unite with them, because there are 700 million Muslims and we surely need to stop being the minority and become part of the majority. So, as Muslims, we united with our Muslim brothers in Asia and Africa. And as members of the Organization of African, or Afro-American Unity, we set out on a program to unite our people on this continent with our people on the mother continent.

And this frightened many power -- many interests in this country. Many people in this country who want to see us the minority and who don't want to see us taking too militant or too uncompromising a stand are absolutely against the successful regrouping or organizing of any faction in this country whose thought and whose thinking patterns is international, rather than national. Whose thought patterns, whose hopes and aspirations are worldly rather than just within the context of the United States border or the borderline of the United States.

So this has been the purpose of the OAAU and also the Muslim Mosque -- to give us direct links, direct contact, direct communication and cooperation with our brothers and sisters all over the earth. And once we are successful in uniting ourselves with our people all over the world, it

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puts us in a position where we no longer are a minority who can be abused and walked upon. We become a part of the majority. And then if this man over here plays too rough, we have some brothers who can play as rough as he. [Applause]

So that's all I have to say about that. I wanted you to know that my house was bombed. It was bombed by the Black Muslim movement upon the orders of Elijah Muhammad. And when the bomb was thrown, one of the bombs was thrown at the rear window of my house where my three little baby girls sleep. And I have no compassion or mercy or forgiveness or anything of that sort for anyone who attacks children. If you attack me, that's one thing. I know what to do when you start attacking me, but when you attack sleeping babies, why, you are lower than a god -- [Laughter and applause]

The only thing that I regret in all of this is that two Black groups have to fight and kill each other off. Elijah Muhammad could stop the whole thing tomorrow, just by raising his hand. Really, he could. He could stop the whole thing by raising his hand. But he won't. He doesn't love Black people. He doesn't even want to go forward. Proof of which, they're killing each other. They killed one in the Bronx. They shot another one in the Bronx. They tried to get six of us Sunday morning. And the pattern has developed across the country. The man has gone insane, absolutely out of his mind. Besides, you can't be seventy years old and surround yourself by a handful of sixteen-, seventeen-, eighteen-year-old girls and keep your right mind. [Laughter and applause]

So, from tonight on, there'll be a hot time in the old town [Applause] with regret. With great regret! There's no organization in this country that could do more for the struggling Black man than the Black Muslim movement if it wanted to, but it has gotten into the possession of a man who's become senile in his old age and perhaps doesn't realize it. And then he has surrounded himself by

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his children, who are now in power and want nothing but luxury and security and comfort and will do anything to safeguard their own interests.

So, I feel responsible for having played a major role in developing a criminal organization. It was not a criminal organization at the outset. It was an organization that had the power, the spiritual power, to reform the criminal. And this is what you have to understand. As long as that strong spiritual power was in the movement, it gave the moral strength to the believer that would enable him to rise above all his negative tendencies. I know, because I went into the movement with more negative tendencies than anybody in the movement. It was faith in what I was taught that made it possible for me to stop doing anything that I was doing and everything that I was doing. And I saw thousands of brothers and sisters come in who were in the same condition. And whatever they were doing, they would stop it overnight, just through faith and faith alone. And by this spiritual force, giving one the faith that enabled one to exercise some

moral discipline, it became an organization that was to be respected as well as feared.

But as soon as the faith in the movement, the faith in the minds of the people in the movement was destroyed. . . . Now it has become a movement that's organized but not on a spiritual basis. And because there's no spiritual ingredient within the organization, there's no moral discipline. For it now consists of brothers and sisters who were once well meaning, but now who do not have the strength to discipline themselves. So they permit themselves to be used as a machine for a man who, as I say, has gone senile and is using them now to commit murder, acts of maiming and crippling other people.

And, I know that there's a brother sitting in here right now, tonight, who was beaten by them a couple of years ago -- I'm not going to say. He knows. And if anybody should apologize to him, I should apologize to him. And I

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do apologize to him. Because he was beaten by the movement when I was in the movement, and I wasn't too far from him when he got beaten.

But this is what happens and this is what we have to contend with. I, for one, disassociate myself from the movement completely. And I dedicate myself to the organizing of Black people into a group that are interested in doing things constructive, not for just one religious segment of the community, but for the entire Black community. This is what the purpose of the Organization of Afro-American Unity is. To have an action program that's for the good of the entire Black community, and we are for the betterment of the community by any means necessary.

And, since tonight we had to get into this old nasty, negative subject, we didn't want to bring up our program. We're going to have a rally here this coming Sunday at two o'clock in the afternoon, at two o'clock -- is it two o'clock Brother Ruben? Two o'clock. At two o'clock, at which time we will give you the program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity; what our aims are, our objectives are, what our program is, whether or not you want to be identified with it, and what active part you can play in helping us to straighten Harlem out. Nobody's going to straighten out Harlem but us. Nobody cleans up your house for you. You have to clean it up yourself. Harlem is our house; we'll clean it up. But when we clean it up, we'll also control it. We'll control the politics. We'll control the economy. We'll control the school system and see that our people get a break. [Applause]

So, on that note, I'm going to bring my talk to a close. I'm going to let you have a five-minute recess, during which time we're going to take up a collection so that we can pay for the expense of the hall. And then we'll take a fifteen-minute question period afterwards.

So, Brother James, is everything all set? Yes. We're going to have a -- those lights are something else -- we're

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going to have a collection period right now, and we -- all we want you to do brothers and sisters, is to help us pay for the hall. And if each of you put a dollar in those white pails that's going by, we'll have the hall paid for. And I really want to apologize to you for taking your good time tonight to talk about a nasty, negative subject. But if you wake up in the middle of the night and see your house on fire all around you, with your babies crying, you'll take time to get on a nasty, negative subject, too.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS

Malcolm X: I want to thank you for your patience. And ask you to be patient just a couple -- this microphone doesn't seem to be up at all. Sir, was there -- there was some questions you wanted to ask, was it?

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Yes, the press here wants to ask a couple questions. I just want to take time to answer them for them, then we'll get right into our business. We can get rid of them and get right into our business.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Well, I'm not at the house, because the house was bombed out.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: I wouldn't say. Behind what has happened, I wouldn't ever say where I'm going to live.

Question: What do you mean when you say "there's a hot time in the old town tonight"?

Malcolm X: Well, that's an expression. Okay. . . .

This is the press. They want to get some questions out of the way. Please. When I said there'd be a hot time in the old town tonight, that's just a song, you know, that people sing. [Laughter and applause] Yes, sir?

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Yes, the house was bombed by the Black Muslim movement upon orders from Elijah Muhammad himself. And Raymond Sharrieff, the Supreme Captain of the FOI, stated in a telegram that he made public that

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the Muslims would not condone me making any statements about Elijah Muhammad. They let it be known where they stood and what they intended to do. And when they made such a statement, I was surprised that the police and the public didn't do something about it. But they were hoping that the Black Muslim movement could get to me and then they would move in on the Black Muslim movement. I know what they're up to. They want those fools to get me and then they'll move in on them. I can see all the way around that.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Do I feel that the police -- [Interjection] -- wait a minute. Stop. Don't go anywhere. Do I feel that the New York police are providing enough protection, or do I have to have protection of my own? I look for protection from Allah.

Question: You mentioned a conspiracy between the Black Muslims and the right wing in this country. Could you elaborate?

Malcolm X: I mentioned the conspiracy between the Muslims and the right wing in this country? I know for a fact that there is a conspiracy between, among, between the Muslims and the Lincoln Rockwell Nazis and also the Ku Klux Klan. There is a conspiracy. . . . [Interjection]

Well, the Ku Klux Klan made a deal, or were trying to make a deal with Elijah Muhammad in 1960 in the home of Jeremiah X, the minister in Atlanta at that time, in the presence of the minister in Philadelphia. They were trying to make a deal with him to make available to Elijah Muhammad a county-size tract of land in Georgia or South Carolina where Elijah Muhammad could then induce Negroes to migrate and make it appear that his program of a segregated state or separated state was feasible. And to what extent these negotiations finally developed, I do not know. Because I was not involved in them beyond the period of December 1960. But I do know that after that, Jeremiah, who was the minister throughout

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the South, could roam the entire South and the Klan not bother him in any way, shape, or form, nor would they bother any of the Black Muslims from then on. Nor would the Black Muslims bother the Klan.

Question: Are you inferring because of this conspiracy the attempt was made upon your life?

Malcolm X: The attempt could have been made upon my life at the --

Question: Are you inferring that because of this conspiracy the attempt was made upon your life?

Malcolm X: Not necessarily that conspiracy. The attempt was made upon my life because I speak my mind and I know too much and they know that I will speak it -- *[Applause]*

Question: Are you directing your followers to take any action?

Malcolm X: Am I directing my followers to take action against the Muslims? No. No.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Am I going to try to infiltrate their organization and win over some of their supporters? No, I have never tried to win supporters from Elijah Muhammad. Since I have left the Black Muslim movement, I've spoken at these rallies. Those who come, come; those who don't, don't. But I've never gone out of my way to win over any of his followers. And he himself is fearful, because he knows that you don't have to exercise too much energy to win his followers as soon as they know the truth and compare the two -- by the way, this is the brother -- this is Leon Ameer, who was Cassius Clay's secretary, whom they beat unmercifully up in Boston. And the courts freed the men who beat him. They fined them \$100 -- was it? -- fined them \$100 and he was on the inside of the Black Muslim specialty squad.

And it was he who heard Elijah Muhammad, Jr., come to New York when Elijah Muhammad was at the armory in June of last year. Junior stood up and told the Fruit --

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many of whom are here now also -- that I should have been killed. That my tongue should have been put in an envelope and sent back to Chicago by now. And because Fat Joseph had not done it, they demoted him. He remained captain, but Clarence up in Boston was put over Joseph and Joseph's authority was curtailed. And then Clarence, the captain from Boston, and John, the captain from Springfield, came to New York to assassinate me. And came to him to get a silencer and couldn't get it. So the police know this. It's not something that's new. They're just waiting until the job is done and then they step in.

Question: Do you know that Elijah Muhammad was behind this?

Malcolm X: Yes.

Question: Or is this your belief?

Malcolm X: Elijah Muhammad invited -- called all of his officials, national officials, to Chicago in October and ordered them to kill or maim any of his followers who leave him to follow me.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Well, when you say, how do I know. Many of the brothers who were in at that time are out now. And if this ever comes into the courts, there are plenty of witnesses who can stand up and testify to it.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: I'd rather not say at this time.

[Question unintelligible, protests from audience]

Malcolm X: Give them two more minutes and we'll end it.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Yes, when I said that no one could clean up our homes but us, and that we will clean it up and that no one should control it but us, including the politics; what do I mean? I mean exactly that. That the Black people -- *[Interjection]* What? Including who? Powell? *[Congressman Adam Clayton] Powell* is one of us -- *[Applause]*

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[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: No, he's not a member of our organization, but when I say he is one of us I mean he's one of the family. And then no one outside the family can get up and talk about him. If we talk about him, we talk about him within the family. But nobody outside the family can instigate us against Powell. *[Applause]*

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Yes, by controlling it politically I mean that the politics of the community of Harlem should be controlled by those of us who live in Harlem. Not by somebody sitting down in Gracie Mansion. 13 *[Applause]*

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: No. But the Organization of Afro-American Unity intends to get involved in every kind of action that's going on in New York City. We don't intend to let anybody downtown influence us in any way, shape, or form. We want the influence to come from Harlem. And from other Harlems around the country. Now, this doesn't mean we're anti-outside of Harlem. This doesn't mean we're anti-Bronx or anti -- White Plains or antiwhite or anti-German or anything like that. But it means we're pro-Harlem. We're pro-ourselves. We want to start doing something for ourselves. That's all it means. It means that we want to stop begging you for your school; we want you to get out of the way and let us straighten out the schools in Harlem. *[Applause]*

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: I just answered this when I said from tonight on there will be a hot time in the old town. I answered it when this gentleman over here asked. The song will be the same. *[Interjection]* An implication? *[Interjection]* An implied threat? I never imply any threat to

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anyone. I am a Muslim, my religion is Islam -- it's a religion of peace.

Question: Do you think there will be any further attempts?

Malcolm X: Sir, yes I do believe there will be further attempts on my life. I know them. They are foaming at the mouth. The rank-and-file Muslim means well. It's those at the hierarchy, who are living off the fatted calf, who don't mean well. And this coming Sunday at two o'clock, as I say, our program will be unfolded.

Elijah Muhammad knows -- he has done some good things and he has done some bad things. He knows that if he had wanted to, he could have united our people with the Muslim world just by teaching the right religion of Islam. He could have done so. The entire Muslim world would have accepted him; as it is now, the Muslim world has rejected him. He can never go into the Muslim world and say that he is a prophet or that Allah came over here in the flesh -- they would cut his head off if he said that. I mean he knows this. None of his followers can go over there without denouncing him. It is impossible for them to go to Mecca or any other place unless they subscribe to Islam, as it is subscribed to over there. So he was in a position to unite us with the Muslim world, those of us who were Muslim. He was also in a position to unite us with Africa. But you cannot read anything that Elijah Muhammad has ever written that's pro-African. I defy you to find one word in his direct writings that's pro-African. You can't find it.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Listen to this question this man got. What are you trying to get at?

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: No, he asked me. No. I got to tell them what you asked me. He asked me, don't I think if I got hurt, you know, wouldn't some of my followers retaliate? What are you trying to say? [Laughter] Or, what are you trying to

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get me to say? [Laughter]

No. I mean, it's okay. I'm not going to get you into any trouble. These are your friends in here. [Laughter] I just want them to hear what you're asking me. That's all. [Laughter] I just want them to hear what you're asking me. You're not going to get in no trouble for this. Would he? [Laughter] No.

Yes sir, last question.

Question: You're under civil court order to get out of your house in Queens --

Malcolm X: I'm under a civil court order to get out of my house in Queens? You know, I only -- somebody told that they heard that on the radio. I know nothing about it. And I haven't discussed it with a lawyer yet and I won't make any comments until I've discussed it with a lawyer. But I just hope that nobody tries to go in there while what's left of my belongings are there.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Some have been in the vicinity, yes, and some policemen, too, have been nice enough to watch the house ever since it was bombed. I wish they had been watching it while it was bombed.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Yeah, a great deal of my personal belongings were lost. They threw four bombs in there. I might point this out, that those who did it were so vicious and those who did it knew the whole layout of the house. They -- and to show you why I believe in Allah -- the bombs that were thrown into the front part of the house were thrown directly against the window, you know, so they came through. But before they threw the first one, the neighbors saw someone go up to the window with a moplike instrument and break the windows, crack the glass, and then they threw the bombs in after the glass was broken and that was in the front part.

Now if they had come around to the -- they had planned to do it from the front and the back so that I couldn't get

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out. They covered the front completely, the front door. Then they had come to the back but instead of getting directly in back of the house and throwing it this way, they stood at a forty-five degree angle and tossed it at the window so it glanced and went onto the ground. And the fire hit the window and it woke up my second oldest baby, but the fire burned on the outside of the house. But had that fire, had that gone through that window it would have fallen on a six-year-old girl, a four-year-old girl, and a two-year-old girl.

Now I'm going to tell you, if it had done it I'd taken my rifle and gone after anybody in sight. I would not wait. I say that because of this. The police know the criminal operation of the Black Muslim movement because they have thoroughly infiltrated it. There is no conversation that takes place in the Black Muslim movement that the city police don't know about, because they have policemen in there. They don't let Black people form anything without some policemen in there. And while I was in the Black Muslim movement, over the Black Muslim movement, many of the police who were sent to infiltrate us -- they're Black -- would tell me, "Look, I'm a cop, but I have to come." They would tell me. I knew the Muslim movement was full of police. So don't you think anything is going down that they don't know about. The only thing that goes down is what they want to go down, and what they don't want to go down they don't let it go down.

Question: I have one last question.

Malcolm X: One last question, yes sir.

Question: The Muslims claim that you bombed your own house.

Malcolm X: Yes, that's what I said. The Muslims claim I bombed my house.

Question: Of course, they say, while you were there.

Malcolm X: Yeah. No, well, you can think what you want. The arson squad, the fire marshall, all of them are experts in this kind of thing. And if anybody can find

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where I've bombed my house, they can put a rifle bullet through my head. It was my children and my own life and my wife's life that was at stake.

Hey, let me tell you something, sir. I stood Sunday morning, you know what the degree -- what the temperature was? It was about fifteen or twenty. I stood in my underwear, barefeet in the middle of my driveway with a gun in my hands for forty-five minutes waiting for the police or waiting for the fire department to come. If I'd wanted to put on a show I could find a better way than that to put it on. [Applause]

That's all.

DISCUSSION PERIOD

Malcolm X: There's a -- brothers and sisters, there's a -- here's the *Saturday Evening Post* dated February 27, 1965, and in it there's an article titled, "An ex-official tells why the Black Muslims are a fraud." This is one of the brothers in Boston and who was formerly the secretary up there and who is the cousin of Ronald Stokes, the brother who was killed out in California in April of 1962. ¹⁴ And I would like to say this before anything else, and that is don't think that I don't know how bad I make myself look by attacking an organization that I was once so inseparably a part of. Well, I'm not particularly concerned with how bad it makes me look. My prime concern is to expose it to the fullest of my ability, let the chips fall where they may. [Applause]

And if the Black Muslim movement says that I'm wrong in what I say, then I say since they're so well qualified and equipped, let them attack the Klan. Let them go find out who -- let them get the persons who bombed that church in Birmingham. Because I'll go get them. I'll go attack the Klan. And attack Rockwell and any of the

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others. And I defy them to do so. They can't do it. Because they both have the same paymaster. [Applause]

So now our question period. And you have to stand up because I can't see beyond this man's light.

Yes sir.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Don't I think that we should become involved in some direct action, demonstrations? We are going to unveil our program on that next Sunday at two o'clock. Brother, I'm for anything you're for as long as it's going to get some results. I'm for anything you're for. [Applause] As long as it's intelligent, as long as it's disciplined, as long as it's aimed in the right direction -- I'm for it.

And what determines what we should do, or shouldn't do, will in no way be influenced by what the man downtown thinks. We don't need anybody on the outside laying the ground rules by

which we are going to fight our battles. We'll study the battle, study the enemy, study what we're up against, and then outline or map our own battle strategy. And we'll get some results. But as long as you have someone coming in from the outside telling you how you should do it and how you shouldn't do it -- and always what they tell you is nonviolence, peaceful, love everybody, forgive them Lord, they know not what they do. As long as you get into that kind of bag, why you'll never get anywhere.

What we want is to let them know that our aims are just. Our aims are within the realm of justice. And since they are, we're justified in going after those aims.

Don't you know it's a disgrace for the United States of America to let -- to have Martin Luther King, my good friend, the Right Reverend Dr. Martin, in Alabama, using school children to do what the federal government should do. Think of this. Those school children shouldn't have to march. Why Lyndon Johnson is supposed to have troops down there marching. Your children aren't supposed to

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have to get out there and demonstrate just to vote. Is it that bad? It shows our so-called leaders have been outmaneuvered.

Every day, you look on the television, you listen to the radio, you read the newspaper, and see where Black people are going to jail by the hundreds, by the thousands. You don't do this in a civilized country. In any other country, the government would do its job. But this exists only because the government is not doing its job. They've got Martin Luther King down there with crocodile tears crying his way into jail and still coming out and haven't got the ballot yet. We can get the ballot. [Applause]

Didn't they pass the civil rights bill? Just a minute, didn't they pass the civil rights bill and have made it legal. Don't you know that anywhere our people want to register and vote they're within their legal rights? All you and I have to do is show that we're men. And when we, and when they go to vote, we go with them. With them. With them. Prepared! [Applause]

Not prepared to make trouble. Not prepared to cause trouble. But prepared to protect ourselves in case trouble comes our way. [Applause] And no one can find fault with that. Yes ma'am?

Question: My nephew is in Vietnam and --

Malcolm X: Your nephew is where?

Question: In South Vietnam --

Malcolm X: In Vietnam? You should have him in Alabama.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: You told him right. [Applause] Sister, you're talking my kind of talk. Yeah.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: I know you would. I know you would. [Applause] Who else? Yes ma'am?. . .

Question: Brother Malcolm [Unintelligible] have fallen out of a hospital window. We buried him Saturday. [Unintelligible] refuse to speak to anyone. They have not

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spoken to his mother or anyone else. We have sent delegations there and each time they tell us that there's no one available to speak to. I had a picket line there Saturday. . . . Now can't something be done about this? A thirteen-year-old child?

Malcolm X: Fell out of the hospital window?

Question: So they say. But this child had lived on the top floor all of his life. . . . What can we do and what must we do to avoid something else like this?

Malcolm X: This is what I meant earlier when I said concerning the importance of our controlling Harlem. As long as we have outsiders running our hospitals and our schools and our everything else, they will run us right on out of existence. I would suggest that you come over to the office and see what we can get our heads together on. And see what we can do. Anything I can do, I certainly will and I know all the brothers and sisters will. [Applause]

We have time for two more questions. Yes ma'am. Right in front.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: No, they're not. They're marching for their parents. Let me tell you. You know, I was in Selma, and when I got to Selma I talked to these children. ¹⁵ I talked to them. And you know I have to say this. I have to expose the man. King's man did not want me to talk to them. They told me they didn't mind me coming in and all of that but they preferred that I didn't talk to the children. Because they knew what I was going to say. [Laughter] But the children insisted that I be heard. Otherwise, I wouldn't have gotten a hearing at all. And some of the,

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many of the students from SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] also insisted that I be heard. This is the only way I got a chance to talk to them.

And I might point out that one little girl who was only thirteen years old told me that she had been in jail the night before. She had just gotten out that morning. And she told of how they were using cattle prods, sticking it up against the heads of some of these little children and giving them headaches and things of that sort.

Oh, yes. The most brutal form of punishment imaginable takes place down there and nothing is done about it. Old Lyndon is all tied up in South Vietnam and the Congo and other places, but he's not minding his business in Mississippi, in Alabama.

But you see, I don't blame them. I blame us. Really, I blame us. Once we organize, we can straighten it out. The government is not going to straighten it out. It's getting too corrupt. It has too many racists in it. Too many segregationists running the government. So how is somebody from Texas going to stop the Klan? From Texas! Texas is a Klan state itself. No. . . . You and I have to do it.

And I promised the brothers and sisters in Alabama when I was there that we'd be back. I'll be back, you'll be back, we'll be back. We'll ease on in, brothers and sisters. [Applause]

Those people down there aren't afraid. They aren't afraid, they're just waiting for somebody to tell them what to do. That's all. And they don't go for that old turn-the-other-cheek stuff. No. That's why they got children doing it. And even those children don't go for turning the other cheek. And there's nothing wrong with my saying this.

Any time you live in a government, a government in 1965, that will permit conditions to exist that force a Negro leader to take children -- babies -- and march them down the street to get the right to register and vote, why that government should come under question. Should come

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under examination. We should stop and take a second look at it. And if it's not the government, then it's the men in the government. But the blame has got to be put somewhere. But you know where I put it? On us. We're too easy. We're too forgiving. We're too loving. We're too forgetful. We're too compromising. And we're too peaceful. Time for one more question. Yes sir. . . . Yes, yes ma'am.

[Question unintelligible]

Malcolm X: Yes, Yes. Akbar Muhammad along with Wallace Muhammad. But Akbar Muhammad gave a press conference in Cairo completely disassociating himself from his father and pointing out that what Elijah Muhammad is teaching in this country is absolutely and diametrically opposed to the true teachings of Islam. This was in Cairo.

And actually what Elijah Muhammad is teaching is an insult to the entire Muslim world, because Islam as the religion, as a religion, has nothing to do with color. There is no religion that has anything to do with color and Islam -- as a religion, it doesn't use the color of a man's skin to measure him or as a yardstick. Islam, as a religion, judges a man by his intention, by his

behavior, by his deeds. Now I can judge these crackers not 'cause they're white -- I'm not talking about them 'cause they're white. I'm talking about them 'cause what they do. Do you understand? Anything you hear me say here about whitey, or the white man, is not because he's white -- no, I'll shake his hand if he's all right. But first he got to get all right. *[Laughter and applause]*

The standard of judgment from a Muslim is behavior, intention, and deed. Do you understand? What Elijah Muhammad teaches is not that. Yes sir.

Question: Getting back to the action.

Malcolm X: The action, yes.

Question: You know, having power, wouldn't it be better if we were -- I mean speaking of the Black man -- to form a Black Ku Klux Klan?

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Malcolm X: No. No. No. Don't let them maneuver you into forming anything that can be compared with the Klan. See, it is true we're the target of brutal, criminal treatment from the Klan. Now, we don't need a Black Ku Klux Klan. All we need is Black people who believe in the brotherhood of man and who will fight anyone who threatens the brotherhood of man. Now, the Klan is a threat to this brotherhood and we are legally within our rights to defend ourselves from this Klan.

But if we call ourselves the Klan, what will happen -- the press will pick up what you do and make what you do look wrong. Because they will make it look wrong anyway. So if you call yourself that, you help them. You help them hurt you. No we don't want anything to do with the Klan or anything like the Klan. We want to destroy the Klan. Disband it, destroy it, erase it from this earth. And we can do it. You've been in the army. They taught you all those tricks. *[Laughter]* Well, use them. *[Laughter and applause]*

I got to say this; then we're going to close. You need to study guerrilla warfare. Get every book you can find on guerrilla warfare. *[Laughter]* There's nothing wrong with saying that. Yes, it's good to know everything. There's nothing wrong with knowing that. Why, the government teaches you that. *[Laughter]*

They draft you to teach you that, don't they? Sure, they taught it to your son. Well, go on and teach it to your son. But then tell your son how to use it. *[Applause and laughter]*

No, you study. We're going to have classes. The OAAU is going to have classes in all of the various sciences that you and I need to know -- karate, judo. We've got some experts. This brother here is an expert judo man, expert karate man. He'd break that board right here like it wasn't even a board. You come on in the OAAU and we'll train you. Show you how to protect yourself. Not so that you can go out and attack someone. You should never

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attack anybody. But at the same time whenever you, yourself, are attacked you are not supposed to turn the other cheek. Never turn the other cheek until you see the white man turn his cheek. The day that the white man turns the cheek, then you turn the cheek. If Martin Luther King was teaching white people to turn the other cheek, then I would say he was justified in teaching Black people to turn the other cheek. That's all I'm against. Make it a two-way street. Make it even steven. If I'm going to be nonviolent, then let them be nonviolent. But as long as they're not nonviolent, don't you let anybody tell you anything about nonviolence. No. Be intelligent.

Brothers and sisters, we're going to have our program on Sunday at two o'clock. I hope that every one of you will be here. It will be one of the last programs that we have -- please don't move; please don't move; please don't move. It's going to be one of the last programs we have. Next Sunday, at two o'clock. It will be designed to unfold to you completely, what our program is, and as I said earlier -- some of you came late -- the only reason that I didn't do it tonight, I wanted to give you a complete clarification on what happened at my house Sunday morning, so that you would know. And once you know, then you can stay way away from me or come on in, we'll get you, one of the two. But I don't want to get you into anything that you don't know what you're getting into. I'm not trying to get you in any trouble, but I am trying to get something organized that will enable us to take a direct action against the forces that have been holding us back. Now they asked me to -- Brother Benjamin will tell you what else there is in just two minutes while there's something else I have to do.

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Not just an American problem, but a world problem

FIRST, brothers and sisters, I want to start by thanking you for taking the time to come out this evening and especially for the invitation for me to come up to Rochester and participate in this little informal discussion this evening on matters that are of common interest to all elements in the community, in the entire Rochester community. My reason for being here is to discuss the Black revolution that is going on, that's taking place on this earth, the manner in which it's taking place on the African continent, and the impact that it's having in Black communities, not only here in America but in England and in France and in other of the former colonial powers today.

Many of you probably read last week I made an effort to go to Paris and was turned away. And Paris doesn't turn anybody away. You know anybody is supposed to be able to go to France, it's supposed to be a very liberal place. But France is having problems today that haven't been highly publicized. And England is also having problems that haven't been highly publicized, because America's problems have been so highly publicized. But all of these three partners, or allies, have troubles in common today that the Black American, or Afro-American, isn't well enough up on.

And in order for you and me to know the nature of the struggle that you and I are involved in, we have to know not only the various ingredients involved at the local level

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and national level, but also the ingredients that are involved at the international level. And the problems of the Black man here in this country today have ceased to be a problem of just the American Negro or an American problem. It has become a problem that is so complex, and has so many implications in it, that you have to study it in its entire world, in the world context or in its international context, to really see it as it actually is. Otherwise you can't even follow the local issue, unless you know what part it plays in the entire international context. And when you look at it in that context, you see it in a different light, but you see it with more clarity.

And you should ask yourself why should a country like France be so concerned with a little insignificant American Negro that they would prohibit him from going there, when almost anybody else can go to that country whenever they desire. And it's primarily because the three countries have the same problems. And the problem is this: That in the Western Hemisphere, you and I haven't realized it, but we aren't exactly a minority on this earth. In the Western Hemisphere there are -- there's the people in Brazil, two-thirds of the people in Brazil are dark-skinned people, the same as you and I. They are people of African origin, African ancestry -- African background. And not only in Brazil, but throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States, and Canada, you have people here who are of African origin.

Many of us fool ourselves into thinking of Afro-Americans as those only who are here in the United States. America is North America, Central America, and South America. Anybody of African ancestry in South America is an Afro-American. Anybody in Central America of African blood is an Afro-American. Anybody here in North America, including Canada, is an Afro-American if he has African ancestry -- even down in the Caribbean, he's an Afro-American. So when I speak of the Afro-American, I'm not speaking of just the 22 million of us who are

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here in the United States. But the Afro-American is that large number of people in the Western Hemisphere, from the southernmost tip of South America to the northernmost tip of North America, all of whom have a common heritage and have a common origin when you go back to the roots of these people.

Now, there are four spheres of influence in the Western Hemisphere, where Black people are concerned. There's the Spanish influence, which means that Spain formerly colonized a certain area of the Western Hemisphere. There's the French sphere of influence, which means that area that she formerly colonized. The area that the British formerly colonized. And then those of us who are in the United States.

The area that was formerly colonized by the Spanish is commonly referred to as Latin America. They have many dark-skinned people there, of African ancestry. The area which the French colonized here in the Western Hemisphere is largely referred to as the French West Indies. And the area that the British colonized are those that are commonly referred to as the British West Indies, and also Canada. And then again, there's the United States. So we have these four different classifications of Black people, or nonwhite people, here in the Western Hemisphere.

Because of the poor economy of Spain, and because it has ceased to be an influence on the world scene as it formerly was, not very many of the people from -- not very many of the black-skinned people from the Spanish sphere of influence migrate to Spain. But because of the high standard of living in France and England, you find many of the Black people from the British West Indies have been migrating to Great Britain, many of the Black people from the French West Indies migrate to France, and then you and I are already here.

So it means that the three major allies, the United States, Britain, and France, have a problem today that is a common problem. But you and I are never given enough

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information to realize that they have a common problem. And that common problem is the new mood that is reflected in the overall division of the Black people within continental France, within the same sphere of England, and also here in the United States. So that -- and this mood has been changing to the same degree that the mood on the African continent has been changing. So when you find the African revolution taking place, and by African revolution I mean the emergence of African nations into independence that has been going on for the past ten or twelve years, has absolutely affected the mood of the Black people in the Western Hemisphere. So much so that when they migrate to England, they pose a problem for the English. And when they migrate to France, they pose a problem for the French. And when they -- already here in the States -- but when they awaken, and this same mood is reflected in the Black man in the States, then it poses a problem to the white man here in America.

And don't you think that the problem that the white man in America has is unique. France is having the same problem. And Great Britain is having the same problem. But the only difference between the problem in France and Britain and here is there have been many Black leaders that have risen up here in the Western Hemisphere, in the United States, that have created so much sort of militancy that has frightened the American whites. But that has been absent in France and England. And it has only been recently that the American Negro community and the British West Indian community, along with the African community in France, have begun to organize among themselves, and it's frightening France to death. And the same thing is happening in England. It is -- up until recently it was disorganized completely. But recently, the West Indians in England, along with the African community in England, along with the Asians in England began to organize and work in

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coordination with each other, in conjunction with each other. And this has posed England a very serious problem.

So I had to give you that background, in order for you to understand some of the current problems that are developing here on this earth. And in no time can you understand the problems between Black and white people here in Rochester or Black and white people in Mississippi or Black and white people in California, unless you understand the basic problem that exists between Black and white people -- not confined to the local level, but confined to the international, global level on this earth today. When you look at it in that context, you'll understand. But if you only try to look at it in the local context, you'll never understand. You have to see the trend that is taking place on this earth. And my purpose for coming here tonight is to try and give you as up-to-date an understanding of it all as is possible.

As many of you know, I left the Black Muslim movement and during the summer months, I spent five of those months on the -- in the Middle East and on the African continent. During this time I visited many countries, first of which was Egypt, and then Arabia, then Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zanzibar, Tanganyika -- which is now Tanzania -- Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Algeria. And then the five months that I was away I had an opportunity to hold lengthy discussions with President Nasser in Egypt, President Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Milton Obote in Uganda, Azikiwe in Nigeria, Nkrumah in Ghana, and Sékou Touré in Guinea.

And during conversations with these men, and other Africans on that continent, there was much information exchanged that definitely broadened my understanding, and I feel, broadened my scope. For since coming back from over there, I have had no desire whatsoever to get bogged down in any picayune arguments with any bird-brained

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or small-minded people who happen to belong to organizations, based upon facts that are very misleading and don't get you anywhere when you have problems as complex as ours that are trying to get solved.

So I'm not here tonight to talk about some of these movements that are clashing with each other. I'm here to talk about the problem that's in front of all of us. And to have -- and to do it in a very informal way. I never like to be tied down to a formal method or procedure when talking to an audience, because I find that usually the conversation that I'm involved in revolves around race, or things racial, which is not my fault. I didn't create the race problem. And you know, I didn't come to America on the *Mayflower* or at my own volition. Our people were brought here involuntarily, against our will. So if we pose the problem now, they shouldn't blame us for being here. They brought us here.

[Applause]

One of the reasons I feel that it is best to remain very informal when discussing this type of topic, when people are discussing things based on race, they have a tendency to be very narrow-minded and to get emotional and all involved in -- especially white people. I have found white people that usually are very intelligent, until you get them to talking about the race problem. Then they get blind as a bat and want you to see what they know is the exact opposite of the truth. [Applause]

So what I would rather we try and do is be very informal, where we can relax and keep an open mind, and try and form the pattern or the habit of seeing for ourselves, hearing for ourselves, thinking for ourselves, and then we can come to an intelligent judgment for ourselves.

To straighten out my own position, as I did earlier in the day at Colgate, I'm a Muslim, which only means that my religion is Islam. I believe in God, the Supreme Being, the creator of the universe. This is a very simple form of

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religion, easy to understand. I believe in one God. It's just a whole lot better. But I believe in one God, and I believe that that God had one religion, has one religion, always will have one religion. And that that God taught all of the prophets the same religion, so there is no argument about who was greater or who was better: Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, or some of the others. All of them were prophets who came from one God. They had one doctrine, and that doctrine was designed to give clarification of humanity, so that all of humanity would see that it was one and have some kind of brotherhood that would be practiced here on this earth. I believe in that.

I believe in the brotherhood of man. But despite the fact that I believe in the brotherhood of man, I have to be a realist and realize that here in America we're in a society that doesn't practice brotherhood. It doesn't practice what it preaches. It preaches brotherhood, but it doesn't practice brotherhood. And because this society doesn't practice brotherhood, those of us who are Muslim -- those of us who left the Black Muslim movement and regrouped as Muslims, in a movement based upon orthodox Islam -- we believe in the brotherhood of Islam.

But we also realize that the problem facing Black people in this country is so complex and so involved and has been here so long, unsolved, that it is absolutely necessary for us to form another organization. Which we did, which is a nonreligious organization in which -- is known as the Organization of Afro-American Unity, and it is so structured organizationally to allow for active participation of any Afro-American, any Black American, in a program that is designed to eliminate the negative political, economic, and social evils that our people are confronted by in this society. And we have that set up because we realize that we have to fight against the evils of a society that has failed to produce brotherhood for every member of that society. This in no way means that we're antiwhite, antiblue, antigreen, or antiyellow. We're

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antiwrong. We're antidiscrimination. We're antisegregation. We're against anybody who wants to practice some form of segregation or discrimination against us because we don't happen to be a color that's acceptable to you. . . . [Applause]

We don't judge a man because of the color of his skin. We don't judge you because you're white; we don't judge you because you're black; we don't judge you because you're brown. We judge you because of what you do and what you practice. And as long as you practice evil, we're against you. And for us, the most -- the worst form of evil is the evil that's based upon judging a man because of the color of his skin. And I don't think anybody here can deny that we're living in a society that just doesn't judge a man according to his talents, according to his know-how, according to his possibility -- background, or lack of academic background. This society judges a man solely upon the color of his skin. If you're white, you can go forward, and if you're Black, you have to fight your way every step of the way, and you still don't get forward. [Applause]

We are living in a society that is by and large controlled by people who believe in segregation. We are living in a society that is by and large controlled by a people who believe in racism, and practice segregation and discrimination and racism. We believe in a -- and I say that it is controlled, not by the well-meaning whites, but controlled by the segregationists, the racists. And you can see by the pattern that this society follows all over the world. Right now in Asia you have the American army dropping bombs on dark-skinned people. You can't say that -- it's as though you can justify being that far from home, dropping bombs on somebody else. If you were next door, I could see it, but you can't go that far away from this country and drop bombs on somebody else and justify your presence over there, not with me. [Applause]

It's racism. Racism practiced by America. Racism which involves a war against the dark-skinned people in Asia,

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another form of racism involving a war against the darkskinned people in the Congo 16 . . . as it involves a war against the dark-skinned people in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Rochester, New York. [Applause]

So we're not against people because they're white. But we're against those who practice racism. We're against those who drop bombs on people because their color happens to be of a different shade than yours. And because we're against it, the press says we're violent. We're not for violence. We're for peace. But the people that we're up against are for violence. You can't be peaceful when you're dealing with them. [Applause]

They accuse us of what they themselves are guilty of. This is what the criminal always does. They'll bomb you, then accuse you of bombing yourself. They'll crush your skull, then accuse you of attacking him. This is what the racists have always done -- the criminal, the one who has criminal processes developed to a science. Their practice is criminal action. And then use the press to make you victim -- look like the victim is the criminal, and the criminal is the victim. This is how they do it. [Applause]

And you here in Rochester probably know more about this than anybody anywhere else. Here's an example of how they do. They take the press, and through the press, they beat the system. . . . Or through the white public. Because the white public is divided. Some mean good, and some don't mean good. Some are well meaning, and some are not well meaning. This is true. You got some that are not well meaning, and some are well meaning. And usually those that are not well meaning outnumber those that are well meaning. You need a microscope to find those that are well meaning. [Applause]

So they don't like to do anything without the support of

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the white public. The racists, that are usually very influential in the society, don't make their move without first going to get public opinion on their side. So they use the press to get public opinion on their side. When they want to suppress and oppress the Black community, what do they do? They take the statistics, and through the press, they feed them to the public. They make it appear that the role of crime in the Black community is higher than it is anywhere else.

What does this do? [Applause] This message -- this is a very skillful message used by racists to make the whites who aren't racists think that the rate of crime in the Black community is so high. This keeps the Black community in the image of a criminal. It makes it appear that anyone in the Black community is a criminal. And as soon as this impression is given, then it makes it possible, or paves the way to set up a police-type state in the Black community, getting the full approval of the white public when the police come in, use all kind of brutal measures to suppress Black people, crush their skulls, sic dogs on them, and things of that type. And the whites go along with it. Because they think that everybody over there's a criminal anyway. This is what -- the press does this. [Applause]

This is skill. This skill is called -- this is a science that's called "image making." They hold you in check through this science of imagery. They even make you look down upon yourself, by giving you a bad image of yourself. Some of our own Black people who have eaten this image themselves and digested it -- until they themselves don't want to live in the Black community. They don't want to be around Black people themselves. [Applause]

It's a science that they use, very skillfully, to make the criminal look like the victim, and to make the victim look like the criminal. Example: In the United States during the Harlem riots, I was in Africa, fortunately. [Laughter] During these riots, or because of these riots, or after the

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riots, again the press, very skillfully, depicted the rioters as hoodlums, criminals, thieves, because they were abducting some property.

Now mind you, it is true that property was destroyed. But look at it from another angle. In these Black communities, the economy of the community is not in the hands of the Black man. The Black man is not his own landlord. The buildings that he lives in are owned by someone else. The stores in the community are run by someone else. Everything in the community is out of his hands. He has no say-so in it whatsoever, other than to live there, and pay the highest rent for the lowest-type boarding place, [Applause] pays the highest prices for food, for the lowest grade of food. He is a victim of this, a victim of economic exploitation, political exploitation, and every other kind.

Now, he's so frustrated, so pent-up, so much explosive energy within him, that he would like to get at the one who's exploiting him. But the one who's exploiting him doesn't live in his neighborhood. He only owns the house. He only owns the store. He only owns the neighborhood. So that when the Black man explodes, the one that he wants to get at isn't there. So he destroys the property. He's not a thief. He's not trying to steal your cheap furniture or your cheap food. He wants to get at you, but you're not there. [Applause]

And instead of the sociologists analyzing it as it actually is, trying to understand it as it actually is, again they cover up the real issue, and they use the press to make it appear that these people are thieves, hoodlums. No! They are the victims of organized thievery, organized landlords who are nothing but thieves, merchants who are nothing but thieves, politicians who sit in the city hall and who are nothing but thieves in cahoots with the landlords and the merchants. [Applause]

But again, the press is used to make the victim look like the criminal and make the criminal look like the victim. . . . This is imagery. And just as this imagery is

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practiced at the local level, you can understand it better by an international example. The best recent example at the international level to bear witness to what I'm saying is what happened in the Congo. Look at what happened. We had a situation where a plane was dropping bombs on African villages. An African village has no defense against the bombs. And an African village is not sufficient threat that it has to be bombed! But planes were dropping bombs on African villages. When these bombs strike, they don't distinguish between enemy and friend. They don't distinguish between male and female. When these bombs are dropped on African villages in the Congo, they are dropped on Black women, Black children, Black babies. These human beings were blown to bits. I heard no outcry, no voice of compassion for these thousands of Black people who were slaughtered by planes. [Applause]

Why was there no outcry? Why was there no concern? Because, again, the press very skillfully made the victims look like they were the criminals, and the criminals look like they were the victims. [Applause]

They refer to the villages as "rebel held," you know. As if to say, because they are rebel-held villages, you can destroy the population, and it's okay. They also refer to the merchants of death as "American-trained, anti-Castro Cuban pilots." This made it okay. Because these pilots, these mercenaries -- you know what a mercenary is, he's not a patriot. A mercenary is not someone who goes to war out of patriotism for his country. A mercenary is a hired killer. A person who kills, who draws blood for money, anybody's blood. You kill a human being as easily as you kill a cat or a dog or a chicken.

So these mercenaries, dropping bombs on African villages, caring nothing as to whether or not there are innocent, defenseless women and children and babies being destroyed by their bombs. But because they're called "mercenaries," given a glorified name, it doesn't excite you. Because they are referred to as "American-trained" pilots,

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because they are American-trained, that makes them okay. "Anti-Castro Cubans," that makes them okay. Castro's a monster, so anybody who's against Castro is all right with us, and anything they can do from there, that's all right with us. . . . They put your mind right in a bag and take it wherever they want, as well. [Applause]

But it's something that you have to look at and answer for. Because they are American planes, American bombs, escorted by American paratroopers, armed with machine guns. But, you know, they say they're not soldiers, they're just there as escorts, like they started out with some advisers in South Vietnam. Twenty thousand of them -- just advisers. These are just "escorts." They're able to do all of this mass murder and get away with it by labeling it "humanitarian," an act of humanitarianism. Or "in the name of freedom," "in the name of liberty." All kinds of high-sounding slogans, but it's cold-blooded murder, mass murder. And it's done so skillfully, so you and I, who call ourselves sophisticated in this twentieth century, are able to watch it, and put the stamp of approval upon it. Simply because it's being done to people with black skin, by people with white skin.

They take a man who is a cold-blooded murderer, named [Moise] Tshombe. You've heard of him, Uncle Tom Tshombe. [Laughter and applause] He murdered the prime minister, the rightful prime minister, [Patrice] Lumumba. He murdered him. [Applause] Now here's a man who's an international murderer, selected by the State Department and placed over the Congo and propped into position by your tax dollars. He's a killer. He's hired by our government. He's a hired killer. And to show the type of hired killer he is, as soon as he's in office, he hires more killers in South Africa to shoot down his own people. And you wonder why your American image abroad is so bankrupt.

Notice I said, "Your American image abroad is so bankrupt."

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They make this man acceptable by saying in the press that he's the only one that can unite the Congo. Ha. A murderer. They won't let China in the United Nations because they say she declared war on UN troops in Korea. Tshombe declared war on UN troops in Katanga. You give him money and prop him up. You don't use the same yardstick. You use the yardstick over here, change it over here.

This is true -- everybody can see you today. You make yourself look sick in the sight of the world trying to fool people that you were at least once wise with your trickery. But today your bag of tricks have absolutely run out. The whole world can see what you're doing.

The press whips up hysteria in the white public. Then it shifts gears and starts working trying to get the sympathy of the white public. And then it shifts gears and gets the white public to support whatever criminal action they're getting ready to involve the United States in.

Remember how they referred to the hostages as "white hostages." Not "hostages." They said these "cannibals" in the Congo had "white hostages." Oh, and this got you all shook up. White nuns, white priests, white missionaries. What's the difference between a white hostage and a Black hostage? What's the difference between a white life and a Black life? You must think there's a difference, because your press specifies whiteness. "Nineteen white hostages" cause you to grieve in your heart. *[Laughter and applause]*

During the months when bombs were being dropped on Black people by the hundreds and the thousands, you said nothing. And you did nothing. But as soon as a few -- a handful of white people who didn't have any business getting caught up in that thing in the first place -- *[Laughter and applause]* -- as soon as their lives became involved, you got concerned.

I was in Africa during the summer when they -- when the mercenaries and the pilots were shooting down Black

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people in the Congo like flies. It wouldn't even get mentioned in the Western press. It wasn't mentioned. If it was mentioned, it was mentioned in the classified section of the newspaper. Someplace where you'd need a microscope to find it.

And at that time the African brothers, at first they weren't taking hostages. They only began to take hostages when they found that these pilots were bombing their villages. And then they took hostages, moved them into the village, and warned the pilots that if you drop bombs on the village, you'll hit your own people. It was a war maneuver. They were at war. They only held a hostage in a village to keep the mercenaries from murdering on a mass scale the people of those villages. They weren't keeping them as hostages because they were cannibals. Or because they thought their flesh was tasty. Some of those missionaries had been over there for forty years and didn't get eaten up. *[Laughter and applause]* If they were going to eat them they would have eaten them when they were young and tender. *[Laughter and applause]* Why you can't even digest that old white meat on an old chicken. *[Laughter]*

It's imagery. They use their ability to create images, and then they use these images that they've created to mislead the people. To confuse the people and make the people accept wrong as right and reject right as wrong. Make the people actually think that the criminal is the victim and the victim is the criminal.

Even as I point this out, you may say, "What does this all have to do with the Black man in America? And what does it have to do with the Black and white relations here in Rochester?"

You have to understand it. Until 1959 the image of the African continent was created by the enemies of Africa. Africa was a land dominated by outside powers. A land dominated by Europeans. And as these Europeans dominated the continent of Africa, it was they who created the

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image of Africa that was projected abroad. And they projected Africa and the people of Africa in a negative image, a hateful image. They made us think that Africa was a land of jungles, a land of animals, a land of cannibals and savages. It was a hateful image.

And because they were so successful in projecting this negative image of Africa, those of us here in the West of African ancestry, the Afro-American, we looked upon Africa as a hateful place. We looked upon the African as a hateful person. And if you referred to us as an African it was like putting us as a servant, or playing house, or talking about us in the way we didn't want to be talked.

Why? Because those who oppress know that you can't make a person hate the root without making them hate the tree. You can't hate your own and not end up hating yourself. And since we all originated in Africa, you can't make us hate Africa without making us hate ourselves. And they did this very skillfully.

And what was the result? They ended up with 22 million Black people here in America who hated everything about us that was African. We hated the African characteristics, the African characteristics. We hated our hair. We hated our nose, the shape of our nose, and the shape of our lips, the color of our skin. Yes we did. And it was you who taught us to hate ourselves simply by shrewdly maneuvering us into hating the land of our forefathers and the people on that continent.

As long as we hated those people, we hated ourselves. As long as we hated what we thought they looked like, we hated what we actually looked like. And you call me a hate teacher.

Why, you taught us to hate ourselves. You taught the world to hate a whole race of people and have the audacity now to blame us for hating you simply because we don't like the rope that you put around our necks. *[Applause]*

When you teach a man to hate his lips, the lips that God gave him, the shape of the nose that God gave him, the

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texture of the hair that God gave him, the color of the skin that God gave him, you've committed the worst crime that a race of people can commit. And this is the crime that you've committed.

Our color became a chain, a psychological chain. Our blood -- African blood -- became a psychological chain, a prison, because we were ashamed of it. We believe -- they would tell it to your face, and say they weren't; they were! We felt trapped because our skin was black. We felt trapped because we had African blood in our veins.

This is how you imprisoned us. Not just bringing us over here and making us slaves. But the image that you created of our motherland and the image that you created of our people on that continent was a trap, was a prison, was a chain, was the worst form of slavery that has ever been invented by a so-called civilized race and a civilized nation since the beginning of the world.

You still see the result of it among our people in this country today. Because we hated our African blood, we felt inadequate, we felt inferior, we felt helpless. And in our state of helplessness, we wouldn't work for ourselves. We turned to you for help, and then you wouldn't help us. We didn't feel adequate. We turned to you for advice and you gave us the wrong advice. Turned to you for direction and you kept us going in circles.

But a change has come about. In us. And what from? Back in '55 in Indonesia, at Bandung, they had a conference of dark-skinned people. The people of Africa and Asia came together for the first time in centuries. They had no nuclear weapons, they had no air fleets, no navy. But they discussed their plight and they found that there was one thing that all of us had in common -- oppression, exploitation, suffering. And we had a common oppressor, a common exploiter.

If a brother came from Kenya and called his oppressor an Englishman; and another came from the Congo, he called his oppressor a Belgian; another came from

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Guinea, he called his oppressor French. But when you brought the oppressors together there's one thing they all had in common, they were all from Europe. And this European was oppressing the people of Africa and Asia.

And since we could see that we had oppression in common and exploitation in common, sorrow and sadness and grief in common, our people began to get together and determined at the Bandung Conference that it was time for us to forget our differences. We had differences. Some were Buddhists, some were Hindus, some were Christians, some were Muslim, some didn't have any religion at all. Some were socialists, some were capitalists, some were communists, and some didn't have any economy at all. But with all of the differences that existed, they agreed on one thing, the spirit of Bandung was, from there on in, to de-emphasize the areas of difference and emphasize the areas that we had in common.

And it was the spirit of Bandung that fed the flames of nationalism and freedom not only in Asia, but especially on the African continent. From '55 to '60 the flames of nationalism, independence on the African continent, became so bright and so furious, they were able to burn and sting anything that got in its path. And that same spirit didn't stay on the African

continent. It somehow or other -- it slipped into the Western Hemisphere and got into the heart and the mind and the soul of the Black man in the Western Hemisphere who supposedly had been separate from the African continent for almost 400 years.

But the same desire for freedom that moved the Black man on the African continent began to burn in the heart and the mind and the soul of the Black man here, in South America, Central America, and North America, showing us we were not separated. Though there was an ocean between us, we were still moved by the same heartbeat.

The spirit of nationalism on the African continent -- It began to collapse; the powers, the colonial powers, they

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couldn't stay there. The British got in trouble in Kenya, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, and other areas of the continent. The French got in trouble in the entire French Equatorial North Africa, including Algeria. Became a trouble spot for France. The Congo wouldn't any longer permit the Belgians to stay there. The entire African continent became explosive from '54-'55 on up to 1959. By 1959 they couldn't stay there any longer.

It wasn't that they wanted to go. It wasn't that all of a sudden they had become benevolent. It wasn't that all of a sudden they had ceased wanting to exploit the Black man of his natural resources. But it was the spirit of independence that was burning in the heart and mind of the Black man. He no longer would allow himself to be colonized, oppressed, and exploited. He was willing to lay down his life and take the lives of those who tried to take his, which was a new spirit.

The colonial powers didn't leave. But what did they do? Whenever a person is playing basketball, if -- you watch him -- the players on the opposing team trap him and he doesn't want to get rid of, to throw the ball away, he has to pass it to someone who's in the clear, who's on the same team as he. And since Belgium and France and Britain and these other colonial powers were trapped -- they were exposed as colonial powers -- they had to find someone who was still in the clear, and the only one in the clear so far as the Africans were concerned was the United States. So they passed the ball to the United States. And this administration picked it up and ran like mad ever since. *[Laughter and applause]*

As soon as they grabbed the ball, they realized that they were confronted with a new problem. The problem was that the Africans had awakened. And in their awakening they were no longer afraid. And because the Africans were not afraid, it was impossible for the European powers to stay on that continent by force. So our State Department, grabbing the ball and in their new analysis,

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they realized that they had to use a new strategy if they were going to replace the colonial powers of Europe.

What was their strategy? The friendly approach. Instead of coming over there with their teeth gritted, they started smiling at the Africans. "We're your friends." But in order to convince the African that he was their friend he had to start off pretending like they were our friend.

You didn't get the man to smile at you because you were bad, no. He was trying to impress your brother on the other side of the water. He smiled at you to make his smile consistent. He started using a friendly approach over there. A benevolent approach. A philanthropic approach. Call it benevolent colonialism. Philanthropic imperialism. Humanitarianism backed up by dollarism. Tokenism. This is the approach that they used. They didn't go over there well meaning. How could you leave here and go on the African continent with the Peace Corps and Cross Roads and these other outfits when you're hanging Black people in Mississippi? How could you do it? *[Applause]*

How could you train missionaries, supposedly over there to teach them about Christ, when you won't let a Black man in your Christ's church right here in Rochester, much less in the South. *[Applause]* You know that's something to think about. It gets me hot when I think about it. *[Laughter]*

From 1954 to 1964 can easily be looked upon as the era of the emerging African state. And as the African state emerged from '54 to '64, what impact, what effect did it have on the Afro-American, the Black American? As the Black man in Africa got independent, it put him in a position to be master of making his own image. Up until 1959 when you and I thought of an African, we thought of someone naked, coming with the tom-toms, with bones in his nose. Oh yeah!

This was the only image you had in your mind of an African. And from '59 on when they begin to come into the

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UN and you'd see them on the television you'd get shocked. Here was an African who could speak better English than you. He made more sense than you. He had more freedom than you. Why places where you couldn't go -- *[Applause]* -- places where you couldn't go, all he had to do was throw on his robes and walk right past you. *[Laughter and applause]*

It had to shake you up. And it was only when you'd become shook up that you began to really wake up. *[Laughter]*

So as the African nations gained their independence and the image of the African continent began to change, the things agreed as the image of Africa switched from negative to positive. Subconsciously. The Black man throughout the Western Hemisphere, in his subconscious mind, began to identify with that emerging positive African image.

And when he saw the Black man on the African continent taking a stand, it made him become filled with the desire also to take a stand. The same image, the same -- just as the African image was negative -- and you hear about old hat in the hand, compromising, fearful looks -- we were the same way. But when we began to read about Jomo Kenyatta and the Mau Mau and others, then you find Black people in this country began to think along the same line. And more closely along the same line than some of them really want to admit.

When they saw -- just as they had to change their approach with the people on the African continent, they also then began to change their approach with our people on this continent. As they used tokenism and a whole lot of other friendly, benevolent, philanthropic approaches on the African continent, which were only token efforts, they began to do the same thing with us here in the States.

Tokenism. They came up with all kinds of programs that weren't really designed to solve anybody's problems. Every move they made was a token move. They never

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made a real down-to-earth move at one time to really solve the problem. They came up with a Supreme Court desegregation decision that they haven't put into practice yet. Not even in Rochester, much less in Mississippi. *[Applause]*

They fooled the people in Mississippi by trying to make it appear that they were going to integrate the University of Mississippi. They took one Negro to the university backed up with about 6,000-15,000 troops, I think it was. And I think it cost them \$6 million. *[Laughter]*

And three or four people got killed in the act. And it was only an act. Now, mind you, after one of them got in, they said there's integration in Mississippi. *[Laughter]*

They stuck two of them in the school in Georgia and said there's integration in Georgia. Why you should be ashamed. Really, if I was white, I'd be so ashamed I'd crawl under a rug. *[Laughter and applause]* And I'd feel so low while I was under that rug I wouldn't even leave a hump. *[Laughter]*

This tokenism, this tokenism was a program that was designed to protect the benefits of only a handful of handpicked Negroes. And these handpicked Negroes were given big positions, and then they were used to open up their mouths to tell the world, "Look at how much progress we're making." He should say, look at how much progress he is making. For while these handpicked Negroes were eating high on the hog, rubbing elbows with white folk, sitting in Washington, D.C., the masses of Black people in this country continued to live in the slum and in the ghetto. The masses, *[Applause]* the masses of Black people in this country remain unemployed, and the masses of Black people in this country continue to go to the worst schools and get the worst education.

Along during the same time appeared a movement known as the Black Muslim movement. The Black Muslim movement did this: Up until the time the Black Muslim movement came on the scene, the NAACP was

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regarded as radical. *[Laughter]* They wanted to investigate it. They wanted to investigate it. CORE and all the rest of them were under suspect, under suspicion. King wasn't heard of. When the Black Muslim movement came along talking that kind of talk that they talked, the white man said, "Thank God for the NAACP." *[Laughter and applause]*

The Black Muslim movement has made the NAACP acceptable to white folks. It made its leaders acceptable. They then began to refer to them as responsible Negro leaders. *[Laughter]*

Which meant they were responsible to white folk. [Applause] Now I am not attacking the NAACP. I'm just telling you about it. [Laughter] And what makes it so bad, you can't deny it. [Laughter]

So this is the contribution that that movement made. It frightened a lot of people. A lot of people who wouldn't act right out of love begin to act right out of fear. Because Roy [Wilkins] and [James] Farmer and some of the others used to tell white folk, look if you don't act right by us you're going to have to listen to them. They used us to better their own position, their own bargaining position. No matter what you think of the philosophy of the Black Muslim movement, when you analyze the part that it played in the struggle of Black people during the past twelve years you have to put it in its proper context and see it in its proper perspective.

The movement itself attracted the most militant, the most dissatisfied, the most uncompromising elements of the Black community. And also the youngest elements of the Black community. And as this movement grew, it attracted such a militant, uncompromising, dissatisfied element.

The movement itself was supposedly based upon the religion of Islam and therefore supposedly a religious movement. But because the world of Islam or the orthodox Muslim world would never accept the Black Muslim movement as a bona fide part of it, it put those of us who

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were in it in a sort of religious vacuum. It put us in a position of identifying ourselves by a religion, while the world in which that religion was practiced rejected us as not being bona fide practitioners, practitioners of that religion.

Also the government tried to maneuver us and label us as political rather than religious so that they could charge us with sedition and subversion. This is the only reason. But although we were labeled political, because we were never permitted to take part in politics we were in a vacuum politically. We were in a religious vacuum. We were in a political vacuum. We were actually alienated, cut off from all type of activity with even the world that we were fighting against.

We became a sort of a religious-political hybrid, all to ourselves. Not involved in anything but just standing on the sidelines condemning everything. But in no position to correct anything because we couldn't take action.

Yet at the same time, the nature of the movement was such that it attracted the activists. Those who wanted action. Those who wanted to do something about the evils that confronted all Black people. We weren't particularly concerned with the religion of the Black man. Because whether he was a Methodist or a Baptist or an atheist or an agnostic, he caught the same hell.

So we could see that we had to have some action, and those of us who were activists became dissatisfied, disillusioned. And finally dissension set in and eventually a split. Those who split away were the real activists of the movement who were intelligent enough to want some kind of program that would enable us to fight for the rights of all Black people here in the Western Hemisphere.

But at the same time we wanted our religion. So when we left, the first thing we did we regrouped into a new organization known as the Muslim Mosque, headquartered in New York. And in that organization we adopted

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the real, orthodox religion of Islam, which is a religion of brotherhood. So that while accepting this religion and setting up an organization which could practice that religion -- and immediately this particular Muslim Mosque was recognized and endorsed by the religious officials of the Muslim world.

We realized at the same time we had a problem in this society that went beyond religion. And it was for that reason we set up the Organization of Afro-American Unity in which anybody in the community could participate in an action program designed to bring about complete recognition and respect of Black people as human beings.

And the motto of the Organization of Afro-American Unity is By Any Means Necessary. We don't believe in fighting a battle that's going to -- in which the ground rules are to be laid down by those who suppress us. We don't believe that we can win in a battle where the ground rules are laid down by those who exploit us. We don't believe that we can carry on a struggle trying to win the affection of those who for so long have oppressed and exploited us.

We believe that our fight is just. We believe that our grievances are just. We believe that the evil practices against Black people in this society are criminal and that those who engage in such criminal practices are to be looked upon themselves as nothing but criminals. And we believe that we are within our rights to fight those criminals by any means necessary.

This doesn't mean that we're for violence. But we do -- we have seen that the federal government has shown its inability, its absolute unwillingness, to protect the lives and the property of Black people. We have seen where organized white racists, Klansmen, Citizens' Councilmen, and others can come into the Black community and take a Black man and make him disappear and nothing be done about it. We have seen that they can

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come in -- [Applause]

We reanalyzed our condition. When we go back to 1939, Black people in America were shining shoes. Some of the most educated were shining in Michigan, where I came from, in Lansing, the capital. The best jobs you could get in the city were carrying trays out at the country club to feed white people. And usually the waiter at the country club was looked upon as the town big shot 'cause he had a good job around "good" white folks, you know. [Laughter]

He had the best education, but he'd be shining shoes right at the State House, the capitol. Shining the governor's shoes, and the attorney general's shoes, and this made him in the know, you know, 'cause he could shine white folks' shoes who were in big places. Whenever the people downtown wanted to know what was going on in the Black community, he was their boy. He was what's known as the "town Negro," the Negro leader. And those who weren't shining shoes, the preachers, also had a big voice in the community. That's all they'd let us do is shine shoes, wait on tables, and preach. [Laughter]

In 1939, before Hitler went on the rampage, or rather at the time -- yeah, before Hitler went on the rampage, a Black man couldn't even work in the factory. We were digging ditches on WPA. Some of you all have forgotten too quick. We were ditchdigging on the WPA. Our food came from the welfare, they were stamped "not to be sold." I got so many things from the store called "not to be sold," I thought that was a store some place. [Laughter]

This is the condition the Black man was in, and that's till 1939. . . . Until the war started, we were confined to these menial tasks. When the war started, they wouldn't even take us in the army. A Black man wasn't drafted. Was he or was he not? No! You couldn't join the navy. Remember that? Wouldn't draft one. This was as late as 1939 in the United States of America!

They taught you to sing "sweet land of liberty" and the

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rest of that stuff. No! You couldn't join the army. You couldn't join the navy. They wouldn't even draft you. They only took white folks. They didn't start drafting us until the Negro leader opened up his big mouth, [Laughter] talking about, "If white folks must die, we must die too." [Laughter and applause]

The Negro leader got a whole lot of Negroes killed in World War II who never had to die. So when America got into the war, immediately she was faced with a manpower shortage. Up until the time of the war, you couldn't get inside of a plant. I lived in Lansing, where Oldsmobile's factory was and Reo's. There was about three in the whole plant and each one of them had a broom. They had education. They had gone to school. I think one had gone to college. But he was a "broomologist." [Laughter]

When times got tough and there was a manpower shortage, then they let us in the factory. Not through any effort of our own. Not through any sudden moral awakening on their part. They needed us. They needed manpower. Any kind of manpower. And when they got desperate and in need, they opened up the factory door and let us in.

So we began to learn to run machines. Then we began to learn how to run machines, when they needed us. Put our women in as well as our men. As we learned to operate the machines, we began to make more money. As we began to make more money, we were able to live in a little better neighborhood. When we moved to a little better neighborhood, we went to a little better school. And when we went to that better school, we got a little better education and got in a little better position to get a little better job.

It was no change of heart on their part. It was no sudden awakening of their moral consciousness. It was Hitler. It was Tojo. It was Stalin. Yes, it was pressure from the outside, at the world level, that enabled you and me to make a few steps forward.

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Why wouldn't they draft us and put us in the army in the first place? They had treated us so bad, they were afraid that if they put us in the army and give us a gun and showed us how to shoot it -- [Laughter] they feared that they wouldn't have to tell us what to shoot at. [Laughter and applause]

And probably they wouldn't have had. It was their conscience. So I point this out to show that it was not change of heart on Uncle Sam's part that permitted some of us to go a few steps forward. It was world pressure. It was threat from outside. Danger from outside that made it -- that occupied his mind and forced him to permit you and me to stand up a little taller. Not because he wanted us to stand up. Not because he wanted us to go forward. He was forced to.

And once you properly analyze the ingredients that opened the doors even to the degree that they were forced open, when you see what it was, you'll better understand your position today. And you'll better understand the strategy that you need today. Any kind of movement for freedom of Black people based solely within the confines of America is absolutely doomed to fail. [Applause]

As long as your problem is fought within the American context, all you can get as allies is fellow Americans. As long as you call it civil rights, it's a domestic problem within the jurisdiction of the United States government. And the United States government consists of segregationists, racists. Why the most powerful men in the government are racists. This government is controlled by thirty-six committees. Twenty congressional committees and sixteen senatorial committees. Thirteen of the twenty congressmen that make up the congressional committees are from the South. Ten of the sixteen senators that control the senatorial committees are from the South. Which means, that of the thirty-six committees that govern the foreign and domestic directions and temperament of the country in which we live, of the thirty-six,

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twenty-three of them are in the hands of racists. Outright, stone-cold, dead segregationists. This is what you and I are up against. We are in a society where the power is in the hands of those who are the worst breed of humanity.

Now how are we going to get around them? How are we going to get justice in a Congress that they control? Or a Senate that they control? Or a White House that they control? Or from a Supreme Court that they control?

Look at the pitiful decision that the Supreme Court handed down. Brother, look at it! Don't you know these men on the Supreme Court are masters of legal -- not only of law, but legal phraseology. They are such masters of the legal language that they could very easily have handed down a desegregation decision on education so worded that no one could have gotten around. But they come up with that thing worded in such a way that here ten years have passed, and there's all kind of loopholes in it. They knew what they were doing. They pretend to give you something while knowing all the time you can't utilize it.

They come up last year with a civil rights bill that they publicized all around the world as if it would lead us into the promised land of integration. Oh yeah! Just last week, the Right Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King come out of the jail house and went to Washington, D.C., saying he's going to ask every day for new legislation to protect voting rights for Black people in Alabama. Why? You just had legislation. You just had a civil rights bill. You mean to tell me that that highly publicized civil rights bill doesn't even give the federal government enough power to protect Black people in Alabama who don't want to do anything but register? Why it's another foul trick, 'cause they . . . tricked us year in and year out. Another foul trick. [Applause]

So, since we see -- I don't want you to think I'm teaching hate. I love everybody who loves me. [Laughter] But I sure don't love those who don't love me. [Laughter]

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Since we see all of this subterfuge, this trickery, this maneuvering -- it's not only at the federal level, the national level, the local level, all levels. The young generation of Blacks that's coming up now can see that as long as we wait for the Congress and the Senate and the Supreme Court and the president to solve our problems, you'll have us waiting on tables for another thousand years. And there aren't no days like those.

Since the civil rights bill -- I used to see African diplomats at the UN crying out against the injustice that was being done to Black people in Mozambique, in Angola, the Congo, in South Africa, and I wondered why and how they could go back to their hotels and turn on the TV and see dogs biting Black people right down the block and policemen wrecking the stores of Black people with their clubs right down the block, and putting water hoses on Black people with pressure so high it tear our clothes off, right down the block. And I wondered how they could talk all that talk about what was happening in Angola and Mozambique and all the rest of it and see it happen right down the block and get up on the podium in the UN and not say anything about it.

But I went and discussed it with some of them. And they said that as long as the Black man in America calls his struggle a struggle of civil rights -- that in the civil rights context, it's domestic and it remains within the jurisdiction of the United States. And if any of them open up their mouths to say anything about it, it's considered a violation of the laws and rules of protocol. And the difference with the other people was that they didn't call their grievances "civil rights" grievances, they called them "human rights" grievances. "Civil rights" are within the jurisdiction of the government where they are involved. But "human rights" is part of the charter of the United Nations.

All the nations that signed the charter of the UN came up with the Declaration of Human Rights and anyone

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who classifies his grievances under the label of "human rights" violations, those grievances can then be brought into the United Nations and be discussed by people all over the world. For as long as you call it "civil rights" your only allies can be the people in the next community, many of whom are responsible for your grievance. But when you call it "human rights" it becomes international. And then you can take your troubles to the World Court. You can take them before the world. And anybody anywhere on this earth can become your ally.

So one of the first steps that we became involved in, those of us who got into the Organization of Afro-American Unity, was to come up with a program that would make our grievances international and make the world see that our problem was no longer a Negro problem or an American problem but a human problem. A problem for humanity. And a problem which should be attacked by all elements of humanity. A problem that was so complex that it was impossible for Uncle Sam to solve it himself and therefore we want to get into a body or conference with people who are in such positions that they can help us get some kind of adjustment for this situation before it gets so explosive that no one can handle it.

Thank you. [Applause]

Notes

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1 The one partial exception is the important new information presented [return] by Malcolm X in a February 15, 1965, speech about the secret negotiations he entered into at the initiative of Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad with leaders of the racist and ultrarightist Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens' Councils. While these matters had been noted in passing in press coverage at the time, and are referred to in Peter Goldman's *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), what Malcolm X himself -- from the standpoint of a direct participant in these talks -- actually said about them on the only occasion that he publicly discussed this matter has never before been in print.

2 Shabazz's speech was printed in the March 15, 1965, issue of the *Militant* [return] newsweekly published in New York. Excerpts from a speech by Jack Barnes given at the same meeting are available in the Pathfinder pamphlet, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*.

3 In September 1957, a court-ordered plan to begin desegregation of [return] the schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, was stymied by Gov. Orval Faubus, who was seeking a third term of office. The governor posted members of the Arkansas National Guard outside Central High School, ostensibly to prevent violence and preserve order. A federal court ordered the guardsmen to quit the school, and nine Black students entered the all-white school. When a crowd of angry whites threatened to lynch the students, city officials ordered the Blacks out. Reluctantly, President Eisenhower dispatched troops to the site and placed the national guardsmen under federal command. The Black students re-entered the school, protected by soldiers, some of whom remained at Central High until the end of the school year.

Faubus was re-elected. In September 1958 he closed all four of Little Rock's public high schools. Not until the fall of 1959 did the desegregation process begin to revive.

James Meredith, a Black resident of Mississippi, had been refused admittance into that state's all-white university in February 1961. Despite a federal court of appeals ruling and an order by a U.S. Supreme Court justice that Meredith be allowed to enroll, Gov. Ross Barnett and state officials blocked his admission. On September 30, 1962, President Kennedy was forced to mobilize more than three hundred federal marshalls to get Meredith into the university. Thousands of troops had to be sent in over the next two days to maintain order when white vigilantes attacked the marshalls. Some three hundred troops were stationed at the university for nearly a year to prevent further incidents.

4 The Bandung Conference, held in April 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia, [return] was an ideological forerunner of the Movement of Nonaligned Countries. Sponsored by Burma, Indonesia,

India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and Pakistan, the conference was attended by representatives of twenty-nine countries. Part of its announced goal was "to consider problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples, for example, problems affecting national sovereignty and of racialism and colonialism."

5 The 1963 civil rights march drew more than 250,000 people for an [\[return\]](#) August 28 rally at the Lincoln Memorial. The dominant theme of the march was the call for passage of civil rights legislation then pending in Congress.

6 In mid-1964, a revolt broke out in the Congo (today Zaire) led by [\[return\]](#) followers of murdered Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. They opposed Moïse Tshombe becoming prime minister. The U.S.-backed Tshombe had been instrumental in the overthrow of Lumumba's government in 1960. During November 1964, U.S. planes ferried Belgian troops and mercenaries to rebel-held territory in an effort to crush the uprising. These forces carried out a massacre of thousands of Congolese.

7 The "Big Six" were the chief leaders of the civil rights movement. [\[return\]](#)

8 See note on page 51. [\[return\]](#)

9 The "Basic Unity Program" of the Organization of Afro-American [\[return\]](#) Unity can be found in George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X. The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (New York: Pathfinder, 1967) pp. 113-24.

10 Malcolm's letter to the *Times* said, in part, "I shall never rest until I [\[return\]](#) have undone the harm I did to so many well-meaning, innocent Negroes who through my own evangelistic zeal now believe in him even more fanatically and more blindly than I did. . . . I totally reject Elijah Muhammad's racist philosophy, which he has labeled 'Islam' only to fool and misuse gullible people. . . ."

11 George Lincoln Rockwell headed the American Nazi Party, which [\[return\]](#) later became the National Socialist White People's Party.

12 J.B. Stoner was chairman of the National States Rights Party. [\[return\]](#)

13 Gracie Mansion is the official residence of the mayor of New York [\[return\]](#) City.

14 Muslim Ronald X Stokes was shot by police during an April 1962 [\[return\]](#) melee outside the Los Angeles temple.

15 Despite civil rights legislation, in early 1965 most Blacks in Selma, [\[return\]](#) Alabama, were still denied the right to vote. Massive demonstrations there, beginning in January, received wide national attention as Sheriff Jim Clark led a campaign of violent attacks on demonstrators. Selma became synonymous with violent racist reaction to the civil rights movement.

16 See footnote on page 92. [\[return\]](#)

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The essence of neoliberalism

What is neoliberalism? A programme for destroying collective structures which may impede the pure market logic.

by Pierre Bourdieu

As the dominant discourse would have it, the economic world is a pure and perfect order, implacably unrolling the logic of its predictable consequences, and prompt to repress all violations by the sanctions that it inflicts, either automatically or —more unusually — through the intermediary of its armed extensions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the policies they impose: reducing labour costs, reducing public expenditures and making work more flexible. Is the dominant discourse right? What if, in reality, this economic order were no more than the implementation of a utopia - the utopia of neoliberalism - thus converted into a *political problem*? One that, with the aid of the economic theory that it proclaims, succeeds in conceiving of itself as the scientific description of reality?

This tutelary theory is a pure mathematical fiction. From the start it has been founded on a formidable abstraction. For, in the name of a narrow and strict conception of rationality as individual rationality, it brackets the economic and social conditions of rational orientations and the economic and social structures that are the condition of their application.

To give the measure of this omission, it is enough to think just of the educational system. Education is never taken account of *as such* at a time when it plays a determining role in the production of goods and services as in the production of the producers themselves. From this sort of original sin, inscribed in the Walrasian myth (1) of "pure theory", flow all of the deficiencies and faults of the discipline of economics and the fatal obstinacy with which it attaches itself to the arbitrary opposition which it induces, through its mere existence, between a properly economic logic, based on competition and efficiency, and social logic, which is subject to the rule of fairness.

That said, this "theory" that is desocialised and dehistoricised at its roots has, today more than ever, the means of *making itself true* and empirically verifiable. In effect, neoliberal discourse is not just one discourse among many. Rather, it is a "strong discourse" - the way psychiatric discourse is in an asylum, in Erving Goffman's analysis (2). It is so strong and so hard to combat only because it has on its side all of the forces of a world of relations of forces, a world that it

contributes to making what it is. It does this most notably by orienting the economic choices of those who dominate economic relationships. It thus adds its own symbolic force to these relations of forces. In the name of this scientific programme, converted into a plan of political action, an immense *political project* is underway, although its status as such is denied because it appears to be purely negative. This project aims to create the conditions under which the "theory" can be realised and can function: *a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives*.

The movement toward the neoliberal utopia of a pure and perfect market is made possible by the politics of financial deregulation. And it is achieved through the transformative and, it must be said, *destructive* action of all of the political measures (of which the most recent is the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), designed to protect foreign corporations and their investments from national states) that aim to *call into question any and all collective structures* that could serve as an obstacle to the logic of the pure market: the nation, whose space to manoeuvre continually decreases; work groups, for example through the individualisation of salaries and of careers as a function of individual competences, with the consequent atomisation of workers; collectives for the defence of the rights of workers, unions, associations, cooperatives; even the family, which loses part of its control over consumption through the constitution of markets by age groups.

The neoliberal programme draws its social power from the political and economic power of those whose interests it expresses: stockholders, financial operators, industrialists, conservative or social-democratic politicians who have been converted to the reassuring layoffs of *laissez-faire*, high-level financial officials eager to impose policies advocating their own extinction because, unlike the managers of firms, they run no risk of having eventually to pay the consequences. Neoliberalism tends on the whole to favour severing the economy from social realities and thereby constructing, in reality, an economic system conforming to its description in pure theory, that is a sort of logical machine that presents itself as a chain of constraints regulating economic agents.

The globalisation of financial markets, when joined with the progress of information technology, ensures an unprecedented mobility of capital. It gives investors concerned with the short-term profitability of their investments the possibility of permanently comparing the profitability of the largest corporations and, in consequence, penalising these firms' relative setbacks. Subjected to this permanent threat, the corporations themselves have to adjust more and more rapidly to the exigencies of the markets, under penalty of "losing the market's confidence", as they say, as well as the support of their stockholders. The latter, anxious to obtain short-term profits, are more and more able to impose their

will on managers, using financial directorates to establish the rules under which managers operate and to shape their policies regarding hiring, employment, and wages.

Thus the absolute reign of flexibility is established, with employees being hiring on fixed-term contracts or on a temporary basis and repeated corporate restructurings and, within the firm itself, competition among autonomous divisions as well as among teams forced to perform multiple functions. Finally, this competition is extended to individuals themselves, through the individualisation of the wage relationship: establishment of individual performance objectives, individual performance evaluations, permanent evaluation, individual salary increases or granting of bonuses as a function of competence and of individual merit; individualised career paths; strategies of "delegating responsibility" tending to ensure the self-exploitation of staff who, simple wage labourers in relations of strong hierarchical dependence, are at the same time held responsible for their sales, their products, their branch, their store, etc. as though they were independent contractors. This pressure toward "self-control" extends workers' "involvement" according to the techniques of "participative management" considerably beyond management level. All of these are techniques of rational domination that impose over-involvement in work (and not only among management) and work under emergency or high-stress conditions. And they converge to weaken or abolish collective standards or solidarities (3).

In this way, a Darwinian world emerges - it is the struggle of all against all at all levels of the hierarchy, which finds support through everyone clinging to their job and organisation under conditions of insecurity, suffering, and stress. Without a doubt, the practical establishment of this world of struggle would not succeed so completely without the complicity of all of the *precarious arrangements* that produce insecurity and of the existence of a *reserve army of employees rendered docile by these social processes that make their situations precarious*, as well as by the permanent threat of unemployment. This reserve army exists at all levels of the hierarchy, even at the higher levels, especially among managers. The ultimate foundation of this entire economic order placed under the sign of freedom is in effect the *structural violence* of unemployment, of the insecurity of job tenure and the menace of layoff that it implies. The condition of the "harmonious" functioning of the individualist micro-economic model is a mass phenomenon, the existence of a reserve army of the unemployed.

This structural violence also weighs on what is called the labour contract (wisely rationalised and rendered unreal by the "theory of contracts"). Organisational discourse has never talked as much of trust, co-operation, loyalty, and

organisational culture as in an era when adherence to the organisation is obtained at each moment by eliminating all temporal guarantees of employment (three-quarters of hires are for fixed duration, the proportion of temporary employees keeps rising, employment "at will" and the right to fire an individual tend to be freed from any restriction).

Thus we see how the neoliberal utopia tends to embody itself in the reality of a kind of infernal machine, whose necessity imposes itself even upon the rulers. Like the Marxism of an earlier time, with which, in this regard, it has much in common, this utopia evokes powerful belief - the *free trade faith* - not only among those who live off it, such as financiers, the owners and managers of large corporations, etc., but also among those, such as high-level government officials and politicians, who derive their justification for existing from it. For they sanctify the power of markets in the name of economic efficiency, which requires the elimination of administrative or political barriers capable of inconveniencing the owners of capital in their individual quest for the maximisation of individual profit, which has been turned into a model of rationality. They want independent central banks. And they preach the subordination of nation-states to the requirements of economic freedom for the masters of the economy, with the suppression of any regulation of any market, beginning with the labour market, the prohibition of deficits and inflation, the general privatisation of public services, and the reduction of public and social expenses.

Economists may not necessarily share the economic and social interests of the true believers and may have a variety of individual psychic states regarding the economic and social effects of the utopia which they cloak with mathematical reason. Nevertheless, they have enough specific interests in the field of economic science to contribute decisively to the production and reproduction of belief in the neoliberal utopia. Separated from the realities of the economic and social world by their existence and above all by their intellectual formation, which is most frequently purely abstract, bookish, and theoretical, they are particularly inclined to confuse the things of logic with the logic of things.

These economists trust models that they almost never have occasion to submit to the test of experimental verification and are led to look down upon the results of the other historical sciences, in which they do not recognise the purity and crystalline transparency of their mathematical games, whose true necessity and profound complexity they are often incapable of understanding. They participate and collaborate in a formidable economic and social change. Even if some of its consequences horrify them (they can join the socialist party and give learned counsel to its representatives in the power structure), it cannot displease them because, at the risk of a few failures, imputable to what they sometimes

call "speculative bubbles", it tends to give reality to the ultra-logical utopia (ultra-logical like certain forms of insanity) to which they consecrate their lives.

And yet the world is there, with the immediately visible effects of the implementation of the great neoliberal utopia: not only the poverty of an increasingly large segment of the most economically advanced societies, the extraordinary growth in income differences, the progressive disappearance of autonomous universes of cultural production, such as film, publishing, etc. through the intrusive imposition of commercial values, but also and above all two major trends. First is the destruction of all the collective institutions capable of counteracting the effects of the infernal machine, primarily those of the state, repository of all of the universal values associated with the idea of the *public realm*. Second is the imposition everywhere, in the upper spheres of the economy and the state as at the heart of corporations, of that sort of moral Darwinism that, with the cult of the winner, schooled in higher mathematics and bungee jumping, institutes the struggle of all against all and *cynicism* as the norm of all action and behaviour.

Can it be expected that the extraordinary mass of suffering produced by this sort of political-economic regime will one day serve as the starting point of a movement capable of stopping the race to the abyss? Indeed, we are faced here with an extraordinary paradox. The obstacles encountered on the way to realising the new order of the lone, but free individual are held today to be imputable to rigidities and vestiges. All direct and conscious intervention of whatever kind, at least when it comes from the state, is discredited in advance and thus condemned to efface itself for the benefit of a pure and anonymous mechanism, the market, whose nature as a site where interests are exercised is forgotten. But in reality, what keeps the social order from dissolving into chaos, despite the growing volume of the endangered population, is the continuity or survival of those very institutions and representatives of the old order that is in the process of being dismantled, and all the work of all of the categories of social workers, as well as all the forms of social solidarity, familial or otherwise.

The transition to "liberalism" takes place in an imperceptible manner, like continental drift, thus hiding its effects from view. Its most terrible consequences are those of the long term. These effects themselves are concealed, paradoxically, by the resistance to which this transition is currently giving rise among those who defend the old order by drawing on the resources it contained, on old solidarities, on reserves of social capital that protect an entire portion of the present social order from falling into anomie. This social capital is fated to wither away - although not in the short run - if it is not renewed and reproduced.

But these same forces of "conservation", which it is too easy to treat as

conservative, are also, from another point of view, forces of *resistance* to the establishment of the new order and can become subversive forces. If there is still cause for some hope, it is that forces still exist, both in state institutions and in the orientations of social actors (notably individuals and groups most attached to these institutions, those with a tradition of civil and public service) that, under the appearance of simply defending an order that has disappeared and its corresponding "privileges" (which is what they will immediately be accused of), will be able to resist the challenge only by working to invent and construct a new social order. One that will not have as its only law the pursuit of egoistic interests and the individual passion for profit and that will make room for collectives oriented toward the *rational pursuit of ends collectively arrived at and collectively ratified*.

How could we not make a special place among these collectives, associations, unions, and parties for the state: the nation-state, or better yet the supranational state - a European state on the way toward a world state - capable of effectively controlling and taxing the profits earned in the financial markets and, above of all, of counteracting the destructive impact that the latter have on the labour market. This could be done with the aid of labour unions by organising the elaboration and defence of the *public interest*. Like it or not, the public interest will never emerge, even at the cost of a few mathematical errors, from the vision of accountants (in an earlier period one would have said of "shopkeepers") that the new belief system presents as the supreme form of human accomplishment.

MYSTERIES OF THE CREATIVE CLASS

or, I Have Seen The Enemy and They Is Us

GREGORY SHOLETTE

Artists and other ‘creative’ professionals are increasingly willing pawns in the State-backed gentrification games of developers and corporations. But can those that wish to challenge the underlying brutalities of ‘culture-led regeneration’ turn their creative powers against it? Gregory Sholette on New York artists’ collective REPOhistory and their fight to re-write the story of urban renewal in Manhattan

A painting of a smartly clad, long necked and sophisticated trio of young white people conversing over a glass of wine fills a full page of the Sunday New York Times. Done in a 1930s Art Deco style, the advertisement is captioned ‘An Oasis In Times Square.’ This, the copy explains, is a place where the traveller, weary from business, can discover tranquility amidst energy and ‘A new level of self-indulgence.’ It was the year 1999 when, with retrograde panache, the Hong Leong Group launched its flagship hotel in New York, the Millennium Premier. Even then I sensed the arrival of something new, a shift in tactics in the decade-old ‘upclassing’ of the city. I also knew something troubling about the hotel’s recent past that made my hunch even more compelling.

A veteran of anti-gentrification activism on the city’s Lower East Side some 20 years earlier, I still recall the clumsy call for ‘pioneers’ to brave the city’s harsh urban frontiers. But by the late 1990s this type of gambit had largely played itself out, at least in Manhattan. Already most of the island was well on its way to full blown gentrification and what was left of the poor and working class largely scattered by force or rising rents in the wake of reverse white flight that began in the 1980s. However, this late ‘90s wave of gentry wanted nothing to do with leaking pipes or chasing away crack-heads from street corners, and under no circumstances would they wear overalls. Yet the hotel’s curiously retro illustration also avoided references to the fevered,



New York Times advertisement for the Millennium Premier Hotel, circa 1999 (artist unknown)



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DEMOLITION IN HELL'S KITCHEN
by William Menking for REPOhistory
circa 1999

technogiddiness of those blissful, pre-crash '90s. Instead, the unknown artist lovingly invoked the modernist conceit of the machine age some 60 years prior. Nor was it camp, for the irony was too far adrift from any rhetorical moorings to signal 'spoof'. Instead, like an arcane plot out of a Philip K Dick novel, the very visage of the city I knew was being transmuted from lead to gold. The more I looked, the more I saw. Quaint Cafés replaced actual coffee shops. Futuristic bars and art galleries took over food processing and light industrial shops. An ersatz cosmopolitanism was everywhere and the Millennium was a part of this larger whole that involved wiping clean not merely the physical traces of the past, but its memories. What filled up the ensuing breach were artful surrogates and clever replicas of a city that no one had ever lived in but that nevertheless looked strangely familiar. Certainly it is easier to see this in retrospect, but the Millennium campaign signaled the start of an entirely new era in the administration of free market urban renewal. More abstract, more inspired, more creative. The question I wanted to answer most, then and now, is whose minds the hotel chain's marketers hoped to, well, gentrify, and what ghosts they sought to keep at bay?

It was the artists' collective known as REPOhistory that provided the key to unlocking this mystery, but its startling solution, like Poe's purloined letter, turns out to have been right in front of me all along.

Located on West 44th Street, the Millennium Premier Hotel stands in a once largely Irish and working class neighborhood formerly known as Hell's Kitchen but re-christened with the sanitariesounding moniker 'Clinton' by real estate speculators in the 1980s. The Times Square from whose implied stresses it claims to offer an 'oasis' is no longer the porn playground of the fiscal crisis '70s. It has been rehabilitated: safe for families, safe for business, efficiently emptied of homeless people and sundry other uninvited. In May of 1998, however, a metal street sign appears outside the Millennium. The sign is flagged off of a lamppost, meters away from the hotel's tastefully subdued, black marble façade. Mounted low enough for passersby to read, its text begins portentously:

What is now the Millennium Broadway Hotel used to be the site of 4 buildings including an SRO hotel that provided badly needed housing for poor New Yorkers...

Artist and architect William Menking designed the plaque to look like a busy montage of newspaper clippings. The story of the Hotel's less than tranquil past continues in bold type:

In 1984, New York City passed a moratorium on the alteration of hotels for the poor. Hours before the moratorium was to go into effect, developer Harry Macklowe had the 4 buildings demolished without obtaining demolition permits, and without turning off water and gas lines into the buildings. NYC officials declared, ‘It is only a matter of sheer luck that there was no gas explosion.’ Attempts to bring criminal charges against Macklowe for these actions were not successful.

Macklowe built a luxury hotel on the site, then lost it to the current owners. The demolition of hotels for the poor during the 1970's and 1980's added to the city's growing homeless population. While streets of the 'new' Times Square seem paved with gold - for many they have literally become a home.

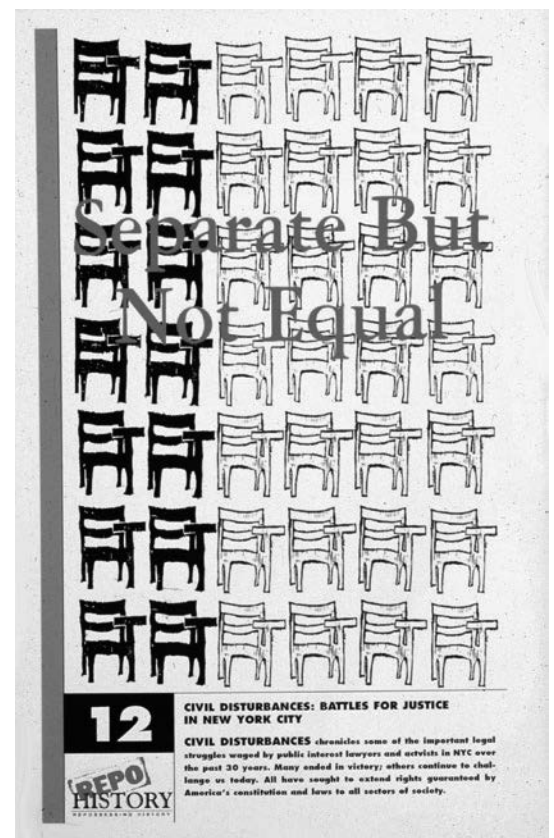
Like the materialisation of an army of Dickensian apparitions, the Millennium/Macklowe sign was one of 20 temporary historical markers specifically sited around New York that made up the public art project 'Civil Disturbances: Battles for Justice in New York City'. Sponsored by New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) and produced by the art and activist group REPOhistory, its aim was to publicly landmark legal cases in which civil rights were extended to disenfranchised peoples. The content of the signs ranged from the famous Brown Vs the Board of Education desegregation case to the first woman firefighter sworn into service in NYC. Others however, pointed to occasions when the law had failed to protect as promised and Menking's sign was in this category. Initially, for a time the city tried to stop REPOhistory from installing 'Civil Disturbances'. After weeks of legal manoeuvres however, the signs went up from spring of 1998 to late winter of 1999. Nevertheless, right from the start several signs vanished after installation. Menking's was among them.

Responding to an inquiry the Millennium freely admitted having its staff confiscate the legally permitted artwork. They even returned it to the group. However, along with the returned sign came a letter threatening legal action if any attempt was made to reinstall it. The grounds? REPOhistory was amassing hotel business. It seems the return of an inopportune past can prove a powerful trigger revealing hidden ideological tendencies in what appears otherwise to be a purely market driven process of privatisation and gentrification. After considerable debate that internally split REPOhistory roughly along lines of activists versus artists, Menking's sign was reinstalled, but now at a greater distance from the hotel. And despite further threats the sign stayed in place, the project's permit ran its course, and neither side took legal action. It is five years on. Aside from this text and other scattered citations, Macklow's 'midnight demolition' is forgotten along with those he cruelly displaced. At the tranquil oasis in old Hell's Kitchen stylish guests still sip wine, discuss art, and continue to manufacture content for the information economy.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

All of this is familiar now. The 1990s affection for the 1920s and pre-crash 1930s, its weird merger of avant-garde aesthetics, high fashion, and post-Fordist management theory all dolled-up in a neo-modernist longing for limitless progress. So what if the occasional act of terror was, and remains indispensable

REPOhistory, 'Civil Disturbances', Laurie Ourlicht's street sign detailing the historic Brown Vs the Board of Education desegregation law suit brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People



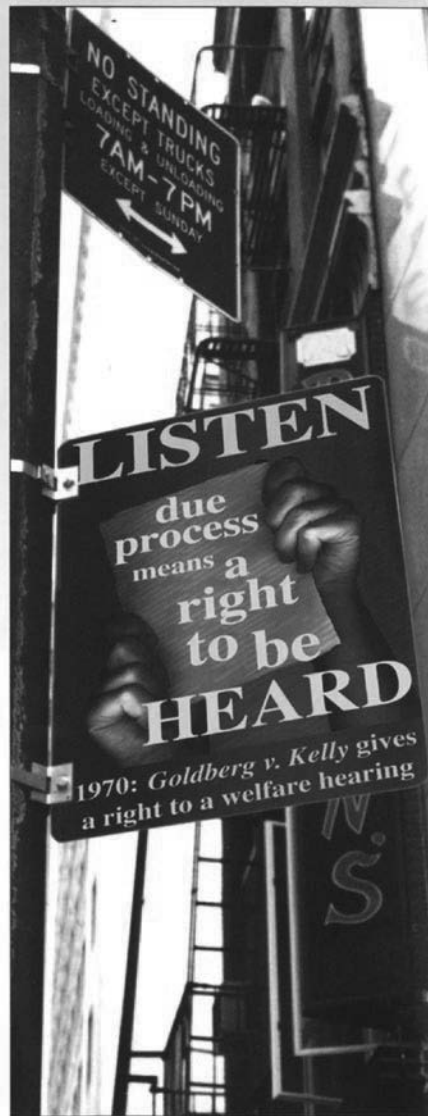
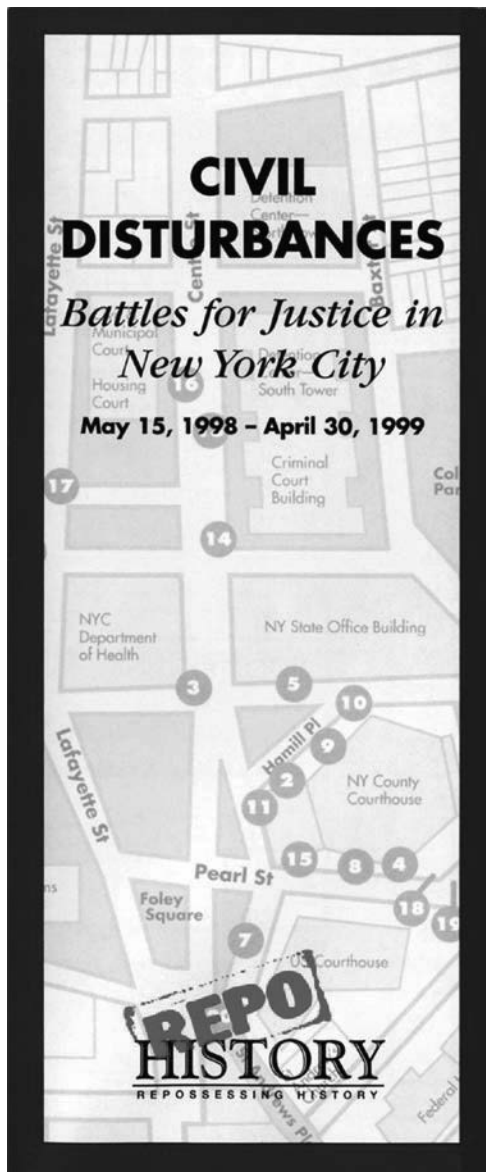
to make it all seem real? Why dwell on conflict? If the creative class has supplanted the traditional labouring class in many places it has done so by greeting capital as potential equal, not as adversary. Winners are admired. Losers on the other hand are truly abject, lacking the aptitude to become exploiters themselves. Asserting a collective disarray, an enduring a-historicity, and a belief they have transcended labour/management antagonisms, creative workers think they can even avoid being exploited in the long run because their big, table-turning breakthrough is always just around the corner, always about to make that longedfor reservation at the swanky Millennium tower a reality.

Anyway, it's 2004, and billionaires abound. According to Forbes' recent survey they number a record 587. Still, it's difficult not to notice a connection between this fact and the new economy with its deregulated markets, rampant privatisation, decaying worker protection and widening gap between rich and poor. Nor are the super-rich all petroleum refiners and armament producers. Many belong to the so-called creative class. Among those joining the ten figure income bracket include the rags to riches writer of Harry Potter stories, JK Rowling; Google creators Sergey Brin and Larry Page; and Gap clothing designer Michael Ying. So why am I still surprised when I walk down formerly forbidding streets to see such upscale consumption? Designer outlets, smart eateries, bars radiant with youthful crowds, and taxis shuttling celebrants to and fro. Block after block the scene resembles a single, unending cocktail party strung like carnival lights up and down the avenue. Between these cheerful stations other men and women, mostly in their forties and fifties, haunt the shadows gathering glass and metal recyclables from public waste bins. Certainly losers can't harm you. But what about ghosts?

I enter bar 'X'. Its ambiance probably not much different from bars in the Millennium New York, or Millennium Shanghai, or Millennium London. I shout for a dry, gin Martini over the mechanised music. (A cartoon thought-bubble appears, 'Am I the only person in here with a

Artist Olivia Beens reading map while on jury duty, 1999 (photo: author)





Artwork: Mona Jimenez

Civil Disturbances: Battles for Justice in New York City (map and brochure)

beard?’ ‘The only one over 40?’) My mind returns to REPOhistory and its altruistic necromancy some six years earlier. ‘If the enemy wins, not even the dead will be safe,’ Walter Benjamin once declared. Not safe from whom? Perhaps it was the noise and the alcohol, but a surprising correlation asserts itself. REPOhistory was part of the creative class. While its objectives were different, REPOhistory, like RTmark, the Yes Men, and similar artistic agitators made use of available technologies and rhetorical forms to reach the same erudite consumer-citizens this swanky bar hoped to attract. The Millennium had been correct all along: we were the competition. With a little toning down of its righteous antagonism REPOhistory could have even taken its place amongst the web designers, dressmakers, MTV producers and other content providers of the new, immaterial economy. And come to think of it, right before the group folded it was increasingly being asked to travel outside to this or that city or town and install public markers about the quaint olden times; the local barber shop, the saloon, the red-light district and parade grounds. I had indeed found the enemy: it

was me.

Like forgotten letters in some dimly lit archive, those not immediately part of the radical shift in the means of production remain out of sight, out of mind, fleeing from demolitions, downsizings and sometimes rummaging for cans. Not that this zone of dark matter was not always present and surrounding the upwardly mobile types such as the Millennium crowd. What is new, however, is the way this far larger realm of unrealised potential can gain access to most of the means of expression deployed by the burgeoning consciousness industry - that ubiquitous spectacle essential to the maintenance of global capitalism. By the same token, the so called 'insiders' might, if circumstances permit, decide to cast their collective lot in with the losers and the ghosts. REPOhistory et al proves it can happen. Because even the new creative class with its 80-hour work week and multiple jobs has a fantasy, one half-remembered perhaps and a bit mad, yet still evident in times of stress and economic uncertainty. It goes like this: the bar tenders and the brass polishers and cooks, the laundresses and bell hops throw down their aprons and spatulas to join in mutinous celebration with artists, web designers and musicians. Raiding the wine cellar, they open up all 33 executive style conference rooms, set up a free health clinic in the lobby, transform the hotel into an autonomous broadcasting tower and party in a universe of creative dark matter.

I finish my drink and return home to wrap-up the essay I promised the fine, creative folks at Mute. ■

Gregory Sholette is a NYC based artist, writer and a co-founder of the artist collectives REPOhistory and PAD/D. He is co-editor with Nato Thompson of *The Interventionists: A Users Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (MIT: 2004 & 2005); and *Collectivism After Modernism* co-edited with Blake Stimson (University of Minnesota Press, 2006)

For more about the controversy surrounding Civil Disturbances see:

Gonzalez, David 'Lampposts As a Forum For Opinion' York New York Times. May 20 1998, (Metro) pg B1.

Cohen, Billie. 'Guerrilla Tactics' 'Around Town, Time Out New York. July 23-30 1998, pg 65.

Kolker, Robert. 'See You in Court' Time Out New York May 28-June 4 1998, pg 45.].

Sholette, Gregory. *Authenticity2: REPOhistory: Anatomy of an Urban Art Project* (first published New Art Examiner November 1999)

Sholette, Gregory. *REPOhistory's Civil Disturbances NYC: Chronology of a Public Art Project* (First published in CHAIN #11, Sept..2004)

For an introduction to Sholette's concept of creative dark matter see:

"Heart of Darkness: a Journey into the Dark Matter of the Art World" (First published in *Visual Worlds*, John R. Hall, Blake Stimson & Lisa T. Becker editors, NY & London: Routledge, 2005), pp.116 - 138.)

Civil Disturbances: Battles for Justice in New York City (map and brochure)

Felix Gonzalez-Torres was interviewed by Tim Rollins at his New York apartment on April 16 and June 12, 1993.

Tim: How long has it been since you've been to the movies?

Felix: Two and a half years. I used to go to movies with Ross mostly. Nowadays it's so much easier to rent a video; I got used to being able to replay the important parts. At the movie-houses you can't say "Hey Joe," to the projectionist, "can you replay that part?"



Tim: So much of your work seems cinematic—drawn from films, the movies. The date-works remind me of credits, really great movie credits, and your stacks remind me of an accumulation of frames from a film. You also often integrate photography in the work. The new work with the curtains... All these ghosts of cinema and screen are living in your work.

Felix: I think a movie-house is a place of loneliness—one of the few places where I feel comfortable being alone. It's dark, you can just sit there and watch movies. When I first moved to New York I used to go to movies a lot because I had no friends. It was a nice way to spend two hours alone. Also at that time there were some great old movie-houses—art movie-houses—you could see three films one right after the other for very little money. I used to do that a lot. It really was about loneliness and empty frames, it was not about any particular movie, it was just about a place. The movie was an excuse to be somewhere in the dark. Once I met Ross the movie-house had different connotations. It was a place where the *movie*

suddenly became important: the movies became part of our dialogue, part of our exchange of ideas.

Tim: Most artists today deal with two powerful traditions inherited from the eighteenth century. There is the realist tradition where the artist simply reflects what's going on in society—the “vision thing.” Then there are other artists like Courbet who transgress that, who create social statements, project something. Which tradition are you from?

Felix: It depends on the day of the week. I choose from many different positions. I think I woke up on Monday in a political mood and on Tuesday in a very nostalgic mood and Wednesday in a realist mood. I don't think I'll limit myself to one choice. I'm shameless when it comes to that, I just take any position that will help me best express the way I think or feel about a particular issue. Formal strategies are there for your use.

When I first made the date-pieces with the empty screens I was working as



a waiter. I used to come home very late at night and watch TV to forget the daily specials before I'd work on any art. I'd scan the channels. There's really not much to see. Everything boiled down to the same low level of meaninglessness. Everything was a fragment of a total spectacle: the most horrific news next to the most glamorous gold ring next to the most glamorous celeb-

erity next to cooking oil. News, events, fiction, data, scandals, starving children, etc., are all collapsed into a level of historical inaction—a dark landscape, sterile, meaningless... I feel so anemic tonight, it must be the rain.

Tim: This is something that I've always wanted to ask you: why have you deliberately, obstinately decided for some reason not to have a studio?

Felix: Do you really want to ask me that?

Tim: Yeah, because it's very curious to me. It's almost like making art on the dining-room table as a hobby. This is an amazing limitation. You don't have the trappings of a studio: assistants, visitors, and all that. Issues of space and light are gone since your work is so sensitive to place and context.

How do you determine the pieces? You say you don't do drawings but I know you must do drawings, you must have some idea of what the piece is going to look like, so how do you begin?

Felix: I really don't plan pieces using drawings. First of all, I usually dislike drawings by sculptors, they're just so academic and expected. I don't follow that prescribed mode. I do make drawings and photographs but they have their own specific function. They are not sketches of the sculptures, these are drawings that represent a parallel set of ideas.

The reason why I don't have a studio... I think that I'm very neurotic. Actually I guess I *am* neurotic. So having a studio would paralyze me completely. Just the *idea* that I would have a place where I *had* to go to work and make "something" scares the shit out of me. The studio is a scary stage set.

Tim: Stage fright?

Felix: Maybe. The only time I had a studio I didn't make a single thing for six months. I guess that's good, I saved the world from more unnecessary artworks. I've always wanted a studio, a studio that looked like an "artist's studio" with all that stuff: all the lights and the stereo music and the assistants like in *House and Gardens*. I never had a penny so that by the time that I got around to having some money I realized I didn't really need a studio. It was a revenge, a sweet one. Now I'm very happy I made that decision because I don't produce objects all the time.



Tim: So let's get down to it, how do you determine a work? For example, Lover Boy: How did you decide how big it was going to be? The dimensions of each sheet of paper? What kind of paper to use and how tall the stack would be? How did you decide on which blue to use? How did you know it would go against the wall in that certain way?

Felix: Well, it goes against the wall because the blue reflects on the wall. The paper is a light blue and is a standard commercial brand trimmed to twenty-four by twenty-four inches.

Tim: But how did you know that that would work?

Felix: I didn't, not until I did the installation. When you don't have a studio you take risks, you change your underwear in public. I'm not afraid of making

mistakes, I'm afraid of keeping them. I have destroyed a lot of pieces—I like the excitement of fucking up royally. Some artists can “rehearse” in their studios before they go into the gallery, I find that too easy. I don't know, I never had anything to lose so I've always done it my own way.

Tim: But how do you know it will work! You must keep a notebook.

Felix: Well, no...

Tim: Don't lie to me! You have a notebook, you must know how...

Felix: I have a notebook! Sometimes.

Tim: All right! there must be some kind of—it might not be a sketch but you must have the measurements written down. You must have taken some piece of paper and cut it the right size and said, “This is the right size.” I know your work isn't completely arbitrary or intuitive.



Felix: I do like certain uncanny numbers. Things happen to me around certain numbers: five, twenty-four, twelve. Those are the numbers that sometimes determine the height of the stacks and the size of certain papers.

Tim: A mystical minimalism?

Felix: Well, yes and no. Some of the stacks are made thirty-two by twenty-nine inches because that's also the size of the paper. If the piece is about something that is very distant to me, then numbers like seventeen, thirty-five, and twenty-one sound perfect because they are numbers that I would never use for anything except for a piece that is very uncomfortable. In terms of the height, it's really determined by how it looks installed in the actual space.

Sometimes I think, well, eight or nine inches is going to work all right. But once it's in the gallery nine inches really doesn't work, it just doesn't look right. Then I have to increase or decrease the amount of paper sheets in the stack. With the new work, the light-strings, I leave those decisions for others to perform. I

don't decide how the strings of lights are installed, I only specify that the piece must have forty-two twenty-watt light bulbs.

Tim: Don't you have to give yourself a lot of installation time?

Felix: I usually do it in just one day. Some shows just take two hours to install—that's it, I'm out of there. I think about the work and the installations for a very, very long time. I lose sleep over these things. I just came back from Vienna with photographs from Peter [Pakesch]'s gallery and I've been getting up in the middle of the night to write something about how it will be installed in the show so that when I go up there...

Tim: So you do draw?

Felix: Sometimes, stuff that goes into the trash can once the show is over. These aren't saved, not signed, numbered, or dated. They're just things to help me through the final piece—which is what I want the public to really be engaged with. The voyeuristic idea that whatever the artist sketches or does is interesting is not interesting to me. That's stuff for *People* [magazine].



Tim: So you don't think these sketches might be interesting or useful to others?

Felix: No, because I don't want people to be involved with the insecurity that comes with making these things. There's a lot of fear that goes into these things. I honestly think that when I made those stack-pieces I was still trying to understand Walter Benjamin. I read Benjamin for the first time while I was in the Whitney program, and I didn't understand it then because I was so green. I had just come out of Pratt Institute where I had just wasted four years.

Pratt Institute is the kind of place where a teacher can look you straight in the eyes and easily tell you to be “honest and truthful to the space,” as if that had some kind of meaning. Pratt is a place where people preserve their jobs by fucking up and confusing young people's minds. They have wasteful courses such as “Space, Form, and Shapes”—Bauhaus theories without the social commitments or interest. From radical forms to empty styles in four easy steps.

Tim: I would like to talk about theory. I think we both come from backgrounds where books were considered with suspicion.

Felix: It's a queer thing, I mean, at least from my background.

Tim: I think it's about wanting a larger world. I think it's about wanting to be involved with the world of ideas and it takes a certain amount of courage to really go into that other land. That's the danger of being too involved in theory, you get to a certain level in your education where you equate theory with practice.

Felix: Tim, I must say that without reading Walter Benjamin, Fanon Althusser, Barthes, Foucault, Borges, Mattelart, and others, perhaps I wouldn't have been able to make certain pieces, to arrive at certain positions. Some of their writings and ideas gave me a certain freedom to see. These ideas moved me to a place of pleasure through knowledge and some understanding of the way reality is



constructed, of the way the self is formed in culture, of the way language sets traps, and of the cracks in the "master narrative"—those cracks where power can be exercised. It is also about influences and role models.

Films-as-texts, such as movies by Godard, have been very influential to me. There is also, of course, Yvonne Rainer's *Journeys from Berlin* and a movie by Sarah Gomez called *One Way or Another*, which is a feminist view of the Cuban revolution, Santeria, and other issues. This movie is very interesting because it's also about the meaning of love during a particular historical period. I saw that movie the same week that I saw *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.

Tim: That's a great movie about love.

Felix: No, it's about meaning and how meaning is dependent on the context. Last but not least, Brecht is an influence. I think if I started this list of influences again I would start with Brecht. I think this is really important because as Hispanic artists we're supposed to be very crazy, colorful—extremely colorful. We are supposed to "feel," not think. Brecht says to keep a distance to allow the viewer, the public, time to reflect and think. When you get out of the theater you should

not have had a catharsis, you should have had a thinking experience. More than anything, break the pleasure of representation, the pleasure of the flawless narrative. This is not life, this is just a theater piece. I like that a lot: *This is not life, this is just an artwork*. I want you, the viewer, to be intellectually challenged, moved, and informed.

Tim: Some people don't like that.

Felix: Of course not because they have an investment in the narrative. The artist is expected to be someone who “feels,” the idiot-savant. I admire artists that break the rules, that break with the expected functions of an artist, that push the limits of artistic practice; artists that can recite economic facts at the drop of a hat; artists that can tell you how much money has been eliminated from programs for pregnant woman and infants over the last twelve years by the Republican “pro-family” administration; artists that can tell you that even though Exxon was fined a few million dollars for the Valdez oil spill, we, the famous taxpayers, will end up paying billions on behalf of Exxon’s real crimes.

Tim: But you're definitely not Brecht and you're not Althusser and you're not Celia Cruz either. Would you have a heart attack if I asked you if Dan Flavin was a mentor?



Felix: I would not have an attack at all. It's very heroic and poetic to take a florescent light and make it into something more than a florescent light without adding paint to it! But that is as far as I can go in my admiration of Flavin...

Tim: And to personalize it. What's quite obvious is that you've taken formal strategies from Russian constructivism to minimalism and collapsed all that into artworks that are as industrial as Donald Judd while being as personal as Emily Dickinson.

Felix: That's true. They're very industrial, you can say that.

Tim: It's obvious that you aren't as interested in the battle between form and content as you are in method: how the work is made, distributed, and shared. Where did the stack-pieces come from?



Group Material
FACERE/FASCIS
 1981
 Mixed media
 Dimensions variable



Felix: It's really difficult to say. I don't really remember, seriously. The first stacks I made were some of the date-pieces. Around 1989 everyone was fighting for wall space. So the floor space was free, the floor space was marginal. I was also interested in giving back to the viewer, to the public, something that was never really mine to start with—this explosion of information, which in reality is an implosion of meaning. Secondly, when I got into making stacks—which was the show with Andrea [Rosen]—I wanted to do a show that would disappear completely. It had a lot to do with disappearance and learning. It was also about trying to be a threat to the art-marketing system, and also, to be really honest, it was about being generous to a certain extent. I wanted people to have my work. The fact that someone could just come and take my work and carry it with them was very exciting. Freud said that we rehearse our fears in order to lessen them. In a way this “letting go” of the work, this refusal to make a static form, a monolithic sculpture, in favor of a disappearing, changing, unstable, and fragile form was an attempt on my part to rehearse my fears of having Ross disappear day by day right in front of my eyes. It's really a weird thing when you see the public come into the gallery and walk away with a piece of paper that is “yours.”

It's a riot when I show these pieces in a museum because people aren't supposed to touch the art much less take it with them. At the 1991 Whitney Biennial people would ask the museum guard if it was true that they could really take a piece from the stack of paper. The guards got into it. But I had a show once here in a New York gallery and this East Village artist got upset with the work. She just couldn't take it. I saw her take twenty, twenty-five sheets from the stack and dump them in the corner trash can. That was really upsetting to me.



Tim: Because it was rude?

Felix: Very upsetting because I had never seen so much bitterness with respect to my work. It was very strange, I was really upset. I thought she was taking them because she needed paper to do work on. So at first I was very, very pleased, but then she just acted maliciously.

Tim: I think you're experiencing the underside of democracy.

Felix: I guess there's a lot of trash on the underside of democracy, unfortunately. Still, I prefer democracy, as faulty as it is.

Tim: Love and fear seem to be the two great themes of your work.

Felix: It's funny you say that because I was just thinking... Earlier I mentioned *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, it took me a long time to understand the opening sequence. The female character says, "You are good for me because you destroy me," I finally understand what that means. You can be destroyed because of love and as a result of fear. Love is very peculiar because it gives a reason to live but it's also a great reason to be afraid, to be extremely afraid, to be terrified of losing that love...

It's not as if I have different bodies of work, I think I just have many fronts. It's almost like being in drag. I'm in a different drag persona as needed.

Sometimes I make the stacks, sometimes I do the curtains, sometimes I do text-pieces, sometimes I do canvases, sometimes the light strings, sometimes billboards or photos... There are pieces that grow and change all the time. There's a piece where I mail the owner something every so often and it goes into this big box. This piece should never be shown. I don't know if you know about this piece.



Tim: Explain it some more. Who gets these things?

Felix: The person who buys this empty box gets these things in the mail.

Tim: How does this person get the box?

Felix: They buy it from Andrea. This piece is not meant to be shown. There are other pieces that are not only meant to be shown but are meant to be taken all over the place. I like working with contradictions: making completely private, almost secretive work on the one hand, and on the other, making work that is *truly* public and accessible. As we know, some so-called public art is really "outdoor art." Just because it's out on the street doesn't make it public.

Tim: Getting back to how you make decisions. I wanted to ask you how you chose the blue that you use. What's the difference between your blue, Felix Gonzalez Torres blue, and Yves Klein blue?

Felix: First of all, my blue is not an international blue, as Yves Klein's was. Mine is just a light blue that you can get anywhere, in any hardware store.

Tim: It's more specific. It's not just light blue.

Felix: Actually, I change it all the time. It's a light blue that I change all the time.

Tim: It's close to the blue [the Italian architect] Aldo Rossi uses, that's why I know.

Felix: Really? It just has to be light blue.

Tim: Okay. Why is it light blue? Is this a baby blue for boys? a robin's egg blue?

Felix: It's more like a Giotto blue in the Caribbean—saturated with bright sunlight.

Tim: It's lighter than Giotto's blue.

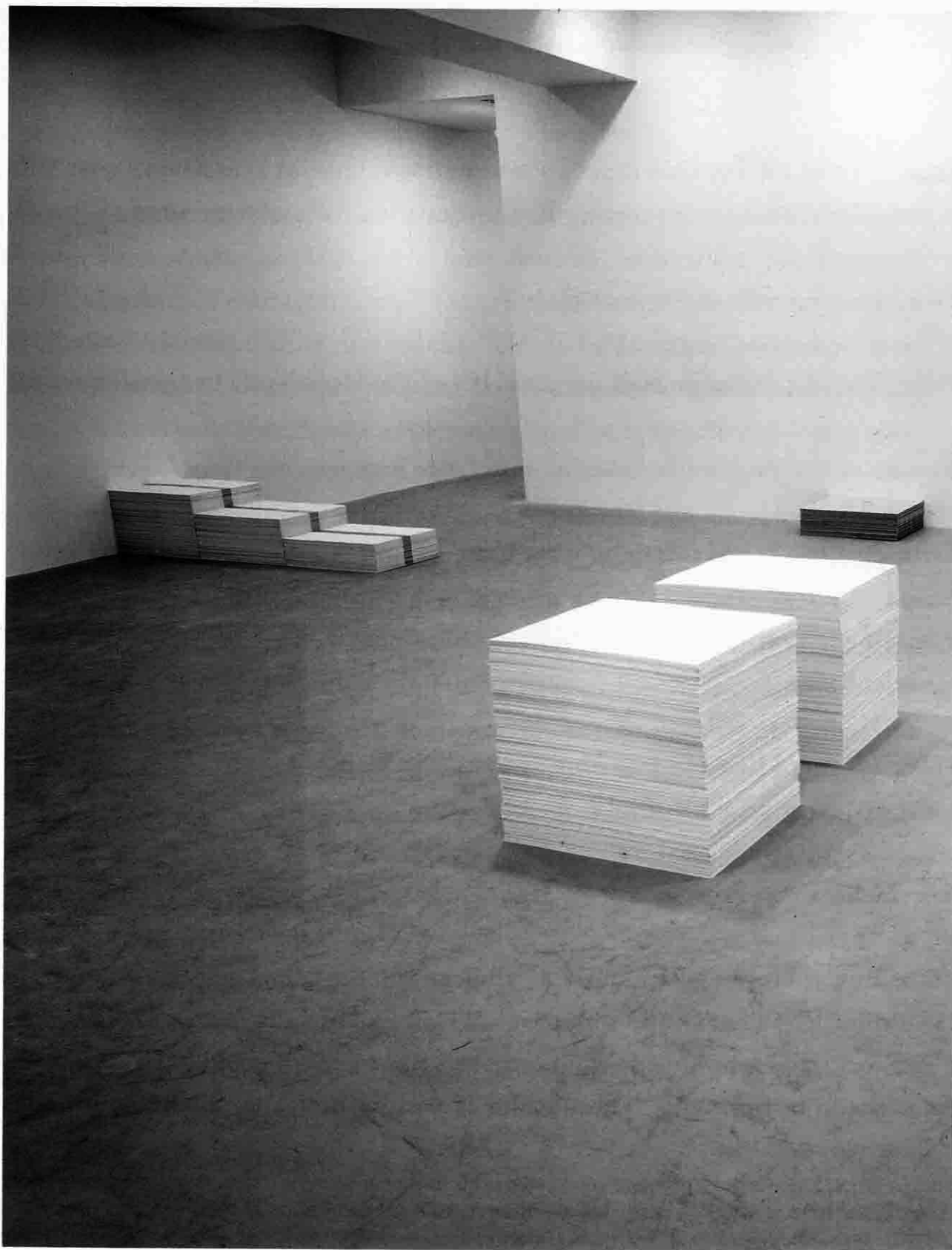


Felix: But when you go out in the Caribbean sun the colors get very washed out. It's almost like what Giotto's blue would look like in *Last Year in Marienbad*—a memory of a light blue. For me if a beautiful memory could have a color that color would be light blue. There's a lot of positive dialectic, you know, in blues.

blue (blōō) *n.* **1. a.** Any of a group of colors whose hue is that of a sky on a clear day. **b.** Anything of this color. **2. the blue.** **a.** The sky.—*adj.* **blu-er, blu-est.** **1.** Of the color blue. **2.** Having a gray or purplish color, as from cold or bruise. **3. Informal.** Gloomy; depressed. **4.** Puritanical; strict. **5.** Indecent; risqué: *a blue joke*.— **blued, bluing.** **1.** To make blue. **2.** To use bluing on. —*idioms.* **once in a blue moon.** Rarely. **out of the blue.** At a completely unexpected time.

(*The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2d college ed.)

Tim: It's very baby blue, you know, the blue of your first flannel blanket (if you're a boy). You don't use a royal, rich, velvety blue, you use this innocent blue.



Installation view, Andrea Rosen Gallery
left to right:

Untitled, 1989–90
 Offset print on paper
 26 x 56 x 29 in.
 Collection of Estelle Schwartz

Untitled (Loverboy), 1990
 Paper
 7 1/2 x 29 x 23 in.
 Collection of Andrea Rosen

Untitled (The End), 1990
 Offset print on paper
 27 x 25 x 87 in.
 Collection of Dannheiser Foundation

Felix: That's a good word for it— an innocent blue.

Tim: Is it a gay blue?

Felix: No. You know, I really didn't have much of an investment in light blue as a kid because we didn't have that kind of luxury of choice. You just got whatever you got: either blue or pink or whatever. If you got a blanket at all you were lucky—forget about what color it is.

Tim: You paint whole walls with it.

Felix: Yeah.

Tim: So it's a big deal.

Felix: I love blue skies. I love blue oceans. Ross and I would spend summers next to a blue body of water or under clear, Canadian blue skies.

Tim: I've heard a lot of grumbling, Felix, about the lack of an overt political or Latino content in your work.



Felix: (laughing) Well, I just want to start by saying that the “maracas” sculptures are next! I’m not a good token. I don’t wear the right colors. I have my own agenda. Some people want to promote multiculturalism as long as they are the promoters, the circus directors. We have an assigned role that’s very specific, very limited. As in a glass vitrine, “we”—the “other”—have to accomplish ritual, exotic performances to satisfy the needs of the majority. This parody is becoming boring very quickly. Who is going to define my culture? It is not just Borges and Garcia Marquez, but also Gertrude Stein and Freud and Guy Debord—they are all part of my formation.

The best thing for me to do with those people is to ignore them, because I question someone who tells me what I’m supposed to do or be. I always feel like asking them why don’t they do it? I think the same thing happened with you and K.O.S. It’s very elegant for some Calvinist critic to judge your project. Anyway people criticize some of the contradictions—as if there are things in life that don’t

come with contradictions. Everything is part of a contradiction, there are just different levels of contradictions. You decided to do something, something other than just teach art to young kids. You decided to push the limits. It is very exciting to take something that is there in everyday life and create from it something out of the ordinary, to give that ordinary object or situation a new meaning with a great economy of means.

I had a problem just recently in Copenhagen where I went to give a lecture. A man in the audience immediately started talking about winning the battle for multiculturalism. I said: "Look, okay, first I have trouble with that kind of language about winning battles. That's too male-oriented for me. That's too macho, that's too much about war." Then he said something about numbers—a certain amount of women, a certain amount of Hispanics, etc. No, multiculturalism is not about numbers, it's about inclusion. It's about opening up the terms of the argument, opening up the terms of the discourse so that everybody can participate

with equal footing. It's not about naming two female, three Hispanics, four whites, five blacks... It's not about quotas. Sometimes quotas are necessary when it comes to concrete things like businesses, but in culture it's more complex. It's about opening up the terms of the argument, and it's about re-addressing the issue of quality and who dictates and defines "quality."



It's funny what you said earlier about books, about trying to escape the world, that's very true. Where I come from there were no books. My father only went up through the fifth grade and my mother was a housewife—there were never books. The first book that came to my house was a Bible. That was the first book I came in contact with.

Tim: The "Text of Texts."

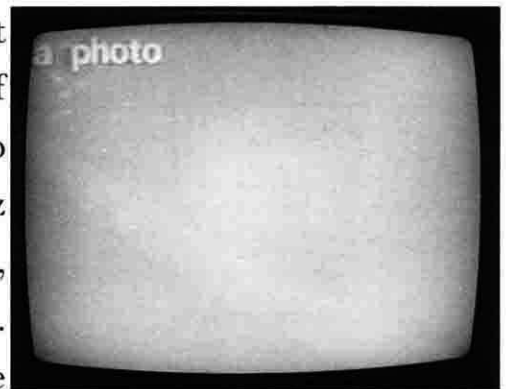
Felix: That's right, it was an illustrated Bible. And I have to say the illustrations were really beautifully perverse: images of Christians being fried in hot oil and things like that. I mean, people being fried alive in oil! Imagine what that can do to the mind of a six-year-old kid. "Pro-family" values are so perverse; their negation of sex is all about an obsession with it. In other words, it's all about sex. Raw. The sexual thing, the guilt, the fear—it's very Latino. Which then makes sexuality even more exciting by means of repression.

Tim: It's New England Baptist, too. It's universal.

Felix: It's universal. But I never really grew up surrounded by those things, as some people have assumed. So I don't know what they look like. I don't know the ghetto, I have never lived in the jungle, and I despise altars. I grew up in San Juan, which is like a small New York City without subways. So when people say, "Oh, you should be doing this, you should be looking like that," I really think that that expectation comes from guilt, it comes from expecting us to wear grass skirts. They don't really know what we're about. They don't know about our experiences, how hybrid we all are. They are stuck with images from National Geographic circa 1950. These assumptions are rooted in ignorance and in a condescending attitude.

Tim: It wasn't like you were standing in line at Roseland or Casa Galicia.

Felix: No. Once I started becoming aware of feminist issues I became very suspicious of salsa music. Some of the lyrics are too heterosexual, too pro-family, and too sexist. I never liked salsa much except for Celia Cruz and some other Cuban musicians. I like black music, deep-house music, and rock more than anything else. Salsa never really hit me in the right spot. But I do love La Lupe—my idol!



Tim: Some artists regress with success. When do you get to the point that you make what you want to make as opposed to making what you think you need to make or what society needs to have out there? This is the dialectic or contradiction that Brecht suffered as well. All artists who are interested in social change labor under the tyranny of necessity.

Felix: How do I define the need? It could be a personal need and/or a political need. I'm a person who lives in this society and I'm a product of this society and this culture. I'm not only a reflection I'm that culture itself, and therefore whatever I make... I hope that everything that I make is needed by my culture. I always think that when culture foregrounds something it is because it is needed. It could be an idea, an object, whatever. It could have been there for a long, long time but it is only when culture feels that it is *ready* that this object or idea becomes important.

I always tell my students that as cultural producers we should be very aware of what the culture is doing. We must read the newspaper, we should watch the news, we should be finding out what is new, because even if we don't take them on as issues that stuff will affect us one way or another. For example, what is happening right now in Yugoslavia with men in uniform killing innocent people, I think that should also be part of the studio. I think that should also be a part of your "inspiration" the way that the horror of being the homeless person down on the street should also be part of your life. Artists should be well informed.

Tim: Your work reminds me so much of arte povera—using industrial materials and making arrangements on the floor. On one hand, there's something free and casual about it. On the other hand, it's clean, it's printed, it was farmed out to industrial shops. The workers who made this stuff have no real connection to what you are doing. You buy, let's say, a hundred dollars worth of paper, print something simple on it, and sell it for eight thousand dollars as fine art. So you're involved in that nexus of profit yourself. And even though everyone is invited to take a sheet of

paper from the stack there will be a collector who will buy the entire stack and have it in their house where dinner guests are privileged to take sheets. The mechanisms of the market can turn works of art into novelty items. I was curious to know what you thought about that contradiction?



Felix: For me it makes a lot of sense to be part of the market. It would be very expected, very logical and normal and "natural" for me to be in alternative spaces, but it's more threatening that people like me are operating as part of the market—selling the work, especially when you consider that, yes, this is just a stack of paper that I didn't even touch. Those contradictions have a lot of meaning, as we know.

Tim: I think your knowledge of manual labor comes from something...

Felix: It comes from serving too many plates of spaghetti as a waiter, I guess! the contradictory use of hiring manual labor comes from the need to keep a healthy distance from the work. I'm for pushing the limits. I love it when people say: "But it is just paper. It is just two clocks next to each other. It is just light bulbs hanging." I love the idea of being an infiltrator. I always said that I wanted to be a spy. I want my artwork to look like something else, non-artistic yet beautifully simple. I don't want to be the opposition because the opposition always serves a purpose:

“Improve your arms against me.” But if you’re the spy—always “straight acting,” always within the system—you are the person that they fear the most because you’re one of them and you become impossible to define.

Tim: By giving an interview like this are you being a “good spy?”

Felix: I think so, I think so. I’m always shifting. There is also a lot of power and threat in that. This type of work (the stacks) has this image of authority, especially after so many years of conceptual art and minimal art. They look so powerful, they look so clean, they look so historical already. But in my case, when you get close to them you realize that they have been “contaminated” with something social.

Tim: You are a political person yet you’re very concerned with form and you’re not apologetic about it.

Felix: I love formal issues. Actually they have a very specific meaning. Forms gather meaning from their historical moment. The minimalist exercise of the object being very pure and very clean is only one way to deal with form. Carl Andre said, “My sculptures are masses and their subject is matter.” But after twenty years of feminist discourse and feminist theory we have come to realize that “just looking” is not *just* looking but that *looking* is invested with identity: gender, socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation... Looking is invested with lots of other texts.



Minimalist sculptures were never really primary structures, they were structures that were embedded with a multiplicity of meanings. Every time a viewer comes into the room these objects became something else. For me they were a coffee table, a laundry bag, a laundry box, whatever. So I think that saying that these objects are only about masses is like saying that aesthetics are not about politics. Ask a few simple questions to define *aesthetics*: whose aesthetics? at what historical time? under what circumstances? for what purposes? and who is deciding quality, etc? Then you realize suddenly and very quickly that aesthetic choices are politics. Believe it or not I am a big sucker for formal issues, and, yes, someone like me—the “other”—can indeed deal with formal issues. This is not a white-men-only terrain, sorry boys.

Tim: How do you go about making the “portraits?”

Felix: As you know, in our culture we read photographs in two ways: by what’s denoted and by what’s connoted. The denoted is pretty obvious: color or black and white, a photo of a person or of a building, a portrait or a landscape, etc. The connoted are all the other characteristics that we bring to the reading of an image according to our particular historical formation and position. So when you look at a portrait photograph of someone you don’t know you pretty much bring your own connotations to a denoted set of characteristics. In other words, from an image you switch to language, which is the only way we humans can “read” an image. In these portrait-pieces, I try to reverse the process. I start with language and then I ask the viewer to provide an image.

I start a portrait by asking the person to give me a list of important events in his or her life—intensively personal moments to which outsiders have very little knowledge of or insight into. Then I add some relevant historical events that in more ways than one have probably altered the course of and the possibility for those supposedly private or personal events. These portraits are always changing, and whoever owns them can alter, add, or take out information. They usually get painted directly on the wall, way up close to the ceiling all around the room like a frieze.



Tim: What is the function of duplication and repetition in your work? The stacks of paper or piles of candies that through accumulation comprise a work are internal forms—each individual piece of paper or piece of candy exists as a piece on its own. But they also exist as external forms when you place identical pieces in different sites and contexts.

Felix: All these pieces are indestructible because they can be endlessly duplicated. They will always exist because they don’t really exist or because they don’t have to exist all the time. They are usually fabricated for exhibition purposes and sometimes they are fabricated in different places at the same time. After all there is no original, only one original certificate of authenticity. If I am trying to alter the system of distribution of an idea through an art practice it seems imperative to me to go all the way with a piece and investigate new notions of placement, production, and originality.

In terms of different contexts, well, that's a very complex issue that needs to be nailed down to a more specific example. As we know, context gives meaning. The language of these pieces depends, to a large degree, on the fact that they get seen and read in art contexts: museums, galleries, art magazines.

Tim: Are the works a metaphor for the relation between the individual and the crowd?

Felix: Perhaps between public and private, between personal and social, between the fear of loss and the joy of loving, of growing, of changing, of always becoming more, of losing oneself slowly and then being replenished all over again from scratch. I need the viewer, I need the public interaction. Without a public these works are nothing, nothing. I need the public to complete the work. I ask the public to help me, to take responsibility, to become part of my work, to join in. I tend to think of myself as a theater director who is trying to convey some ideas by reinterpreting the notion of the division of roles: author, public, and director. Your question is more puzzling to me than I had previously thought because, yes, an individual piece of paper from one of the stacks does not constitute the "piece" itself, but in fact it is a piece. At the same time, the sum of many pieces of the identical paper is the "piece," but not really because there is no piece only an ideal height of endless copies.



As you know, these stacks are made up of endless copies or mass-produced prints. Yet each piece of paper gathers new meaning, to a certain extent, from its final destination, which depends on the person who takes it.

Tim: Do you attach sentiment to your mass-produced materials? For example, your works are often untitled, but then you go ahead and make some evocative reference that becomes part of the piece's "titlelessness."

Felix: No, I don't attach sentiment to mass-produced materials or objects, they already have it. I just make them obvious. Sometimes I feel very democratic about the stacks—things you can take—but sometimes I feel very stingy. Sometimes I want the thing to hang on the wall and I don't want anyone to touch it. I just want this pristine, beautiful object that is just there. Sometimes I do have the desire to

be democratic, of affecting people, of moving people to a different place with knowledge, pleasure, love, inspiration...

Tim: Do you think that has a lot to do with distribution?

Felix: Absolutely. For me it's very beautiful when the work changes by being placed in different contexts. A page or stack in a gallery reads differently from one you see in an artist's studio or one you see in a home or museum. I once went to the employees' toilet in a museum in Germany and found one of my pieces, *Death by Gun*, pinned to the door of the toilet stall. The employees told me that they loved reading about all those people's violent deaths while they were sitting. It helped them "go."

Tim: A laxative.



Felix: That's another function of my work that I hadn't really ever envisioned, you know!

Tim: You've had your revenge on Benjamin, in a way, because those individual works do have an aura. Benjamin claimed that a reproduction of a work of art could not have the aura of the original, one-of-a-kind piece, but you made a work of art that is an original reproduction.

Felix: I never agreed with that. The reproductions or facsimiles of the original always point toward the source of emission—the "real" thing. And as signposts to the original they become desirable.

Tim: Isn't the stack the original in a way? It's the book instead of the page?

Felix: It's always the original because in my case there is no original—the stacks are endlessly reproducible editions.

Tim: You know, celebrities deal in aura. The pop star, the person, becomes the original object. They don't call them stars for nothing. It's about this light that they generate. People rush to a concert even though they've heard the record a million times. They go not so much to hear the

music but to see the words coming out of the mouth of the human “star.” The stack is a “star” in a funny way.

Felix: I never saw it like that. That’s interesting.

Tim: Engels thought it was a law that any increase in quantity necessitates a decrease in quality. The great challenge to our generation is to find a work that’s popular and democratic but doesn’t kiss butt, doesn’t pander. It’s a supremely difficult task.

Felix: It’s a very tight rope, and I think one way of going about it is by being flexible and by saying, okay, sometimes I’m going to be democratic. Sometimes I’m going to do a billboard that is just text about health care, and the next time I just want to do a billboard that is about something perhaps more obscure that I need to see in public. I do have a political and personal agenda with this work, and in a way they are very interrelated but I haven’t been able to find a perfect union for both. So in the meantime I do both things. It feels very satisfying, in a perverse way, to be working on different fronts: not to have a style, not to be easily defined, not to be easily named.

Tim: What about the situation where you have somebody like Sigmar Polke whose stylelessness, like Picasso’s, becomes a style. How do we deal with that?



Felix: That’s a good point. I was just thinking about the fact that I don’t like to be photographed and how suddenly that becomes a persona, you know, the artist that doesn’t like to be photographed.

Tim: Works like a charm.

Felix: Right, I know. Still there are contradictions within everything but I think that I would rather live with that particular contradiction: the “not-photographed” persona. To have a “non-style” is risky but at the same time it’s more liberating for me. I just can’t get up in the morning and do the same goddamn work.

Tim: Do you see a correlation between minimalism and Vietnam?

Felix: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. That work could only have been made because of the extreme positions that Vietnam created. Cultural or, in this specific case, artistic production is not only related to cycles of fashion but to larger social situations. The horror of the Vietnam War was being brought to American homes nightly via television. There is no way one can evoke that inferno through any other means of representation, perhaps film can come slightly closer. The minimalists' answer to the social, political, sexual, and cultural upheaval of the time was to produce rather shocking objects of art that even today don't look like art at all.

In another example of social movements affecting artistic production: during the eighties, parallel to the vital and progressive cultural critiques of artists like Louise Lawler, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holtzer, Cindy Sherman, and

Sherry Levine, we had a very scary return of the bohemian painter, as if twenty years of an intellectual and conceptually based artistic practice had never existed. This was a very dangerous, anti-historical, anti-intellectual movement that served, very clearly, the needs of an artificially wealthy new clientele who wanted some art to decorate their new lobbies, apartments, and (now empty) offices.



It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that a Holtzer or a Kruger will not improve business. You don't want to remind stock traders about moral issues; you want to give them some color, to make them feel good so they can commit crimes with a happy face. And so they did. Unfortunately we will end up paying for all that. Cultural production and socioeconomics are intertwined, either you do work for it or against it. There is never such a thing as an apolitical or inert artwork. Art always serves a function—it either furthers and helps the master narrative or it tries to disrupt it. And it should also be underlined that the reactionary forces that ruled us for the last twelve years are still very active, just waiting to strike back and impose once more their agenda of homophobia, sexism, racism, and divisiveness. Their exclusionary practices are being perfected as we speak. We should never underestimate their vicious power and violence. By the way, Tim, I always say that Group Material is the best kept secret in the art world.

Tim: I think the problem with Group Material is that they operated outside of the art market. A lot of people claim that they hate the commercialism of the art galleries, but if you're not visible in those mainstream venues you're invisible

Felix: That's why I make objects, otherwise I would be doing performances. But aside from the objects, I love the process more than that final product. That's what I love the most. But I understand the rules of the game: you have to circulate an object in the market in order to have a more direct access to power... I've been waiting for the revolution for a long time and it hasn't come. The ones that have come have done very little to change our ways. Therefore I don't want a revolution anymore, it's too much energy for too little. So I want to work within the system. I want to work within the contradictions of the system and try to create a better place. I think revolutions were a really nice idea in the nineteenth century and in the early part of this century, but we must take into consideration the technological advances that are being made right now. These technological shifts are happening in a world that has become very fragile and also very small.

Tim: I know you consider teaching to be an important element of your work. What would you like to see come out of your students?



Felix: I'd like them to be generous. I don't know what I'd like them to be. I know exactly what I don't want them to be—I don't want them to be self-indulgent. I would like to see them involved with the *process* of working in addition to being involved in the final product. More than anything, I would just like them to be happy.

Tim: That is the philosophy of a good parent.

Felix: I think happiness comes from knowing what you want to do. I don't want to discuss the objects that much. I think the issues, the processes, the needs, and the pleasures around the works are more important.

Tim: You've taught at several colleges, right? Doesn't it disturb you that there are so few Spanish-speaking students?

Felix: When I went to art school at New York University there weren't any Hispanics around except for the elevator man. When I started to teach at N.Y.U. in 1987 I used to joke that the elevator man's name got onto the teacher's list by accident. On the list of fifty-five teachers, I had the only Hispanic-sounding name.

Tim: So obviously that bothers you.

Felix: Of course it bothers me. As a young man I didn't think that being an artist was a viable thing to do because there were not many role models. Now that has changed, and it is great to see the variety of voices. I see the practice of teaching as an integral part of my work. Teaching for me is a form of cultural activism, a form of creative change at a very basic level, and it is a way of redeeming the profession of art teaching. As a student you always got these teachers telling you what is right and what is wrong without any doubt or questioning. I want my

students to learn the tools of critical thought and to always doubt, to learn how to doubt themselves and to be self-critical. Only through acts of self-criticism are we able to discern which work is better or worse, hopefully. It's based on the Brechtian model. It is not about good or bad. You try to give them the ability, the tools, to see for themselves what is important, what is needed, what is moving, and what is not. I also make



very clear to them that they should not trust me—I'm not the voice of authority. I make mistakes, I might be wrong. I do have a very clear agenda and that is a desire to make this place a better place, and I'm an artist, that is the position where I speak from. But I'm an artist who tries to redefine the role of the artist. I see myself as an instigator, someone who questions not only the function of the art object and the practice but also the act of teaching art. Is it valid to teach art in the late twentieth century? I constantly question my voice, my opinions, my suggestions. What do I know? I don't give my students the comfort of expecting me to be the voice of knowledge, the father, the master narrative. Even if I wanted to I couldn't.

I had some Hispanic students at CalArts and at N.Y.U. Some were great and some were not. I expect more from them than from other students. Coming from that background, you know, there is a lot of struggle, a lot of fights, things are not easy but you shouldn't let those temporary things stop you. You should work

harder. It's very easy to say, "Poor little me." It's just too easy to feel sorry for yourself, that's what some folks want us to do. They want us to roll over. The only thing they want to hear from us, through our art, is how difficult life is for us, the "others." Hawaiians had to wear grass skirts in "Hawaii 5-0" to make white folks happy. Never mind that our lives are more complex than altars, palm trees, colorful landscapes, and gangs. Never mind that we already had universities when some of your ancestors were sitting at a table thanking God for pumpkins and turkeys.

I also want to make sure I'm not romanticizing the "American Dream," especially now after twelve years of "trickle-down economics" in which 1 percent of the American population owned as much as the bottom 90 percent. All I want to say is that I always expect much more from my minority students. I always tell them we have to work against two negatives: First, we have to prove we're not bad, but that's not enough. After that, we must prove we are good. When we come into a room we are automatically *bad*. When someone like you, white, comes into a room you are given the benefit of the doubt. We don't get that benefit, we are already suspicious—"bad."

Tim: I keep thinking that if we were doing this dialogue ten years from now I honestly think we would be doing it in Spanish. That would be real progress because everybody would be able to read it.



Felix: I had a problem with the idea of making this book bilingual. Why does *my* book have to be bilingual? Why not the other books in this series?

Tim: I think we're more interested in making America bilingual. Making art is obviously some sort of offering to somebody somewhere. Would you agree with that? Would you agree that to make a work of art is to assert a belief in meaning? maybe even to assume the presence, existence of God?

Felix: Let's get out of the area of God quickly! I have a major problem with the cultural traps and constructions of *God*. I think that it is a good excuse for us to accept any kind of situation as natural, inevitable. Once we believe that there is no God, that there is no afterlife, then life becomes a very positive statement. It becomes a very political position because then we have no choice but to work harder to make this place the best place ever. There is only one chance and this is

it. If you fuck it up this time you've fucked up forever and ever. Therefore God becomes a kind of lollipop you give people: "Look you are suffering now in this life, I'm making you feel and live miserably. I'm making things really horrible for you, but in the next life things will be better—believe me, and believe in God."

Once you agree that there is not any other life, that there's nothing except *here*—this thing, this table, you, me—that's it. That becomes a very radical idea because you have to take responsibility to make it the best. By the way, just recently—350 years after Galileo found that the earth moves around the sun—the Vatican accepted their "small mistake" and admitted that the earth really does move around the sun. Galileo, after all, was right. It only took them 350 years to get rid of this dogma! Pity, it could be so funny except that they have so much power, hate, and dogma.

Tim: So what role does art play in that?



Felix: It leaves a mark. It leaves a statement that you were here, that perhaps it is possible to have a different view of life.

Tim: Why bother?

Felix: I think one of the reasons that I made artwork was for Ross.

Tim: And for your audience? the public? the people that come to see your shows?

Felix: I also make art to describe how I feel about other issues that are outside the so-called private sphere.

Tim: I've rarely seen an artist that loves his audience as much as you do.

Felix: You have to start by loving what you have at home. You don't go out and preach if your house is not in order—you cannot preach a new social order. And going back to the question of why make an art object, I must also add it is a way of working out my position within this patriarchal culture. I recently saw a very traumatic photograph of a Yugoslavian soldier beating and kicking the bodies of

two dead Muslim women. This soldier is a man who probably has a god, a man who performs his duty, a “family man,” a hero. And of course these are all my connotations of this photo based on the preconceptions of our own Western, judeo-christian culture. How do I process that picture?

Another reason why I make works of art is to try to get that out of my system in a healthy way. Here is a “family man” who has the kind of respect that I as a gay man will never have. How do I deal with a culture that will give him a medal of “honor?” How? In a way I’m trying to negotiate my position within this culture by making this artwork. What am I supposed to do? How am I supposed to feel? Who am I supposed to identify with? And finally, above all else, it is about leaving a mark that I existed: I was here. I was hungry. I was defeated. I was happy. I was sad. I was in love. I was afraid. I was hopeful. I had an idea and I had a good purpose and that’s why I made works of art. Maybe given enough time I’ll think, yes, well, maybe it has to do with the denial of God: the fact that I tried to negotiate the fact that there is no God. Right now I don’t think that I’m consciously involved in any notion of God. I hope.

Tim: It’s a big problem, you know.

Felix: Really?



pages 32 - 33:
detail, *Untitled (A Walk in the Snow)*, 1993
C-print
25 x 32 in.
Rivendell Collection

pages 34 - 35:
Untitled (Ross with Cat), 1987
Color photograph
8 x 10 in.

During the opening of the exhibition 'Informality', Dr. Joost de Bloois, lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, department of Literary and Cultural Studies, gave a presentation about the notion of "precarity". The concept of "precarity", which is best described as 'the structural uncertainty of livelihood and income', serves as a rallying cry for a great number of contemporary protest movements (from the French anti-CPE protests to the Spanish Indignados, via the Greek social movement and recent student protests in Italy and Germany). Equally, "precarity" has become a key notion in both critical theory and artistic practice today. In his lecture Joost de Bloois unpacked the different meanings and the ambiguities of the notion of "precarity" within political and artistic practices and critical theory.

Here you can read the full text of his presentation 'Making Ends Meet: Precarity, Art and Political Activism'. [1]

'Making Ends Meet: Precarity, Art and Political Activism'. Joost de Bloois

We have to face up to the fact that there is no automatically available road to resistance and organization for artistic labor. That opportunism and competition are not a deviation of this form of labor but its inherent structure. That this workforce is not ever going to march in unison, except perhaps while dancing to a viral Lady Gaga imitation video. The international is over. Now let's get on with the global. Hito Steyerl

A year ago, the chairwoman of the MEDEF, the French employers' association, Laurence Parisot made the following statement: 'Life is precarious, health and love are precarious, *why would work escape this law?*' Apparently, 'precarity' is the law that governs our contemporary universe.

What I would like to do in what follows in a sense is - and of course it will be too brief and simplifying - unpack the presuppositions of this statement. Precarity has indeed become a key notion in many different types of social and political movements today, as well as artistic practices, therefore it is important to discern the many levels of meaning of this notion, that are often intertwined - and, as this statement shows, can be put to use in different ways. 'Precarity' is at the heart of contemporary debates concerning the changing nature of work, and crucially, the nature of contemporary capitalism.

Before we move on, a brief definition of 'precarity'; 'precarity' is best described as 'the structural uncertainty of livelihood and income' - the emphasis is very much on

structural uncertainty. Etymologically: the adjective 'precarious' comes from 'precarus', which means 'imploration': begging God for relief. Already, we can see how 'precarity' not only stands for economic/financial insecurity, but has a very strong emotional/affective - and even cultural - dimension. Precarity means that you are continuously questioned in your mode of being (continuously re-evaluated as a productive, or unproductive, being); you have to continuously prove yourself in society's never-ending rat race.

Over the past three decades precarity has imposed itself as the general condition of the everyday lives of large groups of people. The advent of neo-liberal models of economic policies and economic globalization has resulted in what we might call a generalization of financial as well as emotional/cultural precarity. Just to provide you with some everyday examples of precarity, recognizable for most of us: a 'job for life' has become a rarity, instead we move from one temporary contract to another (Laurence Parisot precisely made her statement to advocate a law proposal that intended to effectively put an end to the very idea of a 'fixed' work contract); at the same time, the financialization, as it is called, of the economy (in so-called 'casino capitalism'), turns our pensions or the companies we work for into live bait for international hedge funds etc (as the Greek crisis shows, whole countries can be targeted: the post-war welfare state that provided at least a minimal sense of financial and existential security is now up for sale and is being rapidly dismantled); globalization in general causes precarity in the sense that it *exposes* us (workers, citizens) to economic and political forces that are no longer restricted to the nation state - and therefore cannot be democratically controlled by the citizens of increasingly powerless nation states (today even the super power that is the US is on its knees before the Mammoth of the financial markets); economic globalization makes us vulnerable - also, and perhaps foremost *emotionally*: just look at the rise of populism and the yearning for identity in Europe today (these are affective shelters against our growing exposure to the outside world). The recent London riots (that recall the riots in the French banlieues show another, even uglier face of precarity: that of structural exclusion. Precarity also designates the exclusion of large social groups from civil society, the job market and the basic requirements for a stable livelihood and social mobility. Again, the exceptional [exclusion, marginalization] becomes the norm. So, the concept of 'precarity' brings all of this together: uncertainty of livelihood, vulnerability (both financial and emotional), exclusion and the gradual loss of the democratic rights and agency of citizens that was fundamental to modern democratic politics.

Because of this, 'precarity' has been claimed by a variety of social movements as their rallying cry. Interestingly, the notion of 'precarity' is used to create a new type of social movement; one that is in a sense *in tune with* the changes that have occurred in global capitalism. We will get to this as well, but it is clear that the 'traditional' (that is to say: 19th/20th century) social organizations and social safety nets (unions, the welfare state) stand at best puzzled, but in practice completely disarmed before financial globalization and the increasing casualization/insecurity of work. For example labour organizations such as unions are the product of what is known as Fordist labour: they represent the interest of a class of workers *that can be identified as such* (they perform the same type of job in the same factory space at the same hours etc); however, today's workers are a lot less homogenous: 'flexible' labour has become the norm - it is a lot more difficult to unify or even to *represent* workers on short term contracts than workers who enter the factory at 16 and stay there until retirement; also, mandatory 'flexibilization' and 'mobility' demands from workers that the re-train and continuously 'develop' themselves according to the ever-changing demands of 'the market' - which, again, makes it very difficult to find a common denominator; finally, the globalization of the work force also undermines traditional forms of labour organizations that served workers united at least by their nationality; it is far more difficult to create forms of social and political representation for workers coming from a variety of countries (EU, non-EU - and a large segment of the labour market today precisely consists of 'informal' or 'illegal' labour...).

So, all of these developments form a rather massive challenge for contemporary forms of social and labour organizations, and emancipatory movements in general. The overarching question here is: how to unite, represent, empower those who, by the precarious nature of their mode of being, are isolated and disseminated, often invisible and vulnerable; how to turn the precarious into political agents? How to organize labour when it no longer fits the traditional frameworks of labour organization, and when these frameworks have been effectively dismantled by three decades of neo-liberal government? Interestingly *and crucially*, the notion of precarity may serve as an instrument for making the ends of the social and cultural spectrum meet. As I said earlier, it is essential to emphasize the *structural* character of precarity: casual labour, a temporary job is no longer something 'you grow out of' - it's no longer a first step towards 'a proper job' (that is to say a stable job that will allow you to buy a house, raise a family, have a pension... in whatever non-normative, disorderly way you'd like to...). Mobility, flexibility, insecurity are no longer the exemption to the

rule of a stable income, but affect all ends of the labour market. I'm old enough to remember that being a postman was having a respectable and even enviable job (it meant being employed by state, working relatively few hours for a guaranteed income and pension); today, being a postman is hardly enviable - in this country, the postman has become the gripping example of flexible, exploitative labour (being 'paid by the parcel' below minimum wage with virtually no social benefits - that is to say: they form a *disposable* work force). Now, the same logic of precarity also applies to the 'higher' end of the labour market: anyone who aspires to become an academic is in for years of temp work (often replacing those lucky enough to obtain research time), more often than not leading to a stagnation of one's research output, and therefore blocking the possibility of a stable job; the same story goes for other now much championed sectors such as ICT or the creative industries. 'Precarity' here serves as a common denominator that might make the different ends of the labour market meet. As a rallying cry, precarity offers the opportunity for alternative forms of social/political organization, that might counter, for example, the waning of the traditional labour unions. In this sense, precarity not only serves to define a rather bleak shared condition of contemporary workers: precisely the fact that it is a shared condition also provides with the potential for alternative modes of organization. However, while recognizing this potential and - and I would certainly like to underline this - the urgency of this concept of precarity, I think we should also be aware of the various problematics inherent to claiming precarity as a rallying cry.

In this respect, I think it is crucial to consider the history of 'precarity' within the social and political movement of the past decades. The ambiguities of 'precarity' are already visible in its appearance in the workerist/operaist or autonomist movement in Italy in the 1970's. *Precario bello* was in fact coined as an emancipatory notion: precarity was seen as a means of emancipating oneself from the sheer boredom of a working life; being precarious meant that you would no longer be working for the same boss for the rest of your life, but that you could chose to work for a couple of months, than travel for a bit or look elsewhere for a job. 'Precario bello' was one of the spearheads in the autonomist project of the working class emancipating itself from capital. However, the developments and metamorphosis within capitalism itself turned this 'beautiful precarity' into something else altogether; the great tragedy of the social movements of the 1970's is that capitalism gave them what they asked for, but in a perverse and distorted way ('you no longer want to spent your entire life working for the same boss, than that is exactly what you will get'...; 'you want to be able to move from one job to another, than that is what we will make you do'). [2] This is also the conclusion drawn by

French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism*: the demands made by the various movements in the 1960's/70's have in a sense been incorporated into the new capitalism: the demand for more autonomy has been translated into imposed mobility, into permanent adaptation, into the idea that we are *all little, individual entrepreneurs* who are exposed to the risks and perils of the market; the demand for work as a means of 'personal development' has been transformed into the idea that even our personality can be put to work and monetized, etc etc. So, from a potentially liberating notion, precarity is appropriated by the new capitalism.

I think, as a critical concept and rallying cry, 'precarity' has perhaps not shaken off this ambiguity (and this is something to reflect on). In contemporary political theory as well as 'political art' 'precarity' is *both* rejected as the perverted result of neo-liberal, global capitalism and in a way glamorized: the precarious individual is, as the British sociologist Guy Standing calls it, celebrated as a modern hero: always moving, always connected, devoid of a stable identity etc. Especially within critical theory that mixes Marxist insights with post-structuralist ideas (Marx with Deleuze & Guattari: think for example of Negri&Hardt or Franco Berardi aka Bifo), this leads to the idea that actually existing 'precarity' is a mere perversion of ideal precarity - of an ideal type of subjectivity that is in a state of becoming and so on. I would like to underline this tension, as it is particularly visible in contemporary social movements and artistic practices alike. The French anti-CPE protests in 2007/2008 are a good example of this (the protesters explicitly called themselves precarious). The CPE was a proposed law that would allow employers to lay off workers under the age of 28 without notice within the first two years of their employment (the CPE would in fact mean the institutionalization of precarity for young workers). This led to mass protests of young people basically asking for stability, rather than change (as the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk says: today, it's the neo-liberal governments that enforce revolutions upon the people, rather than the other way around) - which is a very uneasy sight for progressive eyes. We might also think of what is happening today in Greece, in Spain (the Indignados): we are witnessing the uprising of people asking for not just financial, but existential sustainability instead of change (permanent change is what precisely we have). *On the other hand*, we also see political movements and critical theory seeking a radicalization of precarity: in certain post-autonomous thinkers and movements (Negri&Hardt, Tiqun/Invisible committee), we find this idea that generalized precarity, structural uncertainty, signifies that we are in fact at the brink of a wholly new society, even a wholly new vision of ourselves, a wholly new mode of being: one that

is no longer based on stability of identity (let alone that we will continue to define ourselves through our profession), but one that is based on becomings, new forms of collective identities etc - that is to say: *if* we manage to re-claim this precarity, re-claim its liberating potential (re-claim its ontological potential, if you will), and the liberating potential of contemporary capitalism itself, or its apocalyptic implosion... (I will get back to this ambiguity shortly)

In all of these movements and critical theories, the idea of precarity is vital in addressing the question: *how to reclaim political agency today?* How to turn precarity, as a condition, into something that is not merely paralyzing and demoralizing, but something unifying and empowering? How to reclaim forms of citizenship (political subjectivity), when the traditional conditions for citizenship (belonging to a certain class, having a certain nationality) are no longer self-evident? How to turn the multitude of isolated, precarious workers into an effective political agent? Of course, this does *not* mean claiming that all precarious workers are 'in it together': being a precarious academic or artist is certainly no picnic, but it is not the same as being a precarious migrant worker, a precarious cleaner etc. The protest movements of the 60/70's that I just mentioned precisely rebelled against traditional forms of political and social organization (unions and socialist parties in particular) that overlooked the diversity of the work force (that overlooked the presence of women, the young or immigrants). We should avoid *both* turning social/cultural differences into absolutes (as if cleaners and artists are worlds apart that will never overlap - this is a strategy that is handily exploited by populist discourse for example) *and* romanticizing precarity as our new and unproblematically equalizing human condition (this would amount to doing the same thing as Laurence Parisot, who presented precarity as a natural law of sorts). Precarity *does* demonstrate that, structurally, postmen, academics and artists have lots in common, but this is not a matter of mere equivalence. Precisely, the crucial issue here is how to persuasively employ the complexity of precarity in order to bring these, culturally and socially, very different groups together *politically*? This is where art and political activism are overlapping, and I would like to look at that briefly.

Art plays a highly ambiguous role in what Boltanski and Chiapello call 'the new spirit of capitalism'. The proliferation of precarity, at least in the West, takes place, for an important part, within the transition from so-called Fordist to post-Fordist economic models. That is to say: from highly regulated, repetitive, physical labour we have moved towards flexible and 'immaterial labour'. In the West today, a significant part of the

labour force no longer sees its physical labour power exploited, but, on the contrary, its communicative, emotional and creative skills (for example in the ICT sector, the new media, but also in care work - so again, these are not just the 'high end' jobs). The center of gravity of Western economies has moved towards the immaterial and the cognitive (see, for example, the dominance of the financial markets, the dominance of speculation over production) [the same goes for the 'informal economy' that consists not just of, say, sweat shops but also of 'personalized services', care work such as child care and prostitution, as well as loan sharks]. In this new economy that thrives upon cognitive and emotional exploitation of our communicative and creative skills and total flexibility/permanent mobilization, the artist serves as the new Stakhanov (the name of the model worker in the Soviet Union). As Richard Florida infamously said in his book on the *Creative City*: today, the model for our working environment is no longer Henry Ford's factory, but Andy Warhol's factory... What has long been the privilege of art - communication, creativity, collaboration - has moved to the forefront of the economy. I would even hazard to state that, today, art has in fact been surpassed by this process; after having fuelled the creative industries, art is now in the process of dissolving into the creative industries. The irony today is of course that the creative industries are now being presented to the arts as the example to follow (artists should all become 'creative entrepreneurs'): the creative industries are now rewarded by Dutch government policies, whereas the arts are being cut - this only affirms an ongoing movement to which the arts are to date incapable of finding a response. The precarious working conditions of the art world, the precarious status of the artist have been appropriated by the new spirit of capitalism, and is now, in a sense, being turned against art: art can no longer claim its exceptional status. If art wants to survive, other than as fuel for the international art market, other than as investment object for the super rich, it has to take into account its own dissolution into these economic models (again, the irony here is that the avant-garde idea of the end of art is being realized/imposed on art, rather than being accomplished by art itself).

One way of taking this process into account can be found in post-autonomous theorists (such as Toni Negri, Paolo Virno, Berardi). Already in the 1970's the Italian autonomists (Mario Tronti) coined the notion of the 'social factory': they already noticed how capitalism was trying to put to work all sectors of the social network (education, housework, social and cultural activities are all in the service of capitalism - politics itself becomes a mere process of managing the economy). The transition towards an 'immaterial' economy extends the social factory towards our brains and creativity. To use the old Marxist notion:

today's economy is that of 'real subsumption': everything becomes part of capital - everything becomes labour: we work for FaceBook when we share our holiday snaps, we work for Google when we are researching information, we work when we have that brilliant idea for a project, an essay when we're taking shower or walking the dog... And we do this together: capitalism taps into what is called, again in Marxist/autonomist jargon, 'the general intellect': what is most valuable today for the economy is not heavy machinery but our brains. Again, art is part of that general intellect, up to the point of merely becoming one of its many connections. Now, for people like Negri or Virno, this is not just claustrophobic: the new connected, networked and creative capitalism also, in a sense, seems to realize age-old communist dreams: we are connected, we are simultaneously workers/producers and consumers, we possess the means of production, namely our own linguistic, creative skills. It's just that, for the time being, we still serve the markets - yet, 'the communism of capital' is already in place: all it takes is an exodus from capital, a quasi-ontological leap of the multitude that will allow it finally seize itself.

At the same time, and often in the work of the same critics, we hear less optimistic sounds (again, we seem to be unable to escape a certain ambiguity): if capitalism today manages to even mobilize our emotions and our and affective creative skills, then we are totally at the mercy of capitalism. There is no in-between any longer that can negotiate between capital and workers (no civil society, no unions, no parliament) - the riots in London show just that: precarity also means the total absence of social/cultural mediation; the looters simply demonstrated that nothing stands between them and capital. Here, art may step in - not because it has any privileged position from which it may speak on behalf of others less privileged, but precisely because it is an integral part of the capitalist infrastructure today: if art is an intrinsic part of the current economic regime, then this means that art can also act upon it, however marginally. However, I think it is absolutely vital that this would take place *not* from an anachronistic idea of the avant-garde; if art is merely one of the many dots of the social and economic network, then it should act alongside other possible social and political actors, without claiming to 'represent them'.

If art is an intrinsic part of the current economic regime, artists should recognize themselves as working subjects, whose work precisely is shaped or conditioned by that regime. Rather than representing sad postmen with tears dangling from the corner of their eye or being led by misguided dreams of all too literal autonomy, art should take its economic and political functioning as a starting point for exploring a different practice, a different politics and make use of the means that the

economic regime has put at the disposal of the artist [which closely connect to for example the creative industries or forms of emotional labour]. Art as political *know how* rather than representation.[3] (I would like to reject the emphasis on 'resistance', which is just another avatar of the avant-garde, that pops up in certain contemporary artistic practices and during protests against the cuts in the art world- Cf. the work of Jonas Staal.) [4] If artists do not succeed in creating new alliances, they will inevitably find themselves among what German critic Diedrich Diederichsen calls the new bio-political proletariat: those who provide the entertainment industry with the outpouring of their emotions, their bodies and their wit (comedians, porn stars and Big Brother contestants); once more, they will be precarious workers among many.

Obviously, political art that reflects upon precarity already is quite prolific, as this project shows -on the one hand, we can think of projects such as Precarias a la Deriva in Spain, the Italian Chain Workers collective, The Precarious Workers Brigade from London etc; on the other hand, individual artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn, Hito Steyerl, Hans Haacke or Alan Sekula in their (often documentary) work investigate contemporary working conditions. I think that in these projects and works we find the same ambiguity that seems to haunt the idea of precarity: they are often inspired by what we might call a post-situationist, interventionist aesthetic; or, in the case of Hirschhorn for example, they take 'precarity' literally and mimic it in the use of disposable materials and the explicit situatedness of the work in 'underprivileged' urban areas (see Hirschhorn's Bijlmer Spinoza Project). These works seem to embrace or mimic a certain precarity: a certain mobility, a lack of duration, an interventionist aesthetic (which sometimes amounts to a fetishizing of protest). On the one hand, obviously they proceed from the notion that the new, networked and volatile capitalism, asks for networked and mobile strategies; this of course makes perfect sense but, on the other hand, these strategies remain, for artists, part of their comfort zone: interventionism, ready-mades, performances simply are the weapons of choice of the 20th century avant-garde.

The question is whether these strategies can constitute a response to precarity; the paradox of precarity is that claiming precarity as a rallying cry means claiming something *in order to overcome it*. This overcoming *does not* mean a return to 20th century Fordism or the nation-state (that served as the condition for the welfare state) - a return that is impossible in part due to globalization and immigration, in part to technological developments etc. Any alternative to the current structural precarity, will have to be global and networked (the fate of Dutch workers and artists is closely connected to that of workers in say China...). I am not convinced whether the, part

involuntary, endorsement and even celebration of precarity in current aesthetic strategies is very helpful in finding this alternative (neither is the 'soft' version of this: artists celebrating their status as freelance creatives and cultural entrepreneurs). A significant amount of contemporary movements and artists that claim precarity as their badge of honor are all too eager to reject what remains of the existing social infrastructure in favor of the stateless and subjectless future to come - or the apocalyptic insurrection that will facilitate it. For the time being the remnants of the welfare state may be all we have; they might at least serve as a take off ground for new emancipatory politics. Political philosophers such as Toni Negri or Ulrich Beck propose the guaranteed or social income as one of the main objectives for emancipatory social movements today - whatever you may think of this, it does provide a corner stone of sorts for a progressive politics that is not merely protective and reactionary. Finding the means to reclaim a permanent political agency might be only way to turn the precariat into the truly new dangerous class, as Guy Standing calls it. In this context, art may act as *know how*: as a means of investigation, into new forms of durable agency and representation; as a means of investigation that transcends mere reflexivity and interventionist critique; as experimentation of new forms of organization by the working subject; all this alongside, but not necessarily in the service of social and political movements.

What has been overlooked in a lot of the discussions concerning the brutal financial cuts in the arts in this country, is that these are not just about art; art is but one of the many forms of previously common goods that need to be subjected to the economic regime. Art as know how actively investigates a society that sees art as a common good, as a commonly accessible good and not as a commercial niche among others. If not, art will slowly but inevitably dissolve into generalized precarity, like the rest of us.

[1] This text was presented at the opening of 'Informality: Art, Economics, Precarity' at SMBA, August 13th; it has not been altered, hence its informal and generalizing character.

[2] The fate of 'precarity' seems to confirm the autonomist intuition that if the working class does not emancipate itself from capital, capital most certainly will emancipate itself from the working class - which is what we have been witnessing for the past couple of decades...

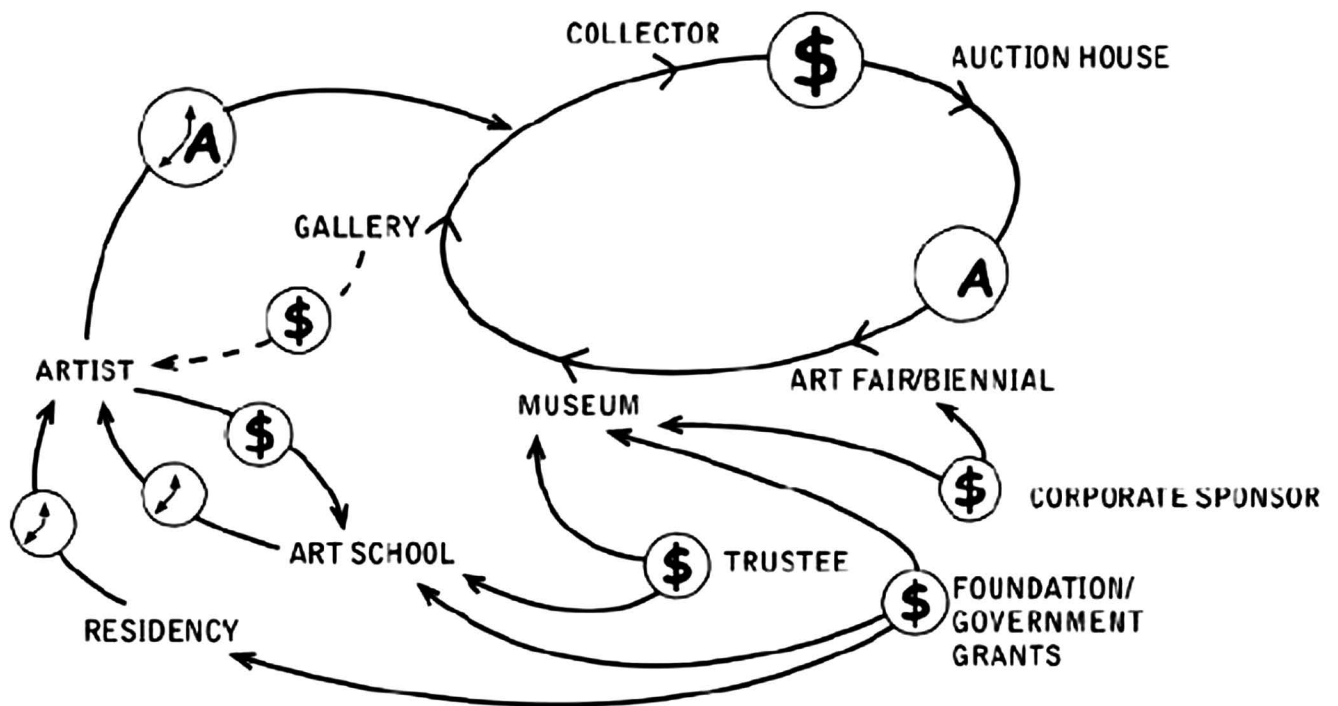
[3] As Hito Steyerl writes: "Art is not outside politics, but politics resides within its production, its distribution, and its reception. If we take this on, we might surpass the plane of a politics of representation and embark on a politics that is there, in front of our eyes, ready to embrace." E-flux#21

[4]Likewise, the notion of 'resistance from within' is problematic, and with it the, now very popular, imagery of the 'invisible enemy'. We do not need a(nother) détournement of representations, what we need is a détournement of practices.

SOURCE:

<http://project1975.smba.nl/en/article/lecture-joost-de-bloois-making-ends-meet-precarity-art-and-political-activism-august-13-2011>

THE BUSINESS OF ART



Pascal Gielen

The Art Scene

An Ideal Production Unit for Economic Exploitation?

In sociology, the 'scene' is barely taken seriously as a form of social organization, but sociologist Pascal Gielen sees the scene as a highly functional part of our contemporary networking

society and thus worthy of serious research. Were the current success of the creative industry to result in the exploitation of the creative scene, however, the level of freedom enjoyed could quickly become a lack of freedom.

When a *Kunsthalle*, an experimental theatre, an international dance school, an alternative cinema, a couple of fusion restaurants and lounge bars – not to mention a sufficient number of gays – are concentrated in a place marked by high social density and mobility, the result is an art scene. 'What's there? Who's there? And what's going on?' are what American social geographer Richard Florida calls the three 'W questions' (Florida is a fan of management jargon). These questions have to be answered if we want to know if ours is a 'place to be'.¹ A creative scene like the one described is good for the economy, the image of a city and intercultural tolerance, it would seem.

Although the art scene has become an important economic variable and a popular subject of study, the term is not exactly thriving in the sociological context. The classic sociologist does know how to cope with concepts like 'the group', 'the category', 'the network' and 'the subculture', but 'the social scene' is relatively unexplored as an area of research. Obviously, there are exceptions, such as work done by Alan Blum.²

Yet the lack of scholarly interest is surprising, since the scene is perhaps the format best suited to social intercourse. Within the prevailing post-Fordist economy – with its fluid working hours; high levels of mobility, hyper-communication

1. Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

2. See, for example, Alan Blum, 'Scenes', in: Janine Marchessault and Will Straw (eds.), 'Scenes and the City', *Public* (2001), nos. 22/23.

and flexibility; and special interest in creativity and performance – the scene is a highly functional social-organizational form. Moreover, it is a popular temporary haven for hordes of enthusiastic globetrotters. Why is the scene such a good social binding agent nowadays? To find a satisfactory answer, we should start by taking a good look at the curious mode of production known as 'post-Fordism'.

Paolo Virno-Style Post-Fordism

The transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist (that is, Toyota-ist) manufacturing process is marked primarily by the transition from material to immaterial labour and production, and from material to immaterial goods. In the case of the latter, the symbolic value is greater than the practical value. Design and aesthetics – in other words, external signs and symbols – are major driving forces in today's economy, because they constantly heighten consumer interest. We are all too familiar with this point of view, which has been propagated by countless postmodern psychologists, sociologists and philosophers since the 1970s.

But how does an industry based on signs and symbols affect the workplace and the manufacturing process? What characterizes immaterial labour? According to Italian philosopher Paolo Virno, current focal points are mobility, flexible working hours, communication and language (knowledge-sharing), interplay,

detachment (the ability to disengage and to delegate) and adaptability.³

Consequently, the person performing immaterial labour can be 'plugged in' at all times and in all places. Yet Virno's conception of immaterial labour is surprisingly refreshing when he links it to such notions as power, subjectivity (including informality and affection), curiosity, virtuosity, the personification of the product, opportunism, cynicism and endless chatter. Admittedly, his conception initially appears to relate to a string of seemingly heterogeneous characteristics applicable to immaterial labour. Presumably, the idea is to select with care a few key aspects from the list. Virno starts with the better-known aspects of the social phenomenon before adding his personal adaptation.

Physical and Mental Mobility

A brief summary – as found in the paragraph above – makes us forget what immaterial labour actually requires from people and, accordingly, what drastic consequences the new form of production has for contemporary society. For instance, mobility is often defined as increasing physical mobility, the negative aspects of which we encounter frequently: traffic jams, overcrowded trains and pollution caused by, among other things, a vast number of planes in the skies. The employee no longer lives his entire life near the

factory or office where he works but moves regularly – as a result of promotion or relocation – not only from one workplace to another but also from one house to another.

Apart from the growth of physical mobility, mental mobility is becoming an increasingly essential part of our present-day working conditions. After all, the immaterial worker works primarily with her head, a head that can – and must – accompany her everywhere. Immaterial labour does not cease when the employee shuts the office door behind her. It is easy for the worker who performs immaterial labour to take work-related problems home, to bed and, in the worst-case scenario, on holiday. The worker can always be reached, by mobile phone or email, and summoned back to the workplace within the moment or two it takes to log on. Mental mobility makes working hours not only flexible but fluid, blurring the boundary between private and working domains. The burden of responsibility for drawing the boundary rests almost entirely on the shoulders of the employee.

The foregoing outline makes rather a depressing impression, but many a person who does immaterial work experiences it as such, as evidenced by the increase in work-related stress and depressions. One cause of depression is an ongoing sense of having too much on one's mind and of being constantly reminded of this fact by the working environment. Perhaps a creative idea is still nestling somewhere in the

brain: a conclusion based more on a socially conditioned criterion than on anything psychological. The knowledge that you can go on looking, that you may be failing to utilize a possibility still lodged in your brain, can lead to psychosis. Burnout is not necessarily the result of a person feeling that his ideas have not been fully exploited. On the contrary, it is rooted in the frustration that an unused, passive zone exists within the cranium that can still be activated. The worker who can no longer stop the introspective quest for inventiveness may find himself falling into an abyss or looking for escape routes, such as intoxication, to momentarily halt the thinking process. He deliberately switches off his creative potential.

However, contrasting with this very one-sided and sombre picture of the effects of immaterial labour, it must be said that it can also liberate a form of mental labour. After all, no-one can look inside the head of the designer, artist, engineer, ICT programmer or manager to check whether he is actually thinking productively – that is, in the interests of the business. It's difficult to measure the development of ideas. A good idea or an attractive design may escape from the brilliant mind of the immaterial worker in a matter of seconds, or it might take months. What's more, the same employee may be saving his best ideas until he's accumulated sufficient capital to set up his own business. Anyone possessing immaterial capital can participate

unseen, and in this case invisibility can be taken literally.

Power and Biopolitics

Clearly, the employer of immaterial labour no longer invests in effective labour but more in working power, in potential or promise, because the person who performs immaterial work comes with a supply of as-yet-untapped and unforeseen capabilities. Perhaps the brilliant designer, engineer, manager or programmer, who had been acquired for a great deal of money, is burnt out. Or perhaps he's in love and focused on something other than work. Maybe his latest brilliant idea was the last, or it will take another ten years before another follows. Who can say?

The paradoxical characteristics of that working power – that potential which is bought and sold as if it were a material commodity – presuppose 'biopolitical' practices, according to Virno. The employer, preferably aided by the government, has to develop ingenious mechanisms for optimizing, or at least guaranteeing, immaterial labour. Since physical and intellectual powers are inseparable, these mechanisms should focus on the life of the immaterial worker: hence the term 'biopolitics'. 'When something is sold that exists merely as a *possibility*, it cannot be separated from the *living person* of the seller. The worker's living body is the substrate of the working power, which in isolation has no independent existence. "Life", pure and simple "*bios*", acquires special

importance since it is the tabernacle of *dynamis*, of the more-or-less possible. Capitalists are only interested for an indirect reason in the worker's life: that life, that body, contains the talent, the possibility, the *dynamis*. The living body becomes an object to be managed. ... Life is situated at the centre of politics as the prize to be won and is the immaterial (and not present in itself) working force.'⁴

4. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, op. cit. (note 1), 83.

Communication, Linguistic Virtuosity and Informality

Virno comments, somewhat ironically, that on the good old Fordist shop floor there would often be a sign saying: 'Silence, people at work'. He believes it could be replaced today with: 'People at work. Speak!' In the post-Fordist setting, communication has become all important. This conclusion would seem fairly obvious, as immaterial labour relies heavily on sharing know-how and ideas. Communication is productive within the contemporary working environment, whereas it was once considered counterproductive for the 'traditional' worker. The latter is a 'doer', working manually, even if his job is only a matter of pressing a button at regular intervals. Chatter, therefore, is a form of distraction or entertainment.

When communication is the key focus in the workplace, the bottom line is negotiation and persuasion. Thus rhetorical powers play a special role in the workplace. Someone

with virtuoso linguistic skills invariably gets more done. Virtuosity has shifted from making – as evident in the work of the artisan – to speaking. Linguistic virtuosity, says Virno, has two characteristics: it finds satisfaction in itself, without attaining any objectified goal; and it presupposes the presence of others, of an audience. In other words, the immaterial worker is a good performer. If he is to convince colleagues that he has a good idea, he must take a verbal, or at least a linguistically logical, course. Even if no idea exists, the immaterial worker counts on his linguistic skills to keep on implying that he's thinking hard or ruminating in a positive way. Others either confirm or contradict him during the process.

Communication, in Virno's opinion, assumes something in addition to virtuosity. Or rather, communication has a specific effect on relationships among immaterial workers. If nothing else, it requires relational skills that have little to do with production. Workers must get on with one another in a workplace in which the human aspect plays an increasingly greater role. Virno refers to 'the inclusion of anthropogenesis in the existing mode of production'. When the human aspect enters the office or factory, it carries with it an air of informality. The ability to get on well with others – and daring to try out ideas on colleagues – involves a degree of trust.

Although that idea goes beyond Virno, it's one worth analysing. After all, one can question whether infor-

mality plays a productive role in the immaterial workplace, which extends further than achieving good communication and a useful exchange of information. Informal association with others also means knowing more about one another. About family life, children and, in some cases, 'extra-curricular' relationships. Private information can be a good way of checking whether an employee is still 'on the ball' and, consequently, whether he's working productively and in the interests of the business. In fact, and more speculatively, isn't a more informal working environment the ultimate tool of biopolitics? An informal conversation is a way of evaluating an employee's brainpower without her being aware of it. 'A good work climate' – which can mean, for example, that it's possible to have a pleasant conversation in the corridor or to go out for lunch or have a beer after work with a colleague – has a dual purpose. It can increase productivity, because employees enjoy being at work (even if the work is not necessarily interesting, good colleagues are a compensation); but it can also be a highly ingenious means of control: the control of life itself. Informalization can mean, therefore, that the immaterial worker in all his subjectivity is biopolitically 'nabbed' or 'caught out' in his situational inability to develop productive ideas. This is genuine biopower: not power set down in formalized rules but power present in a vetting process that can steal round corners, any time and any

place, to encroach upon the body in a subjective fashion. The following section substantiates the argument that biopower can develop within the scene extremely well as a form of social organization.

Scene to Be Seen

In everyday usage, the word 'scene' invariably prevails in alternative discursive settings. For example, 'scene' is rarely used to indicate socially appropriate professions or groups. We do not refer to 'the scene' in relation to civil servants, bankers, the police or heterosexuals; but we do refer to the art scene, the theatre scene, the gay scene and, not to be forgotten, the drug or criminal scene. Creativity and criminality seem to occur to a notable extent in the same semantic circles. They have at least one characteristic in common within society: both creative and criminal networks stand for innovation. Regardless of whether it's a network involving innovative cultural practices, alternative lifestyles or illegal financial transactions, it serves as an alternative to what is socially acceptable or commonsensical. Until now, the word 'scene' has always been available to accommodate heterodox forms in the discursive sense. Yet recent decades have seen a remarkable advance of the discursive fringe towards the centre, making the 'alternative scene' a quality label at the heart of society. Today, labels like 'alternative', 'independent' and 'avant-garde' rank as welcome brands

in the economic epicentre. Hence the word 'scene' cannot lag behind, as Richard Florida clearly understands.

The scene as a form of social organization meets a number of criteria that fit relatively recent social developments. In a world in which individuality and authenticity are highly prized, in leisure activities as well as in the workplace, the scene constitutes a comfortable setting. The scene is a form of social organization that generates the freedom of temporary and flexible relations unavailable in a group (with relatively closed membership), for instance. The scene produces social cohesion and a shared identity unknown in a social category like an age-related or professional group. Relations within the scene are relatively free of obligations, but not without rules. Someone wishing to enter the art scene, for example, must comply with certain rules or social codes, but these are far less specific than the admission codes of a football club, youth movement or lodge. What's more, one scene can easily be exchanged for another. This is where it differs from a subculture, which requires a specific, almost rigid identity.

These are the very characteristics that make the scene an ideal form of social organization in the present network society. Local scenes are proving to be familiar focal points within a worldwide network. They generate just enough, but not too much, intimacy for global nomads. Whether you enter the art scene in Shanghai, Tokyo, New York,

London, Berlin or Brussels, you find a familiar frame of reference despite what may be a totally different cultural context. If, six months ago, you had mentioned the name Damien Hirst in any of these art scenes, you would have instantly created a common ground for socializing, whether participating in an intellectual debate or chatting in a pub. The scene provides a safe, familiar, yet admittedly temporary home in a globalized world. Or, as Alan Blum puts it: it offers a kind of urban intimacy that enables a person to survive in a chilly urban environment and anonymous global time. The reason, to some extent, is that professional and public activities within a scene affect the domestic domain. Professional and private activities, work and personal relationships, often merge seamlessly. Although it may sound facetious, the hotel lounge, vernissage and fusion restaurant are settings for both informal chatter and professional deals. But professional deals may well depend on gossip, and informal chatter may prompt professional deals. Thus the scene is the place where formality and informality effortlessly intersect. And, proceeding in that vein, the scene is the ultimate place for biopolitical control.

The foregoing inventory of public and semi-public spaces that fit comfortably into the scene uncovers another aspect of this form of social organization. It creates a Foucaultian panoptical décor for the visual control of seeing and being seen. If anything: whoever is not seen 'on the

scene' does not belong to the scene, and the scene which is not seen is a non-scene. And so the notion remains very close to its original etymological meaning. The Greek *skènè* was actually a tent: the hut or wooden structure from which actors emerged. Theatricality plays an important constituent part in 'the scene'. In other words, the scene always implies a *mise en scène*. And, by extension, it ties in seamlessly with the demands made of the present-day post-Fordist worker. As we have seen, he depends largely on the performance of his creative ideas. In so doing, he has much to gain from these ideas being communicated to the widest (and most international) audience possible. Foreign is chic on the scene. But he gains only if the audience is reliable. After all, an idea can be easily ridiculed but easily stolen, too. The public – international yet intimate – environment is the perfect place for promoting the social conditions that enable the relatively safe exchange of ideas. Anyone stealing ideas within the scene receives at least a verbal sanction. A claim that an original thought has been copied elsewhere is an option only if witnesses exist and the thought has been aired in public. The originality or authenticity of an idea can be measured recursively, therefore, if that idea was ever 'put on the stage'.

Freiheit macht Arbeit: Freedom Creates Work

Events like biennials and buildings like a *Kunsthalle* or museum are ideal semi-public venues for the art scene and for the circulation of creative ideas. You could say they form the concrete infrastructure of the scene or make the scene more visible: the non-seen scene becomes the seen scene. This applies primarily to artists whose work is displayed by the organizations in question or is on display in the buildings. The concrete infrastructure literally scenarizes the art scene, thus making it a more or less permanent creative scene. This displaying of the scene, incidentally, takes place in complete accordance with the rules of post-Fordist art. As a result, a person works under a temporary contract or, in the art world itself, often without a contract in what is always a vitalist, project-based setting; the work – flexible and invariably at night – is done with irrepressible creative enthusiasm. In short, it involves a work ethic in which work is always enjoyable, or should be; in which dynamism is boosted unconditionally by young talent; and in which commitment outstrips money. These factors determine the spirit of the art scene. If you try to rationalize this great, spontaneous desire and freedom to work (by means of rigid contracts or labour agreements, for instance) or to bureaucratize or routinize it, you are in danger of letting the metaphorical creative genie out of the bottle. However, we

should not forget that creative work as described here is always a form of cheap, unstable work, which makes the art scene of great interest to outsiders like company managers and politicians. Not only does it boost the local economy and introduce the city to the world market; it also, and especially, reveals a biopolitical ethic that benefits today's economy. Rather than believing that *Arbeit macht frei*, as announced on gates to Nazi concentration camps, protagonists of the creative scene seem to think that *Freiheit macht Arbeit* (freedom creates work). The type of accepted flexible work that marks artistic projects would make gratifying advertising for a temp agency. Considering the rhetorical reversal, it is better to offer no opinion as to whether or not the concentration camp has become the central social structure of all society, as Giorgio Agamben claims.⁵

If the crossover involving professional, public and domestic activities – and particularly the interplay between formality and informality, on the one hand, and seeing and being seen, on the other – is exploited on a rationally economic basis, the cultivated freedom of the art scene edges uncomfortably close to the inhuman lack of freedom of the camp. Making a link between scene and camp is undoubtedly going a step too far. The point, however, is that the freedom of the art scene within the capitalist *mise en scène* can be no more than a false freedom, because it inevitably stems

from a well-defined (or un-free) finality, primarily the pursuit of profit.

The fact that Richard Florida and his ilk are perfectly happy with this scene, as viewed from their neoliberal perspective, is suspect, to say the least. Of course, an interest in the art scene from politicians and managers need not lead to paranoia. Their focus does demonstrate to some extent, after all, that artistic phenomena have considerable social support. If and when this focus causes the exploitation of the creative scene, owing to its informality and ethic of freedom – a shift that would restructure biopolitics, bringing about a real lack of freedom – the art scene will have good reason for concern.

5. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Ce este un curator?

Claire Bishop

1.

Subiectul acestui articol este apariția, în jurul anilor 1968–1972, a două tipuri de auctorialitate: curatorul independent și artistul care produce instalații. Aceste auctorialități se nasc din impulsuri similare, dar conduc la funcții diferite. În elaborarea acestui text, mă voi situa pe o poziție contrară celei reprezentate de criticul de artă, filosoful și – ocazional – curatorul rus Boris Groys, care, într-un eseu recent, susține că nu se poate distinge între expoziții (curatoriate) și arta instalației (artistice). El scrie:

Cel puțin începând cu anii 1960, artiștii creează instalații, pentru a-și prezenta practicile personale de selecție. În orice caz, instalațiile nu sînt altceva decît expoziții curatoriate de artiști, în care obiecte produse de alții pot fi – și sînt – reprezentate în exact aceeași măsură ca și obiectele produse de artist. [...] Pe scurt, odată instituită identitatea dintre creație și selecție, rolul artistului și cel al curatorului au devenit, de asemenea, identice. Se mai distinge în mod curent între expoziție (curatoriată) și instalație (artistică), însă distincția a devenit, în fond, desuetă.¹

Astăzi, continuă Groys, nu mai putem vorbi de o autonomie auctorială a artistului, fiindcă el sau ea e implicat(ă) încă de la început în niște practici productive colaborative, colective, instituționalizate (p. 94). Cu alte cuvinte, de la Duchamp încoace, rolul curatorului și cel al artistului sînt unul și același, fiindcă ready-made-ul a pus semnul egal între creație și selecție. Astăzi, auctorialitatea nu mai e unică, susține Groys, ci e o „auctorialitate multiplă”, mai apropiată de cea a filmului, a producției teatrale sau a concertului.

Poziția lui Groys mi se pare izbitor de eronată. Deși există o regiune de suprapunere evidentă între auctorialitatea curatorială și cea artistică, e necugetat să le faci să fuzioneze. Pentru a distinge aceste roluri unul de altul, voi urmări trei etape: sancționarea instituțională a artei instalației, apariția curatorului independent și tensiunea dintre ele în momentul apariției criticii instituționale.

2.

Istoria artei instalației și cea a curatoriei cunosc, desigur, interfețe. În cartea sa *The Power of Display: A History of Exhi-*

WHAT IS A CURATOR?

Claire Bishop

1.

The subject of this paper is the emergence, around 1968–1972, of two types of authorship: the independent curator and the installation artist. These authorships arise from similar impulses, but lead to different functions. In making this argument, I will position myself against the Russian art critic, philosopher and occasional curator Boris Groys, who, in a recent essay, maintains that there is no distinction between (curated) exhibitions and (artistic) installation art. He writes:

At least since the 1960s, artists have created installations in order to demonstrate their personal practices of selection. These installations, however, have been nothing other than exhibitions curated by artists, in which objects by others may be – and are – represented as well as objects by the artist. . . . In short, once the identification between creation and selection has been established, the roles of the artist and of the curator also became identical. A distinction between the (curated) exhibition and the (artistic) installation is still commonly made, but it is essentially obsolete.¹

Today, Groys continues, we can no longer speak of the authorial autonomy of the artist because he or she, from the beginning, is involved in collaborative, collective, institutionalised, productive practice (p. 94). In other words, since Duchamp, the roles of the curator and the artist are one and the same, because the ready-made equated the acts of creation and selection. Today, authorship is no longer singular, argues Groys, but a “multiple authorship” more akin to that of a film, a theatrical production or a concert. Groys’ argument strikes me as wrong. Although there is a clear point of overlap between curatorial and artistic authorship, it is unwise to conflate the two. To separate these roles I will take three steps: the institutional endorsement of installation art; the emergence of the independent curator; and the tension between them in the emergence of institutional critique.

2.

The histories of installation art and curating are of course intertwined. In her book *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition*

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bition *Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* [Puterea expunerii: O istorie a instalațiilor de expoziție de la Muzeul de Artă Modernă] (1998), Mary Anne Staniszewski prezintă instalația de expoziție ca pe un precursor al artei instalației. Ea susține că această deplasare se petrece la MoMA, prin expoziția *Spaces* [Spații] (1970) și prin seriile *Project Rooms* [Săli-proiect] (1971).² Aceste expuneri de instalații au avut un impact imediat asupra rolului curatorului, Jennifer Licht, pentru că nu mai exista niciun „obiect” pe care ea să-l instaleze, ci doar o serie de funcții tehnice și administrative pe care trebuia să le îndeplinească. După cum remarcă Staniszewski în legătură cu *Spaces*, această nouă funcție curatorială includea asigurarea finanțării private sub forma covoarelor, iluminării, tabloului acustic, pinilor miniaturali, a stroboscoapelor etc. Ea a atras atenția asupra ironiei faptului că, cu cât mai mulți artiști își declarau autonomia prin tratarea galeriei ca un cadru neutru pentru instalațiile lor, cu atât mai mult sporea accesul corporațiilor în calitate de cosponsori ai lucrărilor.

O convergență similară a designului de expoziție și a artei instalației are loc în același timp în Europa, deși cu un apel mai puțin consistent la sponsorizări. Ea poate fi observată la tradiția postminimalistă antisubiectivă (de exemplu, Richard Long la Konrad Fisher, 1968; Daniel Buren la *Prospect 68*) și la o traiectorie cu un caracter auctorial mai accentuat subiectiv, precum instalația *Block Beuys* (1970) a lui Joseph Beuys sau instalațiile produse colectiv și reciclate continuu ale lui Paul Thek (1971–1973).³ În fiecare din aceste exemple, artistul ce produce instalații realizează o diversificare a rolului curatorial, ceea ce rezultă în mod firesc într-o deplasare a interpretării curatoriale asupra aparatului din jurul expoziției. Instalația și autorul ei sînt unica unitate de semnificație – în locul propunerii de către curator a unui subiect tematic, istoric, generațional sau geografic care să unifice semnificații multiple, produse de autori individuali.

3.

Această tensiune e speculată cât se poate de vizibil la Documenta 5, din 1972, prima mare expoziție internațională la care un număr semnificativ de artiști produc instalații, punînd stăpînire pe o sală întreagă pentru a expune o singură lucrare (Michael Asher, Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, Paul Thek, Art and Language, Joseph Beuys și Vito Acconci).⁴ Expoziția era condusă de Harald Szeemann, cunoscut astăzi ca primul curator independent, după demisia sa de la Berne Kunsthalle din 1969.⁵ La Documenta 5, Szeemann a condus o echipă de curatori în producerea unei expoziții excentrice, sub titlul general *Questions of Reality: The Image-World Today* [Probleme ale realității: Lumea imaginii astăzi]. Expoziția era împărțită în 15 secțiuni disparate și prezenta realitatea nu doar prin opere de artă, ci prin spectrul mai larg al culturii vizuale: lucrări ale bolnavilor mentali, imagini științifico-fantastice, propagandă politică, bancnote elvețiene și „trivialrealism” (obiecte kitsch, printre care se numărau

Installations at the Museum of Modern Art (1998), Mary Anne Staniszewski presents exhibition installation as a precursor of installation art. She argues that this shift takes place at MoMA with the exhibition *Spaces* (1970) and the *Project Rooms* series (1971).² These exhibitions of installations immediately impacted upon the role of the curator, Jennifer Licht, because there was no longer an “object” for her to install, just a set of technical and administrative functions to fulfill. As Staniszewski notes in relation to *Spaces*, this new curatorial function included the securing of private sponsorship in the form of carpets, lighting, acoustic panels, miniature fir trees, strobe lights, etc. She points out the irony that the more artists asserted their autonomy by treating the museum gallery as a neutral framework for their installations, the more the corporation stepped in as co-sponsor of the work. A similar convergence of exhibition design and installation art takes place in Europe at the same time, albeit with less recourse to sponsorship. It can be seen in the anti-subjective post-minimalist tradition (e.g. Richard Long at Konrad Fischer, 1968; Daniel Buren at *Prospect 68*), and in a more subjectively authored trajectory, such as Joseph Beuys’ installation of the *Block Beuys* (1970) or the collectively-produced and continually recycled installations of Paul Thek (1971–1973).³ In each of these examples, the installation artist brings about a diversification of the curatorial role, with a consequent displacement of curatorial interpretation onto the apparatus surrounding the exhibition. The installation and its author are the singular unit of meaning – rather than the curator’s proposal of a thematic, historical, generational or geographic theme that unites multiple, individually-authored meanings.

3.

This tension is played out most conspicuously in Documenta 5, 1972, the first major international exhibition in which a significant number of artists work in installation, taking over an entire room to show one work (Michael Asher, Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, Paul Thek, Art and Language, Joseph Beuys and Vito Acconci).⁴ The exhibition was directed by Harald Szeemann, today celebrated as the first independent curator following his resignation from the Berne Kunsthalle in 1969.⁵ At Documenta 5, Szeemann led a team of curators to produce an eccentric exhibition under the general rubric *Questions of Reality: The Image-World Today*. The exhibition was split into 15 discrete sections, and presented reality not just through works of art, but through the broader field of visual culture: the work of the mentally ill, science fiction images, political propaganda, Swiss bank notes, and “trivialrealism” (kitsch objects including souvenirs of the Pope, military insignia, garden gnomes, and so on). Alongside these small displays were three themed panoramas of contemporary art, the most controversial being *Individual Mythologies*. This featured over 70 artists working in performance, installation and process art. Through this section, Szeemann posited that all artistic activity, even in its most political and



Harald Szeemann, press conference for Documenta 5, 1972, credit: Documenta archive

suveniruri cu papa, insigne militare, pitici de grădină și așa mai departe). Pe lângă aceste mici expuneri, mai erau trei panorame tematice ale artei contemporane, cea mai controversată fiind *Individual Mythologies* [Mitologii individuale]. Pe genericul acesteia figurau în jur de 70 de artiști angajați în performanțe-uri, instalații și artă bazată pe proces. Prin această secțiune, Szeemann afirma că orice activitate artistică, chiar și în formele sale cele mai accentuat politice și critice, privește formarea unei lumi interioare.⁶ După cum vă puteți imagina, o astfel de structură excentrică a încălcat convenția de-a expune doar artă înaltă la Documenta și a pus în așa măsură pe expoziție pecetea identității lui Szeemann, încât, din 1972 încoace, toate referirile la vreo ediție Documenta se fac prin menționarea numelui curatorului.⁷

Nu e poate surprinzător că această propunere s-a lovit de o reacție ostilă din partea unora dintre artiști, în special a acelor ale căror lucrări se opuneau explicit interiorității, expresiei și mitului. Zece artiști au cosemnat o scrisoare adresată publicației *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, plângându-se de viziunea curatorială a lui Szeemann, în timp ce alți doi au publicat articole aprinse în catalog.⁸ Daniel Buren l-a acuzat pe Szeemann că ar fi expus expoziția ca pe o lucrare de artă, afirmând că „Lucrările prezentate sînt pete de culoare alese cu grijă în tabloul pe care-l compun împreună ca pe-un întreg fiecare dintre secțiuni (săli)”.⁹ Am putea considera că această strategie ar fi acceptabilă dacă petele de culoare alese cu grijă ar fi obiecte alese de un artist; atunci n-ar mai fi niciun model concurent de auctorialitate. Însă, în viziunea lui Buren, Szeemann transformase muzeul într-un tablou „al cărui autor nu e nimeni altcineva decît organizatorul expoziției”. Auctorialitatea secundară sau metaauctorialitatea curatorului dislocase auctorialitatea principală a artistului. Esențialul în nemulțumirea lui Buren vizează pierderea de către artist a autonomiei sale, atunci cînd curatorul devine *auteur* – chiar dacă acesta eșuează în a recunoaște imposibilitatea unei prezentări „pure” și *invariabile* a artei.¹⁰

Pe un ton similar, de-acum celebrul eseu „Cultural Confinement” [Captivitate culturală] al lui Robert Smithson, publicat și el în catalogul Documenta 5, începe cu o admonestare la adresa „celui care face expoziția”, ca fiind un prizonier al semnificației culturale. Smithson aduce invective galeriei cu pereți albi, care separă arta de lumea exterioară, și împotriva impunerii metafizicii curatoriale. Aceasta pentru că ambele conspiră în favoarea consumului: lucrarea de artă „neutralizată, ineficientă, abstractă, sigură și lobotomizată politic” devine „gata să fie consumată de societate. Totul se reduce la nutreț vizual și la marfă transportabilă”.¹¹ Ceea ce sugerează aceasta e că o bună acțiune curatorială nu va expune pur și simplu conformîndu-se condițiilor date, ci va fi la fel de dialectică precum lucrarea pe care aspiră să o arate.

Scrisoarea de retragere a lui Robert Morris de la Documenta, datată 6 mai 1972, privește într-o manieră mai directă decalajul dintre auctorialitatea curatorială și cea artistică.

critical forms, concerns the formation of an interior world.⁶

As you can imagine, such an eccentric structure broke with the convention of showing only high art at Documenta, and stamped Szeemann's identity over the exhibition to the extent that since 1972, all Documentas have been referred to by the name of the curator.⁷

It is perhaps unsurprising that this proposition received a hostile response among some artists, particularly those whose work explicitly opposed interiority, expression and myth. Ten artists co-signed a letter to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* complaining about Szeemann's curatorial vision, while two others published heated essays in the catalogue.⁸ Daniel Buren accused Szeemann of exhibiting the exhibition as work of art, arguing that “The works presented are carefully chosen touches of color in the tableau that composes each section (room) as a whole.”⁹ One senses that this strategy would be acceptable if the carefully chosen touches of colour were *objects* chosen by an artist; then there would be no competing model of authorship. But in Buren's eyes, Szeemann turned the museum into a tableau “whose author is none other than the exhibition organizer”. The secondary or meta-authorship of the curator displaced the primary authorship of the artist. At the core of Buren's complaint is the artist's loss of autonomy when the curator becomes *auteur* – even while this fails to acknowledge the impossibility of a “pure” and *uninflected* presentation of art.¹⁰

In a similar vein, Robert Smithson's now celebrated essay “Cultural Confinement”, also published in the Documenta 5 catalogue, begins with an invective against the “exhibition maker” as prisoner of cultural meaning. Smithson rails against the white walled gallery that separates art from the outside world, and against the imposition of curatorial metaphysics. This is because both conspire towards consumption: the “neutralised, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomised” work of art becomes “ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise”.¹¹ The implication is that good curating will not just display according to given conventions, but be as dialectical as the works of art it aspires to show.

Robert Morris' letter of withdrawal from Documenta, dated 6 May 1972, more directly concerns the gap between artistic and curatorial authorship. Morris objected to having his work used illustrate “misguided sociological principles or outmoded art historical categories” – a clear reference to *Individual Mythologies*, whose premise could not be more removed from Morris' anti-expressionism. He complains that Szeemann has not consulted him as to which work will be shown, but has clearly indicated which work he wishes to include.¹² Morris also claims that Szeemann has not been in touch with him after he has expressed a desire to be represented by a different work to the one requested. This is important, for it introduces the idea that the curator has an *ethical* or moral obligation that is significantly different to an artist's *aesthetics* of artistic presentation. What Morris wants from a curator is someone who respects the artist's wishes, communicates clearly, and is available for negotiation.¹³

Morris obiectează împotriva faptului că lucrările sale fuseseră utilizate pentru a ilustra „principii sociologice care induc în eroare sau categorii depășite ale istoriei artei” – o aluzie clară la *Individual Mythologies*, ale cărei premise n-ar putea fi mai străine de antiexpresionismul lui Morris. El se plînge că Szeemann nu l-ar fi consultat în privința lucrării care urma să fie expusă, ci s-ar fi pronunțat fără echivoc asupra celei pe care voia să o includă.¹² Morris mai susținea să Szeemann nu l-ar mai fi contactat după ce și-a exprimat dorința să fie reprezentat de o altă lucrare decât cea solicitată. Acest lucru e important, pentru că introduce ideea conform căreia curatorul ar avea o obligație etică sau morală distinctă în mod semnificativ de estetica prezentării artistice a artistului. Ceea ce vrea Morris de la un curator e ca acesta să respecte dorințele artistului, să comunice într-o manieră limpede și să fie disponibil pentru negocieri.¹³ Cu alte cuvinte, o figură subordonată artistului și care să nu-i conteste auctorialitatea. Nu există o manieră mai relevantă de-a înțelege aceste așteptări decât aceea de-a ne imagina aceste reclamații adresate unei instalații sau unei expoziții curatoriate de un artist. Cu toate că atât curatorierea, cât și instalația se ocupă cu selecția, ele funcționează în sfere discursive distincte: selecția curatorială e întotdeauna o negociere etică a unor auctorialități preexistente, spre deosebire de creația artistică de semnificații sui-generis.

4.

Musée d'Art Moderne al lui Marcel Broodthaers (1968–1972) e esențial pentru elaborarea acestei interacțiuni complexe dintre putere și responsabilitate. Ca un prim exemplu de artist prezentînd o expoziție ca artă a instalației (în loc de o *mise-en-scène* a lucrărilor de către unul din contemporani, bunăoară Duchamp, în 1938), instalația-muzeu fictională a lui Broodthaers nu poate fi privită în afara contextului mai larg al luptei pentru autonomie și autodeterminare care și-a atins punctul culminant în timpul protestelor din 1968. *Musée d'Art Moderne* a fost instituit, scria Broodthaers, „sub presiunea situației politice a vremii sale”: el „împărtășea anumite trăsături cu evenimentele din 1968, altfel spus, cu un gen de evenimente politice pe care l-a experimentat fiecare țară”.¹⁴ Broodthaers participase la ocuparea Palais des Beaux-Arts în mai 1968, iar instalarea *Musée d'Art Moderne* în propria sa casă patru luni mai târziu e un fapt indisociabil de motivele care au dus la această ocupare: dorința de-a exercita control asupra culturii și de-a conduce, în loc de-a fi condus de către o autoritate. Într-o scrisoare deschisă scrisă la sfîrșitul ocupației, datată 7 iunie 1968, Broodthaers exprima aceste sentimente în maniera eliptică care îi e caracteristică:

Ce e cultura? Eu scriu. Am ocupat etajul. Sînt negociator pentru o oră sau două. Eu spun eu. Îmi reiau atitudinea care mi-e proprie. Mi-e teamă de anonim. (Aș dori să controlez *sensul/direcția* culturii.)¹⁵

Primul avatar al *Musée d'Art Moderne* al lui Broodthaers, *Section XIXème Siècle*, cuprindea o serie de săli în care erau

In other words, a figure who is subservient to the artist and who does not contest his/her authorship.

There is no clearer way to grasp these expectations than to imagine these complaints applied to an installation, or to an artist-curated exhibition. Although both curating and installation are concerned with selection, they function within different discursive spheres: curatorial selection is always an ethical negotiation of pre-existing authorships, rather than the artistic creation of meaning sui generis.

4.

Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne* (1968–1972) is essential to elaborating this complex interplay of power and responsibility. As the first instance of an artist presenting an exhibition as installation art (rather than the *mise-en-scène* of work by one's contemporaries, e.g. Duchamp 1938), Broodthaers' fictional museum installation cannot be seen apart from the larger context of the battle for autonomy and self-determination that climaxed in the protests of 1968. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* was founded, wrote Broodthaers, “under pressure of the political period of its time”: it “shared a character connected to the events of 1968, that is, to a type of political event experienced by every country”.¹⁴ Broodthaers had participated in the occupation of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in May 1968, and the installation of a *Musée d'Art Moderne* in his own home four months later is indissociable from the motives leading to this occupation: a desire to exert control over culture, and to steer rather than be steered by authority. In an open letter written at the end of the occupation, dated 7 June 1968, Broodthaers expressed these sentiments in a characteristically elliptical fashion:

What is culture? I write. I have taken the floor. I am a negotiator for an hour or two. I say I. I resume my personal attitude. I fear anonymity. (I would like to control the *meaning/direction* of culture.)¹⁵

The first avatar of Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne*, the *Section XIXème Siècle*, comprised a series of rooms in which the trappings of exhibition installation were themselves staged: packing crates, ladders, signage, and so on. It was an installation created from the *mise-en-scène* of the apparatus of installing art. Broodthaers added to this installation with announcements, signs, open letters, invitations and speeches, all of which has been extensively discussed as a strategy to invoke the apparatus of institutional authority as a performative repertoire of conventions.¹⁶ The signs and postcards also evoke the nineteenth century, and we can speculate why this might be. In this period, the public museum replaced the private collection of art, the avant-garde emerged in opposition to the academy, and the romantic paradigm of individual artist genius was instantiated. The nineteenth century therefore provides an ambivalent model: the emergence of a democratic public space, but also the institutionalisation of bourgeois individualism.



Marcel Broodthaers installing *Musée d'Art Moderne*, *Section de Publicité*, Documenta 5, 1972, credit: Documenta archive

expuse înseși efectele expoziției: cutii pentru ambalat, scări mobile, plăcuțe semnalizatoare și așa mai departe. Era o instalație creată prin punerea în scenă a aparatului instalării artei. Broodthaers mai incluse în instalație anunțuri, semne, scrisori deschise, invitații și discursuri, iar despre toate se discutate îndelung, făcând din ele o strategie de invocare a aparatului autorității instituționale în calitate de repertoriu performativ de convenții.¹⁶ Semnele și cărțile poștale evocau, de asemenea, secolul al XIX-lea și putem presupune ce voia să însemne aceasta. La acea vreme, muzeul public luase locul colecției de artă private, avangarda își făcuse apariția ca o opoziție față de stilul academic, iar paradigma romantică a geniului artistic individual își găsisse reprezentanți. Prin urmare, secolul al XIX-lea furnizează un model ambivalent: emergența unui spațiu public democratic, dar și instituționalizarea individualismului burghez. Tocmai în această tensiune dintre privat și public își face apariția funcția curatorului, mediind între împlinirea privată și noua sferă publică. După închiderea instalației de la Bruxelles în septembrie 1969, au apărut numeroase avataruri ale *Musée d'Art Moderne*.¹⁷ Cea mai mare și mai ambițioasă secțiune s-a deschis în mai 1972 la Düsseldorf Kunsthalle: *Section des Figures, The Eagle from the Oligocene to Today* [Secțiunea figurilor, Vulturul din oligocen pînă azi], o expoziție cu peste 300 de obiecte împrumutate de la peste patruzeci de muzee și colecții private, fiecare purtând imaginea unui vultur, și care erau instalate convențional pe pereți și în vitrine. Fiecare obiect era însoțit de o etichetă care afirma, în engleză, franceză sau germană, „Aceasta nu este o lucrare de artă” – o prescurtare a *Trădării imaginii* a lui Magritte din 1928, cu logica *Fîntînii* lui Duchamp din 1917. Broodthaers scria că titlurile picturilor lui Magritte furnizează un surplus care excedează explicația rațională: ele „pecetluiesc, pur și simplu, neînțelegerea privitorului și deplasează lucrarea într-o sferă intelectuală unde e făcută să fie cu totul inaccesibilă oricărei interpretări obișnuite”.¹⁸ Împrumutînd formula deictică „Aceasta este...” din pictura lui Magritte (formulă reluată recent de Tino Sehgal), Broodthaers permitea interpretării să prolifereze: „aceasta” se putea referi la cuvîntul din propoziție, la eticheta însăși, la obiectul singular lîngă care era așezată, la grupul de obiecte din vitrină, la expoziția însăși sau la actul descifrării ei. Multiplele straturi ale acestei negații amintesc aici de un pasaj din eseul lui Michel Foucault despre René Magritte, *Aceasta nu este o pipă* (1968), pe care Broodthaers îl recomandă cititorilor în catalogul său de la expoziția din Düsseldorf. Concentrîndu-și atenția asupra unei versiuni tîrzii a picturii *Les Deux Mystères* [Cele două mistere] (1966) a lui Magritte, Foucault observa:

Totul este legat tracic în interiorul unui spațiu de școală: pe o tablă este „arătat” un desen care „arată” forma unei pipe; iar un text scris de un învățător zelos „arată” că într-adevăr despre o pipă e vorba. Deși nu se vede, degetul arătător al profesorului domnește peste tot, la fel ca și vocea sa, care tocmai este pe cale de a articula cît

It is in this tension between private and public that the function of the curator comes into play, mediating between private accomplishment and the new public sphere.

Numerous avatars of the *Musée d'Art Moderne* appeared following the closure of the Brussels installation in September 1969.¹⁷

The largest and most ambitious section opened in May 1972 at the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle: the *Section des Figures, The Eagle from the Oligocene to Today*, an exhibition of over 300 objects borrowed from over forty museums and private collections, each of which bore the image of an eagle, and which were conventionally installed on the walls and in vitrines. Each object was accompanied by a label stating, in English, French or German, “This is not a work of art” – a contraction of Magritte’s *The Treason of Images*, 1928, with the logic of Duchamp’s *Fountain*, 1917. Broodthaers wrote that the titles of Magritte’s paintings provided a surplus that exceeded rational explanation: they “simply seal the viewer’s incomprehension and displace the work into an intellectual realm where it is rendered completely unavailable to any common interpretation”.¹⁸ By borrowing the deictic “This is...” of Magritte’s painting (a formula recently reprised by Tino Sehgal), Broodthaers could allow interpretation to proliferate: “this” could refer to the word in the sentence, the label itself, the individual object it sat next to, the grouping of objects in a vitrine, the exhibition itself or the act of deciphering it. The many layers of negation here echo a passage in Michel Foucault’s essay on René Magritte, *This is Not a Pipe* (1968), which Broodthaers recommended to readers in his catalogue to the Düsseldorf exhibition. Focusing on a late version of Magritte’s painting called *Les Deux Mystères* (1966), Foucault observes that:

Everything is solidly anchored within a pedagogic space. A painting “shows” a drawing that “shows” the form of a pipe; a text written by a zealous instructor “shows” that a pipe is really what is meant. We do not see the teacher’s pointer, but it rules throughout – precisely like his voice, in the act of articulating very clearly, “This is a pipe.” From painting to image, from image to text, from text to voice, a sort of imaginary pointer indicates, shows, fixes, locates, imposes a system of references, *tries to stabilise a unique space*. But why have we introduced the teacher’s voice? Because scarcely has he stated, “This is not a pipe, but a drawing of a pipe”, “This is not a pipe but a sentence saying that this is not a pipe”, “The sentence ‘this is not a pipe’ is not a pipe”, “In the sentence ‘this is not a pipe’, *this* is not a pipe: the painting, written sentence, drawing of a pipe – all this is not a pipe.”¹⁹

It is not difficult to transpose this voice of the teacher, attempting to stabilise meaning, to that of the curator: both embody an institutional authority that mediates between the work of art and its pupils/viewers. At stake is the site of meaning and the impossibility of “showing” this meaning in a word or an object. Foucault ends his chapter with a vision of the pipe rising above the blackboard/easel and the children laughing – because even *this* pipe is not a pipe, but yet another drawing of a pipe, exact-

se poate de clar: „aceasta este o pipă“. De la tablă la imagine, de la imagine la text și de la text la voce, un fel de deget arătător general indică, arată, fixează, reperează, impune un sistem de trimeri, *încearcă să stabilizeze un spațiu unic*. Dar de ce am introdus și vocea profesorului? Căci abia a apucat să spună „aceasta este o pipă“, că el s-a și văzut nevoit să revină și să corecteze îngăimînd: „aceasta nu este o pipă, ci desenul unei pipe“, „aceasta nu este o pipă, ci o frază care spune că este o pipă“, „fraza «aceasta nu este o pipă» nu este o pipă“, „în fraza «aceasta nu este o pipă», aceasta nu este o pipă: tabloul acesta, fraza aceasta scrisă, desenul aceasta înfățișînd o pipă, nimic din toate acestea nu este o pipă“. ¹⁹

Nu e greu să transpui această voce a profesorului, care urmărește stabilizarea semnificației, asupra celei a curatorului: ambii întruchipează o autoritate instituțională care mediază între lucrarea artistică și elevii/privitorii săi. În joc sînt locul semnificației și imposibilitatea de-a „arăta“ această semnificație într-un cuvînt sau într-un obiect. Foucault își încheie capitolul cu o viziune a pipei care se ridică deasupra tablei/șevaletului și cu copiii care rîd – pentru că nici măcar această pipă nu este o pipă, ci doar un alt desen reprezentînd o pipă, exact la fel ca acela din tablou (sau din tabloul în tablou). El are în vedere un colaps al semnificației: șevaletul se prăbușește, pictura cade pe podea, cuvintele se risipesc. ²⁰ *Section des Figures* a lui Broodthaers – și, desigur, tot ce aparține *Musée d'Art Moderne* – poate fi văzută ca încurajînd o astfel de ruptură cu interpretarea pedagogică: cu cuvintele lui Foucault, ea nimicește „«sintaxa», și nu numai pe aceea care construiește frazele – ci și aceea, mai puțin manifestă, care face «să stea împreună» (alături sau față în față) cuvintele și lucrurile“. ²¹

„Să stea împreună“: cuvintele dintr-o propoziție și lucrările de artă dintr-un spațiu. Numindu-se el însuși în funcția de director al muzeului, Broodthaers se asigură că nimeni nu poate vorbi în numele lui și înlocuiește ventriloquismul curatorial cu o dublă auctorialitate – selecție/creație, dar și mediere. ²² În această privință, e nimerit faptul că ultimul avatar al *Musée d'Art Moderne* a fost prezentat la Documenta 5 din 1972 și că includea *Section Publicité* – folosirea vulturului în publicitate, expusă împreună cu însăși arhiva muzeului, funcționînd una pentru cealaltă ca reclamă. Aceasta era însoțită de *Section d'Art Moderne*, amplasată în subsecțiunea *Muzeele artiștilor* a lui Szeemann. În instalație figura o placă așezată pe podea, înconjurată de stîlpi ce purtau sloganul „Proprietate privată“, scris în trei limbi; în ultima lună a expoziției, Broodthaers a schimbat inscripția, motivînd transformarea după cum urmează:

„Proprietate privată“ – prezentarea acestei inscripții poate fi înțeleasă ca o satiră la adresa identificării Artei cu Proprietatea privată. Putem vedea aici și expresia puterii mele artistice, destinată să se substituie celei a organizatorului – Szeemann de la Documenta 5 – (secțiunea *Individual Mythologies*).

ly the same as the one in the picture (or picture within a picture). He envisages a collapse of meaning: the easel breaks, the painting falls to the floor, the words scatter. ²⁰ Broodthaers' *Section des Figures*, and indeed all of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, can be seen as encouraging such a rupture with pedagogic interpretation: in the words of Foucault, it shatters “not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to but also opposite one another) to ‘hang together’”. ²¹

Hanging together: words in a sentence, and works of art in a space. By appointing himself the museum's director, Broodthaers ensures that he cannot be spoken for, and dislodges curatorial ventriloquism with a twofold authorship – selection/creation, but also mediation. ²² In this respect it is fitting that the final avatar of the *Musée d'Art Moderne* took place at Documenta 5 in 1972 and included the *Section Publicité* – the use of the eagle in advertising, shown alongside the Museum's own archive, functioning as publicity for each other. It was accompanied by the *Section d'Art Moderne*, located in Szeemann's sub-section *Artists' Museums*. This installation featured a plaque on the floor surrounded by stanchions, bearing the slogan “Private Property” in three languages; in the last month of the exhibition, Broodthaers changed this inscription, accounting for this shift as follows:

“Private property” – the presentation of this inscription can be understood as as satire on the identification of Art with Private property. One can also see here the expression of my artistic power as it is destined to replace that of the organiser – Szeemann from Documenta 5 – (section *Individual Mythologies*).

The second aim, finally, seemed to me not to have been attained, and on the contrary, the inscription reinforces the structure put in place.

Whence the change, – for one of the roles of the artist is to attempt, at least, to carry out a subversion of the organisational scheme of an exhibition. ²³

The words of the revised inscription are a series of eleven verbs ending in *pouvoir*, “to be able to”, and the only verb capable of functioning as a noun, “power”: the final line of the inscription, *faire informer pouvoir*, therefore operates ambiguously as “make inform power” or “make power inform”. At its closure, then, the *Musée d'Art Moderne* enacts a struggle that pits the first curator-auteur against the first artist-curator. Who constructs meaning, and on whose behalf?

5.

But – to paraphrase Foucault paraphrasing Beckett – does it really matter who is speaking? Because what is at stake is not the precise and pedantic difference between the curator and the artist, but the different discourses within which each player functions. It is evident that the rise of the independent curator has problematised the idea of collective authorship, highlighting the need for a more nuanced vocabulary to address this. Boris Groys is not the only writer to compare the curatorial role

În sfârșit, mi se părea că al doilea scop n-ar fi fost atins și că, dimpotrivă, inscripția întărea structura instaurată. De unde și schimbarea – fiindcă unul din rolurile artistului este acela de a încerca – măcar – să determine o subminare a schemei organizaționale a unei expoziții.²³ Cuvintele încripției revizuite sînt o serie de unsprezece verbe care se sfîrșesc cu *pouvoir*, „a fi capabil să”, și unicul verb ce poate funcționa ca substantiv, „putere”: ultimul rînd al inscripției, *faire informer pouvoir*, operează prin urmare ambiguu ca „a informa puterea” sau „putere de-a informa”. Astfel, la închiderea sa, *Musée d'Art Moderne* pune în scenă o luptă care-l angajează pe primul curator-*auteur* împotriva primului artist-curator. Cine construiește semnificația și pe seama cui?

5.

Însă – pentru a-l parafraza pe Foucault, care-l parafraza pe Beckett – contează oare cu adevărat cine vorbește? Fiindcă ceea ce e în joc nu e diferența precisă și pedantă dintre curator și artist, ci diferitele discursuri între limitele cărora funcționează fiecare jucător. E evident că apariția curatorului independent a problematizat ideea auctorialității colective, subliniind nevoia unui vocabular mai nuanțat pentru formularea acestor chestiuni. Boris Groys nu e singurul autor care compară rolul curatorului cu *auteur*-ul cinematografic: Rob Storr îl compară pe curator cu un regizor de film care are ultimul cuvînt de spus – dar și cu un redactor literar care negociază cu editorii și cu scriitorii pentru a obține „cea mai bună” versiune cu puțină a cărții.²⁴ Pentru Ralph Rugoff, curatorul este un custode; pentru Viktor Misiano, un agent matrimonial.²⁵ În eseul lor din 1989 intitulat „Museum Curator to Exhibition *Auteur*” [De la curatorul muzeului la autorul de expoziții], sociologii Nathalie Heinrich și Michael Pollack compară și ei recent evidențiată poziție a curatorului cu *auteur*-ul din teoria cinematografiei, însă merg puțin mai departe, atribuind schimbările care au afectat acest rol proliferării expozițiilor și muzeelor.²⁶ Dezvoltarea exponențială a industriei culturale reclamă noi abilități din partea curatorului: „un rol administrativ mai cuprinzător, determinarea unui cadru conceptual, selectarea unor colaboratori specializați din diferite discipline, conducerea unor echipe de lucru, consultarea unui arhitect, asumarea unei poziții formale în privința prezentării, organizarea publicării unui catalog enciclopedic etc.” (p. 236). E semnificativ faptul că multe din aceste roluri fără legătură directă între ele sînt legate de marketing: există mai multe expoziții pentru că există mai multe evenimente în arta contemporană, concurînd fiecare pentru un public cît mai extins, pentru cît mai multe cronici, cît mai multe finanțări, cît mai multe sponsorizări și pentru vizibilitate cît mai mare pe radarele artei internaționale. Rolul extins al curatorului e adecvat cu și e inseparabil de producțiile promoționale ale industriei culturale.

to the cinema *auteur*: Rob Storr compares the curator to a film director who has the final cut – but also to a literary editor who negotiates with publishers and writers to get the “best” version of work that can be attained.²⁴ For Ralph Rugoff, the curator is a caretaker; for Viktor Misiano, a psychoanalyst; for Jean-Christophe Ammann, a matchmaker.²⁵ In their 1989 essay “Museum Curator to Exhibition *Auteur*”, the sociologists Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollack also compare the recently singularised position of curator to the *auteur* in cinema theory, but go one step further in attributing the changes in this role to the proliferation of exhibitions and museums.²⁶ The exponential growth of the culture industry requires new skills of the curator: “an enlarged administrative role, determining a conceptual framework, selecting specialised collaborators from various disciplines, directing work crews, consulting with an architect, assuming a formal position in terms of presentation, organising the publishing of an encyclopaedic catalogue, etc.” (p. 236). It is significant that many of these extraneous roles relate to marketing: there are more exhibitions because there are more venues for contemporary art, each competing for more audiences, more reviews, more funding, more sponsorship, and more profile on the international art radar. The expanded role of the curator dovetails with, and is inseparable from, the promotional productions of the culture industry. But this is only half of the story. The newly singularised role of the curator is inseparable from changes in artistic production that took place during the years 1968–1972 – the years bracketing Broodthaers’ *Musée d'Art Moderne*. These are the years of a power-struggle, not simply for control of a space, but for a control of meaning (and in the case of Broodthaers, the claim to a profoundly ambiguous meaning). Today, when the influence of the independent critic has been supplanted by a not-so independent curator as an arbiter of taste – a semi-celebrity sought after by artists and gallerists alike – it seems ever more pressing to recognise the function of authorial autonomy that is evacuated in Groys’ claim that the curator and installation artist are a single entity. That installation art – whose ephemeral and experiential *modus operandi* so often sought to evade the market and the museum – ends up a factor in the promotion of both the museum and the curator, is an irony that perhaps only Broodthaers anticipated.

Însă aceasta e doar o jumătate a poveștii. Recent evidențiatul rol al curatorului e inseparabil de schimbările desfășurate în producția artistică din perioada 1968–1972 – anii care au delimitat existența Musée d'Art Moderne al lui Broodthaers. Aceștia sînt anii unei lupte pentru putere – nu doar pentru controlul asupra unui spațiu, ci pentru controlul asupra semnificației (iar în cazul lui Broodthaers, ai reclamării unei semnificații profund ambigue). Astăzi, cînd influența criticului independent a fost înlăturată de un curator nu chiar atât de independent în calitate de arbitru al gustului – o semi-celebritate rîvnită de artiști și de galeriști deopotrivă –, pare chiar mai urgentă recunoașterea funcției autonomiei auctoriale, care a fost evacuată prin pretenția lui Groys că artistul care produce instalații și curatorul ar fi una și aceeași entitate. Faptul că arta instalației – al cărei *modus operandi* efemer și experiențial încerca cel mai adesea să se debaraseze de piață și de muzeu – sîrșește prin a fi un factor care promovează atât muzeul, cît și curatorul e o ironie pe care poate doar Broodthaers a anticipat-o.

Traducere de Veronica Lazăr

Note:

1. Boris Groys, „Multiple Authorship”, in Barbara Vanderlinden și Elena Filipovic (eds.), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Exhibitions and Biennials*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2006, pp. 93–99. Am fost invitată să scriu o replică de 150 de cuvinte la acest eseu; o sarcină imposibilă. Articolul de față încearcă să dea un răspuns complet.
2. Ea susține că prima instalație din această serie, realizată de Keith Sonnier, „a transferat dimensiunile creative și ideologice ale designului unei expoziții asupra unui individ”, înscrind-le în semnătura artistului. Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1998, p. 286.
3. Beuys a instalat colecția lui Karl Ströher de lucrări ale sale la Hessisches Landesmuseum din Darmstadt, în 1970; aceasta nu a mai fost mutată sau deinstalată de atunci. Variațiuni la *Pyramid/A Work in Progress* a lui Paul Thek, expusă la Moderna Museet în 1971–1972, au fost prezentate ca *A Station of the Cross* (Galerie M. E. Thelen, Essen, 1972), *Ark, Pyramid* (Documenta 5, 1972), *Ark, Pyramid – Easter* (Kunstmuseum Lucern, 1973), și *Art, Pyramid – Christmas* (Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg, 1973).
4. Scriind în *Artforum*, Carter Ratcliff era convins că doar trei lucrări reușiseră să reziste autorității comenzi curatoriale prin afirmarea propriilor condiții privind angajamentul și toate trei erau instalații (Nauman, Asher și Serra).
5. Demisia lui Szeemann a avut loc în urma receptării ostile pe care o întâmpinase din partea orașului *When Attitudes Became Form* [Cînd atitudinile au devenit formă], expoziția sa inovatoare de artă bazată pe proces, antiformă și Arte Povera.
6. Titlul, *Individual Mythologies*, trebuia inițial să fie *Shamanism and Mysticism*, ca omagiu adus lui Joseph Beuys. Szeemann a operat inteligent această schimbare, pentru a face aluzie la mai puțin cunoscutul artist francez Etienne Martin, care-și descria propriile sculpturi ca „mitologii personale”. Vezi Harald Szeemann, „III Documenta 5”, in *Écrire les Expositions*, Bruxelles, La Lettre Volée, 1996, pp. 24–33. Celelalte două mari secțiuni de la Documenta 5 erau *Realismus*, care prezenta tendința tipică anilor '70 spre fotorealism în pictură și sculptură, și *Idea + Idea/Light*, lucrare conceptuală realizată de artiști printre care se numărau Art and Language, Berndt și Hilla Becher și Hanne Darboven.
7. Vezi Gabriele Mackert, „At Home in Contradictions: Harald Szeemann's Documenta”, in *Archive in Motion: 50 Years Documenta 1955–2005*, Kassel, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, 2005, pp. 253–261.

Notes:

1. Boris Groys, „Multiple Authorship”, in Barbara Vanderlinden și Elena Filipovic (eds.), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Exhibitions and Biennials*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2006, pp. 93–99. I was invited to respond to this essay in 150 words; an impossible task. The present paper goes towards a full response.
2. She argues that the first installation in this series, by Keith Sonnier, “transferred the creative and ideological dimensions of an exhibition design to an individual”, inscribing it within the artists’ signature. Mary Ann Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1998, p. 286.
3. Beuys installed Karl Ströher’s collection of his work at the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt in 1970; it has not been moved or deinstalled since that date. Variations on Paul Thek’s *Pyramid/A Work in Progress*, shown at the Moderna Museet in 1971–1972, were presented as *A Station of the Cross* (Galerie M. E. Thelen, Essen, 1972), *Ark, Pyramid* (Documenta 5, 1972), *Ark, Pyramid – Easter* (Kunstmuseum Lucern, 1973), and *Art, Pyramid – Christmas* (Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg, 1973).
4. Writing in *Artforum*, Carter Ratcliff thought that only three works managed to resist the exhibition’s overbearing curatorial remit by asserting their own terms of engagement, and it is telling that all three are installations (Nauman, Asher and Serra).
5. Szeemann’s resignation followed the city’s hostile reception to *When Attitudes Became Form*, his groundbreaking exhibition of process-based art, anti-form and Arte Povera.
6. The title, *Individual Mythologies*, was originally to be called *Shamanism and Mysticism*, in homage to Joseph Beuys. Szeemann wisely changed this to allude to the little-known French artist Etienne Martin, who described his own sculptures as “personal mythologies”. See Harald Szeemann, “III. Documenta 5”, in *Écrire les Expositions*, Brussels, La Lettre Volée, 1996, pp. 24–33. The other two large sections of Documenta 5 were *Realismus*, showing the 70s trend for photorealism in painting and sculpture, and *Idea + Idea/Light*, conceptual work by artists including Art and Language, Berndt and Hilla Becher, and Hanne Darboven.
7. See Gabriele Mackert, “At Home in Contradictions: Harald Szeemann’s Documenta”, in *Archive in Motion: 50 Years Documenta 1955–2005*, Kassel, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, 2005, pp. 253–261.
8. Letter to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 May 1972, signed by Carl Andre, Hans Haacke, Donald Judd, Barry Le Va, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Dorothea Rockburne, Fred Sandback, Richard Serra and Robert Smithson. The basic thrust of this brief letter is that the artist should be allowed to make his/her own decisions about their works and contributions to an exhibition. The letter is reproduced in *Archive in Motion*, p. 259.
9. “These sections (castrations), themselves carefully chosen ‘touches of color’ in the tableau that makes up the exhibition as a whole and in its very principle, only appear by placing themselves under the wing of the organizer, who reunifies art by rendering it equivalent everywhere in the case/screen that he prepares for it.” Daniel Buren, “Exposition d’une exposition”, in *Documenta 5*, 1972, section 17, p. 29, English translation taken from the web project *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist* [http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/index.html].
10. It is perhaps intriguing that Buren – an artist whose work has engaged in a radical desubjectivisation of expressive forms such as painting, and a critique of art’s autonomy through the development of site-specific interventions – should now lament art’s lack of autonomy. Returning to this text thirty years later, in his contribution to *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist*, Buren admitted that his position had not changed: “This does not mean that exhibitions do not require an organiser – they clearly do – the difference is between an organiser-interpreter and an

8. Scrisoare către *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 mai 1972, semnată de Carl Andre, Hans Haacke, Donald Judd, Barry Le Va, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Dorothea Rockburne, Fred Sandback, Richard Serra și Robert Smithson. Principala linie de atac a acestei scurte scrisori susține că artistului ar trebui să-i fie permis să ia singur deciziile în privința lucrărilor și contribuțiilor sale la expoziții. Scrisoarea e reprodusă în *Archive in Motion*, p. 259.
9. „Aceste secțiuni (castrăn), ele însele «pete de culoare» alese cu grijă în tabloul pe care-l constituie expoziția ca întreg prin însuși principiul ei, apar doar plasându-se sub aripa organizatorului, care reunifică arta făcând-o să fie aceeași ori-care ar fi sertiurul/ecranul pe care i-l pregătește.” Daniel Buren, „Exposition d'une exposition”, în *Documenta 5*, 1972, secțiunea 17, p. 29, traducere englezăscă preluată din proiectul web *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist* [http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/index.html].
10. E, poate, curios faptul că Buren – un artist ale cărui lucrări erau angajate într-o desubiectivizare radicală a formelor de expresie cum e pictura și într-o critică a autonomiei artei prin desfășurarea unor intervenții asupra unor locuri determinate [*site-specific interventions*] – deplîngea acum lipsa de autonomie a artei. Revenind treizeci de ani mai târziu asupra acestui text, în contribuția sa la *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist*, Buren a recunoscut că poziția sa a rămas neschimbată: „Asta nu înseamnă că expozițiile nu au nevoie de un organizator – cu siguranță au nevoie de unul –, însă diferența este aceea dintre organizatorul-interpret și organizatorul-autor. Cu cel din urmă, cel care ajunge să fie expus este curatorul, și nu lucrarea de artă”. Daniel Buren, contribuție la proiectul web *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist*.
11. Smithson afirmă că nu există nicio libertate în „procesul” de explorare din spațiul predeterminat al galeriei neutre; în schimb, el pledează în favoarea unei „dialectici care caută o lume în afara limitărilor culturale”, adică riscând să se angajeze în spațiul extraartistic. Vezi Robert Smithson, „Cultural Confinement”, în Jack Flam (ed.), *Robert Smithson Collected Writings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 155. *Process* era una din subdiviziunile secțiunii *Individual Mythologies* de la Documenta 5.
12. După cum o știu curatorii practicieni, acest lucru poate fi interpretat în două feluri: artiștii vor să expună mereu lucrări noi, iar Szeemann e perfect îndreptățit să-și exprime interesul față de o anumită piesă; pe de altă parte, am putea bănui că scrisoarea lui Szeemann avea poate un ton mai curînd asertiv (Morris: „a dictat”), sugerînd dorința conformării față de un concept.
13. În sfîrșit – și pentru a mai dezvolta puțin această temă etică –, Morris își exprimă dezaprobarea față de faptul că Szeemann ar fi împrumutat una din lucrările sale de la un colecționar, fără a-l informa mai întîi pe artist. Scrisoarea lui Morris e reprodusă în *Archive in Motion: 50 Years Documenta 1955–2005*, p. 258.
14. Marcel Broodthaers, scrisoare deschisă cu ocazia Documenta 5, 1972, și interviu cu Jürgen Harten și Katharina Schmidt, care au circulat ca declarații de presă cu ocazia expoziției sale de la Düsseldorf Kunsthalle, din 1972; ambele sînt citate în Douglas Crimp, „This is Not a Museum of Art”, în *Marcel Broodthaers*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Centre/New York, Rizzoli, 1989, p. 75.
15. Marcel Broodthaers, scrisoare deschisă, datată Palais des Beaux-Arts, 7 iunie 1968, adresată „Prietenilor mei”. Citată în Douglas Crimp, „This is Not a Museum of Art”, p. 76.
16. Pentru o discuție mai pe larg despre *Musée d'Art Moderne*, vezi Rainer Borge-meister, „Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present”, în *October*, nr. 42, toamna 1987, pp. 135–154 și eseul lui Douglas Crimp „This is Not a Museum of Art”.
17. Incluzînd *Section VIIème Siècle* (Amsterdam, 1969), *Section Cinéma* (Düsseldorf, 1971) și *Section Financière* (Cologne Art Fair, 1971).
18. Marcel Broodthaers, „Imaginary Interview with René Magritte”, în René Magritte, *Écrits complets*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971, pp. 728–729.
19. Michel Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, pp. 29–30 [„Aceasta nu este o pipă”, traducere de Bogdan Ghiu, în *Ce este un autor? Studii și conferințe*, Cluj, Idea Design & Print, 2004, p. 21]. Italicele îmi aparțin.
20. „Locul comun – lucrare banală sau lecție cotidiană – s-a evaporat” (p. 31 [21]). Prin „loc comun” Foucault înțelege aînt fundamentul limbajului și al ideilor pe care-l împărtășim cu toții, cît și „platitudine” în sensul obișnuit; în locul
- organiser-author. With the latter, what gets exhibited is the *curator* rather than the works of art.” Daniel Buren, contribuție la proiectul web *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist*.
11. Smithson argues that there is no freedom to be found in exploring “process” within the predetermined space of the neutral gallery; instead, he advocates a “dialectics that seeks a world outside cultural confinement”, i.e. risking to engage with extra-artistic space. See Robert Smithson, “Cultural Confinement”, in Jack Flam (ed.), *Robert Smithson Collected Writings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 155. *Process* was one of the subdivisions of Documenta 5’s *Individual Mythologies*.
12. As practising curators will know, this can cut two ways: artists always want to show new work, and Szeemann is perfectly entitled to express interest in a particular piece; on the other hand, we can assume that Szeemann’s letter perhaps had a rather assertive tone (Morris: “dictated”), indicating a desire for conformity to a concept.
13. Finally – and to develop further this ethical theme – Morris expresses his disapproval of the fact that Szeemann borrowed one of Morris’s works from a collector, without first informing the artist. Morris’s letter is reproduced in *Archive in Motion: 50 Years Documenta 1955–2005*, p. 258.
14. Marcel Broodthaers, open letter on the occasion of Documenta 5, 1972, and interview with Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt, circulated as a press release on the occasion of his exhibition at Düsseldorf Kunsthalle in 1972; both are cited in Douglas Crimp, “This is Not a Museum of Art”, in *Marcel Broodthaers*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Centre/New York, Rizzoli, 1989, p. 75.
15. Marcel Broodthaers, open letter, dated Palais des Beaux-Arts, 7 June 1968, address “A mes amis”. Cited in Douglas Crimp, “This is Not a Museum of Art”, p. 76.
16. For an extensive discussion of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, see Rainer Borgemeister, “Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present”, in *October*, No. 42, Fall 1987, pp. 135–154, and Douglas Crimp’s “This is Not a Museum of Art”.
17. Including the *Section VIIème Siècle* (Amsterdam, 1969), the *Section Cinéma* (Düsseldorf, 1971), and the *Section Financière* (Cologne Art Fair, 1971).
18. Marcel Broodthaers, “Imaginary Interview with René Magritte”, in René Magritte, *Écrits complets*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971, pp. 728–729.
19. Michel Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, pp. 29–30. My italics.
20. “The common place – banal work of art or everyday lesson – has disappeared” (p. 31). By “common place”, Foucault means both the shared ground of language and ideas, and the “common-place” as ordinary; in its place stands what he calls a “non-place” of mystery and enigma – a surplus that is unstable, un beholden to conventions, “translations with neither point of departure nor support” (p. 52). Foucault refers to the emergence of the “non-place” in Magritte’s uncanny painting *Perspective: Mme. Récamier* (1958), in which the living subject of David’s portrait is replaced by a coffin sitting upright (p. 41). He also refers to the “non-place of language” in the preface to *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London, Routledge, 2001, p. xvii.
21. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 48, cited in Translator’s Introduction, Michel Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, p. 4.
22. “And in place of the artist as author we find the artist as director of his *Museum of Modern Art*; that in place of the traditional, which is to say modern, museological institution, we find the museum-without-walls, that is, the actual enunciative regime of all that modernity calls art.” Thierry de Duve, “Critique of Pure Modernism”, in *October*, No. 70, Fall 1994, p. 93. Even so, the

- său stă ceea ce el numește un „ne-loc” al misterului și enigmei – un surplus care e instabil, nesupus convențiilor, „translații lipsite de punct de plecare și de suport” (p. 52 [31]). Foucault se referă la apariția „ne-locului” în strania pictură *Doamna de Récamier* (1958) a lui Magritte, în care subiectul viu al portretului lui David e înlocuit de un coșciug așezat pe verticală (p. 41 [26]). El se mai referă, de asemenea, la „ne-locul limbajului”, în prefata volumului *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London, Routledge, 2001, p. xvii [Cuvintele și lucrurile. O arheologie a științelor umane, traducere de Bogdan Ghiu și Mircea Vasilescu, București, Univers, 1996, p. 34].
21. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 48 [Cuvintele și lucrurile, p. 35], citat în Introducerea traducătorului la Michel Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, p. 4.
 22. „Iar în locul artistului ca autor îl întâlnim pe artistul ca director al Muzeului de Artă Modernă; că în locul instituției muzeologice tradiționale, adică moderne, descoperim muzeul-fără-ziduri, adică regimul enunțiativ actual a tot ceea ce modernitatea numește artă.” Thierry de Duve, „Critique of Pure Modernism”, in *October*, nr. 70, toamna 1994, p. 93. Chiar și așa, „semnificația” oficială pe care o desfășoară *Musée d'Art Moderne* este instituționalizată acum de către istoricii criticii instituționale: [se trasează] o paralelă între mitologia vulturului și mitologia muzeului ca discurs. În această povestire, se pune adesea prea puțin accentul pe aspectul suprarealist al lucrărilor lui Broodthaers.
 23. Marcel Broodthaers, in *Interfunktionen*, nr. 10, 1973, pp. 78–79.
 24. Rob Storr, „Show and Tell”, in Paola Marincola (ed.), *Questions of Practice: What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2006, p. 20.
 25. Ralph Rugoff, „You Talking To Me?”, in Paola Marincola, *Questions of Practice*, p. 51; Viktor Misiano, in Carin Kuoni, *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art*, New York, Independent Curators International, 2001, p. 119; Jean-Christophe Ammann, in Carin Kuoni, *Words of Wisdom*, p. 23. The latter publication offers myriad analogies for the curator. For Dan Cameron, he/she is “a kind of artist” (p. 39); for Robert Fleck the curator is “not an artist”, nor a “meta-artist”, but a “facilitator” (p. 63). Lippard compares curating to choosing the illustrations for a book (p. 102), while Szeemann compares it to “the creation of a little poem or a drama” (p. 167). For Yuko Hasegawa, the curator is like the “conductor of an orchestra” (p. 80); for Rosa Martinez, the curator should be a combination of “intrepid explorer”, “diplomat”, “guerrilla”, “economist”, and “therapist” (p. 111).
 26. Heinrich and Pollack support this claim with the argument that the budgets for a large-scale exhibition and a film are roughly equivalent; both trade in the economy of temporary cultural products for mass distribution; and both require a team to work under a director whose identity undergoes major variations (producer, scriptwriter, director, curator, creator etc.). Both, we could add, tend to be commercial enterprises.

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The Occupation of Art and Gentrification

How an artistic presence was used to aid the gentrification of 1980s New York City.

An article from "*No Reservations - Housing, Space and Class Struggle*"; News From Everywhere and Campaign For Real Life, London, 1989.



INTRODUCTION

Initially we intended to write an article analysing the role of art in transforming a run-down working class area, Lower Manhattan, New York City, for the benefit of capital. In the course of our research and discussion we realised that what was happening in Lower Manhattan wasn't an isolated incident, but part of an increasingly significant capital accumulation process with art as a major protagonist, and involving a widespread transformation of urban space. We believe there is a general global tendency of culture to act as an element in the regeneration of the inner cities,

adapting itself in different ways to different places. There seem to be two strategies at work: a) Art as state-manipulated gentrifier as in the Lower East Side, and b) Art as a fresh base for accumulation in areas ravaged by the decline of industry. (In the latter case the UK is closely following the US experiment in Pittsburgh and Chicago and applying them over here.) We hope to summarise b) in the conclusion while the part of the article devoted to Lower Manhattan concentrates on a). Because we believe that art is an integral aspect of the development of capitalist social relations we found it necessary to include some general observations on the role of art in capitalist society by way of an introduction.

"In art, the world of the artist is set before one's eyes as an Object, a world which the artist has brought forth from the full power of his own inwardness, a world which will satisfy every real need and longing." - Max Stirner[1]

MALIGNANT CULTURES

Culture sells the promise of advancement by appealing to a 'classless creativity' which everybody supposedly possesses and needs to express. The US TV program 'Fame' promotes this myth: the coming together of kids from 'both sides of the tracks' - ethnic slums and white suburbia alike - an allegedly harmonious unity where everybody is 'equal', each individual succeeding or failing according to their own artistic talent. Both teamwork (bit-parts, chorus lines) and individual advancement (starring roles) are promoted, the bourgeois theatrical forms reflecting the dominant organisation and values of bourgeois society. Art and culture are now more democratised than ever; the worse the present crisis gets and the fewer job opportunities there are for a greater number of people, the more necessary it becomes to soak up at least a small fraction of this into cultural careers or into the service sector[2] and to contain the rest with illusions of escape. In facing up to the proletariat's increasing refusal of steady, legal full-time work, capital is employing a mixed strategy including on the one hand forced labour schemes, and on the other the allure of personal success in the cultural field which can be presented and internalised as not being alienated labour, but as an act of self-fulfilment, whereas in reality culture means the production of capital's most sophisticated means of control and submission of both consumer and producer. Just as our concrete relationships are mediated by objects as commodities, so our emotions are mediated by culture, by their hollow representations. It's worth mentioning two of the most lucrative art/music movements, punk and rap/graffiti art, which in their heydays both stimulated flagging profits in the music biz, initially emerged from the ranks of black and white dispossessed youth (although in the case of punk there was always a disproportionate art-school influence).

Artists can often get away with appearing to be 'outside' class relations; they and their products are seen as an expression of 'everyman' or the human essence. This gives them a unique facility to worm their way into poor neighbourhoods as the cultural vanguard of a social fragmentation created by gentrification.

THE THIN END OF THE RED WEDGE

In any capitalist society, art merely embodies the ideology appropriate to the given level of production. The Constructivists are a good illustration of this. They emerged in Russia as an avant-garde art movement at the end of the Civil War in 1921, immediately aligning themselves closely with Bolshevik ideology and put their various talents in the service of the state and its changing

economic needs. They began by promoting the benefits of the New Economic Policy, Lenin's strategy to reinvigorate the economy by a partial return to free enterprise. By 1923, when the success of private industry was seriously threatening the state's profits from the sale of their own commodities, Mayakovsky, a poet, and Alexander Rodchenko, a Constructivist photographer, combined to form an 'advertisement constructor' team to promote state goods. So for the next two years Constructivists dedicated themselves to not only promoting Bolshevik economic policy as a progressive force in the formation of a new social order, but also acted as an advertising agency with the state as their major client.

During this period many of these artists also became involved in designing commodities, through 'production art', including such gems as plates printed with the slogan 'he who does not work does not exist'.

"Our gravitation towards the principle of 'construction' is a natural manifestation of contemporary consciousness which derives from industry." - Alexander Rodchenko

"Art must not be concentrated in dead shrines called museums. It must be spread everywhere - on the street, in the trams, factories, workshops and in the workers' homes." - Vladimir Mayakovsky [3]

When the state consolidated sufficient domination over the market, around 1928, and the NEP was abolished by Stalin who went on to enforce the collectivisation of agriculture and the Five Year Plans which set ever higher production targets, the Constructivists were replaced by the Socialist Realists.

The Socialist Realists essentially continued the Constructivist project in terms of style and approach, but with different tasks and priorities, reflecting a changed economic reality, i.e. since the state no longer had to compete in the market with private industry, the Socialist Realists could concentrate on selling the benefits of Stalinist accumulation, for example by aestheticising tractors which symbolised the industrialisation of agriculture (and the dispossession of all classes of peasants). In the climate of extreme austerity and with the abolition of 'consumer choice' in the post-NEP period, Socialist Realism preoccupied itself with marketing the ideology of production while actual production was enforced at gun-point.

Western artists have traditionally sneered at Constructivism and Socialist Realism for being crude and utilitarian, NOT ART, when in fact they demonstrate the essence of the function of art, but too blatantly for western tastes; not only on the economic level but also on the social level - in 'one-class' Russia, the Constructivists were the voice of the proletariat'. In the West artists either claim to

be the voice of a specific class or the voice of the people in general. In both cases their role as specialists depends on the general suppression of creativity throughout society; however the bourgeoisie can only reproduce themselves by maintaining generalised alienation through such means as art, whereas the proletariat can only combat its own alienation.

In the West today art continues to perform the same function at a different level of production and within a different economic framework. Most people over here who receive artistic training (apart from the privileged minority who can survive as 'pure talents untainted by commercialism' - as they see it) end up either in some form of commodity design or marketing, thus promoting the ideology of consumption or designing YTS ads or sophisticated police recruitment ads promoting the ideology of production, work and the state.

As an element of this society, art is a force against revolutionary transformation, in that it perpetuates the divisions in social activity and individual/collective consciousness. In both pre- and post-capitalist societies, culture will be so diffused into every aspect of daily life that it would become unrecognisable as a separate category. In some African tribal languages there are no specific words for specific cultural activities, i.e. the same word is used to describe both music and life itself.

"Appreciating is the sole diversion of the 'cultivated'; passive and incompetent, lacking imagination and wit, they must try to make do with that; unable to create their own diversions, to create a little world of their own, to affect in the smallest way their environments, they must accept what's given; unable to create or relate, they spectate. Absorbing 'culture' is a desperate, frantic attempt to groove in an ungroovy world, to escape the horror of a sterile, mindless existence. 'Culture' provides a sop to the egos of the incompetent, a means of rationalising passive spectating; They can pride themselves on the ability to appreciate the 'finer' things, to see a jewel where there is only a turd (they want to be admired for admiring). Lacking faith in their ability to change anything, resigned to the status quo, they have to see beauty in turds because, so far as they can see, turds are all they'll ever have." - Valerie Solonas' "SCUM Manifesto" was written in 1967 and published in 1968, the year she shot and wounded Andy Warhol.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT HOUSING SITUATION IN NEW YORK CITY

There are now about 100,000 people homeless in New York City while at the same time over 80,000 city owned apartments have remained empty in recent years. Over 90,000 people have been evicted and SWAT[4] teams have been used to remove people. Two women, Elisabeth Magnum and Eleanor Bumpurs, have been killed by cops during evictions. While there is a 15 year-long waiting list of nearly 175,000 people for public housing the city is progressively selling off their housing stock. Also, over half a million apartments in NYC have been abandoned since 1970, the result of an aggressive disinvestments, criminal cut-off of services and arson. Pig Mayor Koch of New York has said in the press that homeless people living on the street should not be given spare change because they will only "spend it on drink and drugs". Those living in the streets, parks and shanty towns are subjected to regular brutality and harassment by the city police force. The Koch administration has also attempted to clear the streets of vagrants by having them committed to mental institutions. In 1986 the US government declared hundreds of military bases ready to be filled with the homeless. Not surprisingly most of the homeless have rejected this 'offer'. As the "Our Land" magazine put it - *"Can we remain silent while the homeless are driven out of public places and parks, and Amerika's new concentration camps are readied? How soon will these camps contain Aids-victims, pot smokers, draft resisters and 'communists'?"*

An academic survey carried out in the early 1980s concluded that *"There is very substantial abandonment in New York City, displacing (directly, indirectly or through chain effects) between 77,500 and 150,000 persons a year."* The figures for displacement through gentrification are given as "between 25,000 and 100,000 persons a year in the current period." [5]

"HOLBEIN AND THE BUM"

The gentrification of Lower Manhattan in New York is an example of the effects of the de-industrialisation of the inner-cities which is taking place world wide, with the decline of blue-collar work and the rise of white-collar work (of course doing white-collar work doesn't necessarily mean you are not a proletarian): "This shift from blue-collar to white-collar industries makes the economy of the city, according to the New York Times, even more incompatible with its labour force. In 1929 59% of the labour force was blue-collar; in 1957 the percentage slipped to 47%. By 1980 less than one third of the total workforce in the United States consisted of blue-collar workers." [6] The class occupation and use of previously industrial space has been progressively transformed. One of

the spearheads of this process has been the art movement - both individual artists and gallery owners. Artists initially moved into the area attracted by cheap rents for large spaces ideal for art production; i.e. warehouses, lofts and light manufacturing space.

The process began with Fluxus and more recently has been extended into the Lower East Side by a ragbag of other radical art tendencies. The Fluxus art movement developed from the late 1950s onwards, gradually centering itself in SoHo (south of Houston Street) Village, an area immediately west of the Lower East Side, during the next 10 years. A central feature of their activity, initially financed by a rich NY business family who were also art patrons, was using loft space to realise their self-indulgent fantasies about art environments. The following excerpts illustrate how 'radical art' expects itself to be regarded purely on the level of its ideology and abstract intentions which mask its real social and material function: " *'A new life. Ruhm's Wien built of the letters in the German name for Vienna - Hollein's aircraft carrier as a city for 30,000 inhabitants - Oldenburg's alteration of the Thames - My super highway as a cathedral environment - are all utopias containing more breadth and visualisation of present day thought than the repressive architecture of bureaucracy and luxury that imposes restrictions on people.*

Everything is forbidden.

Don't Touch!

No Spitting! No Smoking!

No Thinking!

No Living!

Our projects - our environments are meant to free men - only the realisation of utopias will make man happy and release him from his frustrations! Use your imagination! Join in...Share the power! Share property!'

'PURGE the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual', professional and commercialised culture...

(...) PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,

(...) FUSE the cadres of cultural, social and political revolutionaries into the united front and action.'" [7]

Despite these fantasies of a liberating reconstruction of space in the service of the masses, we

should point out that Maciunas, one of the leading Fluxists, was a real estate speculator, whose initial activities in this field were financed by rich art patrons. [8]

More recently, in the Lower East Side itself, specifically residential space was made available by working class people moving out of the area because of landlords' neglect of property, evictions carried out often by means of intimidation (i.e. firebombing people out of their homes) and the police turning a blind eye to such activities as well as drug Mafia operations and high levels of street crime. The artists were pioneers of gentrification in this new frontier for the middle class, by creating an art scene and community, combining the use of their space for living, producing, performing and exhibiting. These artistic events and the cultural ambience attracted middle class art consumers which in turn created a market for other cultural needs - yuppie bars, restaurants etc. It was inevitable that the galleries would take their place in this new scene, packaging in their catalogues the bohemian thrills of the area: *"The Lower East Side enters the space of the ICA catalogue in three forms: mythologised in the texts as an exciting bohemian environment, objectified in a map delimiting its boundaries, and aestheticised in a full-page photograph of a Lower East Side 'street scene'. All three are familiar strategies for the domination and possession of others. The photograph, alone, is a blatant example of the aestheticisation of poverty and suffering that has become a staple of visual imagery. At the lower edge of the photograph a bum sits in a doorway surrounded by his shopping bags, a liquor bottle and remnants of a meal. He is apparently oblivious of the photographer, unaware of the composition in which he is forced to play a major role. Abundant graffiti covers the wall behind him, while at the left the wall is pasted over with layers of posters, the topmost of which is an advertisement for the Pierpoint Morgan Library's Holbein exhibition. The poster features a large reproduction of a Holbein portrait of a figure facing in the direction of the bum in the doorway. High art mingles with the 'subculture' of graffiti and the 'lowlife' represented by the bum in a photograph which is given a title, like an art work: First Street and Second Avenue (Holbein and the Bum). While its street subject has long been popular among art photographers, this photograph is inserted into the pages of a museum catalogue for the purpose of advertising the pleasures and unique ambience of this particular art scene. Only an art world steeped in the protective and transformative values of aestheticism and the blindness to suffering that such an ideology sanctions could tolerate, let alone applaud such an event. For this picture functions as a tourist shot, introducing the viewer to the local colour of an exotic and dangerous locale. Holbein and the Bum is intended not to call attention to the plight of the homeless but to fit comfortably into the pages of an art catalogue unveiling to art lovers the special pleasures of the East Village as a spectacle for the slumming delectation of those collectors who cruise the area in limousines."* [9]

Incidentally, a lot of the original pioneer artists who didn't make it have been priced out by the

success of a project that they helped initiate and may move on to begin the process elsewhere to the cost of their unfortunate new neighbours.

The state subsidised housing for artists in the Lower East Side as it became aware of the attraction of an art environment in creating the conditions for international investment. One example of this is AHOP; *"The alignment of art world interests with those of the city government and the real estate industry became explicit to many residents on the Lower East Side during the ultimately successful battle which community groups waged to defeat Mayor Koch's Artist Home Ownership Program (AHOP). In August 1981, the city issued a Request for Proposals for the development of AHOP. The requests solicited 'creative proposals to develop co-operative or condominium loft-type units for artists through rehabilitation of properties owned by the city.' The cost of AHOP, around 7 million dollars, was to be partly financed by the Participation Loan Scheme Programme, which consists of 25 million dollars of federal funds designated for low/moderate income people to help them secure mortgages at the low market rates. The city's eagerness to allocate 3 million dollars of public money for the housing needs of white middle-class artists was seen as a clear indication of the city's attitude to the housing needs of the poor. Despite the fact that the art community lobbied hard to have AHOP implemented, it was defeated in February 1983. Considerable pressure brought to bear by various community groups forced many supporters in the art world and members of the Board of Estimate to change their mind."* [10]

Although in this case such a blatantly manipulated strategy failed, gentrification continues by other means. It is no coincidence that the Lower East Side is just down the road from one of the world's biggest finance centres. It is obviously preferable for capital to have a 'safe' gentrified area next to its financial heartland than a potentially explosive population for whom the banks are obvious targets for revenge.

"GENTRIFICATION IS CLASS WAR: FIGHT BACK!"

Tompkins Square Park in the Lower East Side (or East Village, as the settlers now call it) is surrounded by burnt out derelict houses, a few remaining tenants and yuppies in condominiums. It had been home to hundreds of homeless people (and was used for open-air gigs) up until a police decision to impose a 1am curfew, some time in July 88.

This was apparently because of neighbourhood association complaints about noise - which means it was most likely an attempt to appease yuppies and real estate speculators, concerned at the presence of 'undesirables' on their doorstep. In the weeks leading up to the riot on the 6th/7th the police

began periodically clearing the park at 1am. A small rally held on the 30th July to protest the curfew was broken up by the police who arrested 4 people and injured several others. This led to the calling of a rally on the 6th August. By 11pm on the 6th a hundred cops, some of them on horseback, were waiting inside the park for the demonstrators. Soon after, several hundred people turned up behind a banner that read "*Gentrification is Class War: Fight Back!*". They came into the park, marched around for a while and then most of them went back out on to the street. By 12.30 the park was closed. Shortly afterwards the police were pelted with bottles and they brought in reinforcements, including a helicopter. The cops then charged the crowd, sparking off a riot that lasted several hours. 31 people and 13 cops were injured. 9 people were arrested on charges of riot, disorderly conduct etc. Because of widespread anger at the savagery of the police attacks on the crowd Mayor Koch was forced to lift the curfew on August 7th. The next day 800 people met in a church near the park to discuss what had happened. People in the meeting expressed hostility not only towards the police but also to others who co-operated with them - for example, the Guardian Angels.

On 9th August 600 people marched to the 9th precinct police station where the cops refused to talk with them. On August 13th a day of protest took place during which 13 people were arrested. William Brevard, a local black labourer, comments on the events: "There are deeper problems to this situation. Some people complain about the homeless but what does it show that there are homeless people who have to come here at all? What happened here is a side of America that's not being shown. This isn't a race thing - forget about race. You see black and white among the homeless here. This is about the people who don't have anything - against those with money." [11]

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED

There were no TV news cameras present while the riot was going on. We're not sure whether this was because the cops stopped them getting into the area or whether they just voluntarily complied with a police request to stay away. But at least one person did manage to record the event on film.

Paul Garrin is a young fashion photographer and video artist who lives on the Lower East Side, very near to where the riot occurred. On seeing the riot begin, he went and got his video camera and found a ledge above the street from which to film the riot. He managed to film the riot for a few minutes before a group of cops (some with their identifying numbers covered) who were beating somebody up, spotted him filming them at work. They then turned on him, beating him and smashing the camera, although the film was not damaged.

The next day (and for days afterwards) his video-film of the riot was being shown on all the main TV news programs and Garrin was interviewed on TV news and chat shows. After this he received several phone threats from anonymous cops on the NY police force, which he recorded and also publicised in the media.

Garrin said that he climbed onto the ledge where he filmed from "to avoid confrontation". From the beginning of his involvement in the riot he wanted his role to be that of an observer and recorder, through his camera lens, but not that of a participator in the 'drama'. He was probably immediately thinking of the possibilities of capitalising on the images he was recording, whether as saleable news footage or as material to be incorporated into some of his arty videos. He has since profited financially by fulfilling both these possibilities. His career in photography and video art has surely taught him that every time he picks up a camera what he records has the possibility of becoming a saleable commodity.

While his film is a useful piece of evidence for those fighting legal cases against the cops, and for exposing police lies, its use to him is as a means to self promotion, profit from viewing royalties, and career advancement through greater media exposure. If he had been cleverer he could have avoided becoming a target for police threats by either sending his film to the media anonymously or insisting his name was not revealed. But obviously he could not afford to miss this opportunity to self-publicise and further his media reputation.

In one interview Garrin claimed he was against the personality cult being built around him by the media, because it distracted from the real issues of police violence and homelessness, yet his own actions in regard to the media effectively encouraged this.

Part of Garrin's art activities is working as 'technical whizkid' for video artist Nam June Paik, an ex-member of the Fluxus art movement which helped begin the gentrification of Lower Manhattan. During October-December '88 there was an exhibition of Paik's video arts at the Hayward Gallery in London. Also on display were some of Garrin's own videos. One of these contained footage of riots around the world, including Tompkins Square Park. Another one was a collection of TV coverage of the riot, including Garrin's film and him being interviewed on several TV programmes. Within a few months of it happening the riot has been packaged and aestheticised as an art commodity by the same artists whose activities and presence helped create the gentrification process that the rioters were fighting against.

CONCLUSION

1

The traditional manufacturing base of the inner cities is in progressive decline for several reasons: the movement of heavy industrial production to 'Third World' countries with cheaper labour costs, the increasing automation of certain sectors of the labour process and the need to centralise financial administration and dealing in parts of the inner city.

At the same time as this, there is a parallel process of administrative sectors (at least those that aren't dependent on split-second business decisions) being farmed to towns and suburbia which in turn creates new potential for valorising the space they have vacated in the inner cities.

2

This shift in the accumulation process has meant an increasingly incorporation of cultural consumption as one of its major features. In Pittsburgh, the previous US steel capital, state and private investors have initiated a large-scale cultural redevelopment project: the state realises its profits from an amusement tax levied on theatre tickets and parking ticket revenues, while in the private sector for every dollar spent directly on cultural consumption, 3.4 dollars is spent at other retail outlets - shops, hotels, restaurants etc. British capital has been closely following experiments such as this and initiated something similar in Bradford - with a proposed £100 million development of the city centre, a possible Northern base for the National Theatre and the V&A's Indian art collection. A preservation order has been slapped on remaining Victorian wool warehouses, one of which is being turned into a £350,000 art gallery and workshop complex. Parallel developments are taking place in Liverpool and Glasgow, amongst others.

3

It's not only in the inner cities that this process is at work, but in any ex-industrial areas which not only have buildings and space that can be re-valorised, but also a high proportion of unemployed proletarians who can be drafted into the service sector for low wages.

In Hemsworth, a mining village whose pit was closed after the miners' strike, an inland beach was created with thousands of tons of sand being dumped round the shores of a local lake. This 'seaside resort' 40 miles from the coast has generated a tourist industry in place of the colliery.

4

In this article we've concentrated on Lower Manhattan as an example of how the State and big business has used avant-garde art to reclaim territory that had become unprofitable.

As we can see in the New York AHOP programme the role of artists hasn't been organic/spontaneous but they have been utilised by an alliance of State, real estate and big business elites to act as the thin end of a wedge that will destabilise and ultimately displace working-class communities. For instance, in Manhattan, the cultural element has the effect of enhancing the value of surrounding financial areas, not only by removing the threat of a large, dispossessed, angry 'undesirable' population with nothing to lose, but also provides the amenities for the refined cultural tastes of the financial elite.

5

In London neither of the strategies outlined in this article seem to have been deployed, with the possible exception of Notting Hill [12]. Here it seems to be more a case of pioneer yuppies bringing in their cultural baggage with them, including retail outlets for middle-class tastes which in turn creates an attractive environment for other yuppies to move into. This process is encouraged by estate agents manipulating the market.

6

In a period of low economic growth art is one of the few expanding industries. Art and property share as commodities share a characteristic which is of great importance in the present climate of recession: they can both be constantly revalorised. Where property has a specific use value (i.e. as dwelling space) art does not; art has become a pure embodiment of capital, along with its social and

ideological function: "Now where the merger of art and business is most complete a nauseating contradiction arises between a businesslike need to proclaim creativity (in reality its opposite) as distinct from the cynical amassing of money. Capitalists exploit others but rarely conceive of themselves as just plain robbers...In the mid-80's the figure of the auctioneer is the one that compels attention in the two foremost capitals of art: London and New York. The paradoxical combination of sniffy pedantry and a keen eye for price slots in with the trend for global equitization and soaring real estate values in the major financial centres. With banks beginning to set up art advisory services, art has become an investment as never before, attracting money in search of quick gains and appreciating assets." [13] The ideology of art defines itself as a purely creative activity furthest removed from the dirty dealings of the market place but in reality art embodies the crazy logic of capitalism in its clearest form - the total domination of exchange value over use value.

7

The only radical function for art we know of is the one proposed by Bakunin in the Dresden insurrection of 1849 when he advocated, without success, taking the paintings out of the museums and putting them on the barricades at the entrance of the city to see if this would have stopped the firing of the oncoming soldiers.

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Footnotes

- 1) "Art and Religion" by Max Stirner - The Young Hegelians - An Anthology; edited by Lawrence S. Stepelvich, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- 2) i.e. the people who are employed in servicing cultural consumers; also a lot of people with artistic aspirations can be found in occupations such as bar staff, waiters/waitresses etc.
- 3) Both quotes from "Soviet Commercial Design of the Twenties" - edited by M. Anikst
- 4) The first SWAT team (Special Weapons And Tactics) was formed in 1966/7 in Los Angeles and took part in such forays as the full-scale assault on the Black Panther headquarters in 1969, and in 1974, the fierce attack on the Symbionese Liberation Army. SWAT also collaborated in the bombing of the MOVE house in Philadelphia in '85 - killing 6 adults, 5 kids and destroying an entire block of houses.
- 5) "Abandonment, gentrification and displacement: the linkages in New York City" by Peter Marcuse - in Gentrification of the City, edited by N. Smith and P. Williams.
- 6) "The Fine Art of Gentrification" by R. Deutsche and C. G. Ryan in "The Portable Lower East Side".
- 7) In the book which these quotations are taken from, "The Assault on Culture" by S. Home, the author contradicts his own title by perpetuating the illusion that the intentions that the artist declares through his/her self-expression are more relevant than the objective social effects of their activity.
- 8) For reasons of space this article does not deal with other early related attempts to encourage an arts presence, such as the state's subsidised artists' housing schemes of the 1970's and changes in local state zoning regulations so as to promote residential/artistic rather than industrial use of property. There were also the efforts of the West Village middle-class homeowners and the SoHo Artists' Tenants Association who used their political/cultural connections to further their own interests. (For details see "Loft Living" by Sharon Zukin, particularly chapter 5.)
- 9) "The Fine Art of Gentrification", op. cit.
- 10) "The Fine Art of Gentrification", op.cit.
- 11) "The Militant" 26/8/88 (an American Trot paper).

12) The pamphlet "Once Upon A Time There Was A Place Called Nothing Hill Gate... By Paddington Bear" (BM Blob, London, 1988; now available on the revolt against an age of plenty site; revoltagainstplenty.com) deals in some detail with (amongst other things) the role of art in the gentrification of Notting Hill.

13) Introduction to "Pravda 3" - BM Blob, London, 1980s (also available on the revolt against an age of plenty site). _

Sonja Lavaert and Pascal Gielen

The Dismasure of Art

An interview with Paolo Virno

In his home town Rome, Italian philosopher Paolo Virno talks with philosopher Sonja Lavaert and sociologist Pascal Gielen about the relation between creativity and today's economics, and about exploitation and possible forms of resistance. Virno is known for his analysis of post-Fordism; his view that the disproportion of artistic standards runs parallel to communism, however, is new to the philosophy of art. He believes aesthetics and social resistance meet in a quest for new forms. Political art or not, the contents hardly matter.

The art world has displayed an avid interest in your work over the past few years; we ourselves are here to interview you for an art magazine. Yet you've hardly written anything explicitly about art. Where do you think this interest in your work comes from?

It's true. I sometimes get invited to talk about art at conferences or seminars organized by art academies and that always embarrasses me a little, as if there has been some mistake, because my knowledge of modern art is actually very limited. I think that people involved in art being interested in my work has something to do with a concept I use, namely 'virtuosity'. In my opinion, this concept is the common ground between my political and philosophical reflection and the field of art. Virtuosity happens to the artist or performer who, after performing, does not leave a work of art behind. I have used the experience of the performing, virtuoso artist not so much to make statements about art, but rather to indicate what is typical of political action in general. Political action does not produce objects. It is an activity that does not result in an autonomous object. What strikes me is that today work, and not just work for a publishing company, for television or for a newspaper, but all present-day work, including the work done in the Volkswagen factory, or at Fiat or Renault, tends to be an activity that does not result in an autonomous 'work', in a produced object. Of course the Volkswagen factory cranks out cars, but this is entirely subject to a system of automatic mechanized labour, while the duties of the individual Volkswagen factory workers consist of communication that leaves no objects behind: of this type of virtuoso activity. I see virtuosity as a model for post-Fordist work in general. And there is more: what strikes me is that the earliest type of virtuosity, the one that precedes all others, precedes the dance, the concert, the actor's performance and so on, is typically the activity of our human kind, namely the use of language. Using human language is an activity that does not result in any autonomous and remaining 'work'; it does not end in a material result, and this is the lesson De Saussure, Chomsky and Wittgenstein taught. Post-Fordist work is virtuoso and it became virtuoso when it became linguistic and communicative.

What do I think about art? The only art of which I have a more than superficial knowledge is modern and contemporary poetry. I think that the experience of avant-garde art including poetry in the 20th century is one of disproportion and of 'excess', of lack of moderation. Great 20th-century avant-garde art – and poetry in particular – from Celan to Brecht and Montale, has demonstrated

the crisis of experiential units of measure. It is as if the platinum metre bar kept in Paris to define the standard length of a metre suddenly measured 90 or 110 centimetres. This emphasis on immoderation, disproportion and the crisis in units of measure is to be credited greatly to avant-garde art and this is also where it edges up to communism. With regard to the crisis of measure, art is a lot like communism.

Only poetry, or other art as well?

Art in general, I expect, but I know poetry best. It is about disproportion. In addition to explaining the crisis, poetry wants to find new standards of measure and proportion. Along the same lines the major Italian poet and critic Franco Fortini has said that there is an objective common ground between avant-garde art and poetry and the communist movement – and I do not use the term ‘communist’ in the sense of actual socialism. What’s more, I consider actual socialism as interpreted within the communist party and the Soviet Union as communism’s worst enemy.

This emphasis on the disproportion or crisis of units of measure is present in the communist movement and they are looking for new criteria, too. The experience of the artist-performer can provide us with a general post-Fordist model.

What do you mean by ‘crisis of the unit of measure’?

It is as if the metre, the standard set to measure cognitive and affective experience, no longer works. We see the same crisis in the fields of politics and history: social prosperity is no longer produced by labour time, but by knowledge, by a general knowing, by ‘general intellect’, and as a result social prosperity and labour time are no longer directly connected. The new standard to measure prosperity is within the domain of intelligence, language and collaboration. The problem is that social prosperity is still measured by the old standard of labour time, while realities have changed and it is actually determined by ‘general intellect’. We can see the same thing happening in 20th-century art. It demonstrates the inadequacy of the old standards and suggests, in the formal sphere and through the formal work of poetry, new standards for the appraisal of our cognitive and affective experience. This is a point that brought the artistic avant-garde close to the radical social movement and in this sense there is a kind of brotherhood between the two: they would like to explain that the old standards are no longer valid and to look for what might be new standards. Another way to put the problem is: how can you locate a

new public sphere, which has nothing to do with the state? Avant-garde art proved the impotence, the inadequacy, the disproportion of the old standards through a formal investigation. The common ground of art and social movements is never about content. Art that relates to social resistance is beside the point, or rather art expressing views on social resistance is not relevant. The radical movement and avant-garde poetry touch on the formal investigation that yields an index of new forms denoting new ways of living and feeling, which results in new standards. All this is far removed from a substantive relation.

So you see only a formal parallel? Do you think there is a historic evolution in this formal parallelism and can there be any interaction between form and content?

No. When it comes to content, there is no common ground. There is only contact with regard to form and the quest for forms. To me, it is purely a matter of a formal investigation. The form of the poem is like the form of a new public sphere, like the structure of a new idea. Looking for forms in the arts is like looking for new standards of what we may regard as society, power, and so on.

As new rules?

Yes, exactly, it's about new rules. This collapse of the old rules and anticipating new rules, even if only formal, is where aesthetics and social resistance meet: this is the common ground where a new society is anticipated that is based on 'general intellect' and not on the sovereignty of the state anymore.

Do you mean: rules to organize the standard?

It is a matter of defining concepts: the concept of power, of work, of activity and so on. In connection with art I would like to add, and this perhaps goes without saying, that after Benjamin we cannot but wonder what the fate of technical ability to reproduce is going to be. In our present context we need, aesthetically and politically, a concept of 'unicity without the aura'. You both know Benjamin's concept of the unicity of a work of art involving the 'aura', a kind of religious cult surrounding the artwork as is for instance evident in the case of the *Mona Lisa*. Benjamin points out that the aura is destroyed by reproduction techniques: think about film and photography.

The problem we face today is the problem of the singularity of experience, which has nothing to do with aura or cult. To grasp the

particularity of the experience we need a concept of unicity without aura, for that particularity or unicity no longer has the character of an aura. Nowadays it is all about finding the relation between the highest possible degree of communality or generality and the highest possible degree of singularity. In art forms, too, what matters is finding the relation between the most general and the most particular. Art is a quest for unicity without any aura.

Art and philosophy face the same problem?

Absolutely. Philosophy is supposed to formulate a critique against the universal on behalf of the general.¹ The concepts of 'universal' and 'general' are constantly being mixed up, while they are in fact opposites. The 'comune' or 'general' is not that which we encounter in you, in him, in me but that which occurs, passes, between us. My brain is general yet simultaneously particular because it is not like yours or his: only the universal aspects are. Aspects that are equally present in us all are universal. 'General' refers to what exists or occurs in the borderland, between you and me, in the relation between you, him and me, and in that sense there is a constant movement between the particular and the general. Marx's concept of 'general intellect' is general, just as the English language is general and not universal. Language serves as a model for the general that only exists within a community and that cannot exist apart from the community. Our mother tongue, the language we speak, does not exist apart from the relation with a community each of us has individually, whereas our bifocal eye sight does exist in each of us individually, apart from the community. There are things that only exist inside relationships. When Marx speaks of 'general intellect', he refers to collaboration and so to something like that, which only exists in the in between. This concept of Marx's refers to the general good. Now I think that in modernity, the general in both art and philosophy is involved in a complex emancipatory struggle to get away from the universal. This is also how I interpret 'other globalization' or 'new global' movements: they represent the dimension of the general that criticizes the universal. Sovereignty, on the other hand, is a form of the universal. So the question we now face is: What aesthetic and political experiences can we develop to transfer from the universal to the general without consequently destroying the particular?

1. We have in most cases translated the Italian 'comune' by 'general' because of Virno's moves in the field of logic, his wordplay on a principal level, his translational referrals to Marx's notion of 'general intellect'. However, the Italian 'comune' also means 'common', 'communal', 'collective'. So please keep in mind that in each case, the logical 'general' also echoes the English 'common'.

Or take what philosophers call the 'individuation principle', meaning the valuation of everything that is unique and unrepeatable in our lives. Speaking of individuation implies that you consider the individual a result, not a starting point. The individual is a result of a movement that is rooted in the 'communal' and yet is, or is becoming, particular. It is Marx who, for 'general intellect', uses the term 'social individual'. We can postulate that the general is something pre-individual, a kind of general consciousness that exists before individuals form, and from which they form. This general pre-individual is a 'we' that exists before the different I's develop, so is *not* the sum of all I's. This is also in perfect agreement with the view on human development of the Russian psychologist and linguist Vygotsky, who was actually heavily influenced by Marx: prior to anything else there exists a collective social context and only beyond and from that context does the child develop into a separate individual subject. Or remember the formidable discovery of the 'mirror neurons' by the neurosciences, which tells us there is a kind of general sensing, an empathy that precedes the constitution of the separate subject. The Italian scientist Gallese, who contributed to this discovery, speaks of a space in which the 'we' is central. I think all these expressions by Vygotsky, Marx and Gallese are different ways to grasp the concept of the general as opposed to the concept of the universal. I would like to highlight this contrast, which is a hard nut that both political movements and artistic research will have to crack. The alliance between the general and the singular opposes the state and its machinery. Today, movements that side with the multitudes carefully anticipate this alliance: the multitudes are individuals who nevertheless maintain strong ties with the general. On the other hand, the state and post-Fordist society transform the general into the universal; they transform the general intellect into a source of financial gain and social collaboration, and virtuosity into patterns and structures of post-Fordist production.

Returning to the connection between art and politics: how do you feel about engaged art, for instance about what Brian Holmes does or Michelangelo Pistoletto and his Cittadelarte – Fondazione Pistoletto? How do you feel about art that takes up a substantive political standpoint as well? Is it relevant?

In this context I would like to talk about the Situationists and Debord, for they provide an example of an artistic movement, Debord and *Situationiste Internationale*, turning into a political avant-garde. To me, engaged art is an integral part of political move-

ments, one of its components. Political movements use a lot of tools, including means of communication like the Internet, and politically engaged art is one of those tools. It is a component of movements' political capital.

Yet I would once again like to underline that the most important effect of art is set in the formal sphere. In that sense, even art that is remote from political engagement touches upon the social and political reality. The two are not conflicting matters. They operate on different levels. The formal investigation produces criteria, units of measure, whereas the directly political engagement of the artist is a specific form of political mobilization.

Do you mean to say that even politically engaged art is still part of a formal investigation? Engagement is closely connected to a successful formal investigation?

Yes, what I mean is that even artists who are remote from the political movement may, through their search for new forms and expressions and in spite of themselves, get in touch with the needs of such a political movement, and may be used by it. Brecht as well as poets much more remote from social realities, like Montale, realized a similar relation. The Situationists were very important when they became a political movement, but from that moment on they were no longer avant-garde art: it's about two modes of existence. They clearly illustrate this double take. Before 1960 they were an artistic movement rooted in Dadaism and Surrealism, afterwards they participated in social resistance, making the same mistakes or gaining the same merits as other political activists. Another problem is that when language becomes the main principle according to which social reality is organized, social reality as a whole becomes aesthetic.

So where would you situate art within society from a sociological perspective? Or put the other way around: What would happen if art was cut away from society? What social role do you ascribe to fiction in society?

Well, I think that Enzensberger's quip is appropriate here. He said poetry is no longer found in volumes of poetry but scattered over society like an effervescent tablet dissolved in a glass of water. You will find art everywhere, even in commercials. There is no longer a monopolistic location for the production of art; the artistic experience is molecularly disseminated. We also live in a time, the post-Fordist era, in which human nature has become an economic stake.

Every aspect of human nature (that we are linguistic beings, the effect of environment on the human species) constitutes raw material for production. The debate about human nature that took place between Foucault and Chomsky in Eindhoven in 1971 was very important to me. This debate was at the heart of the social movements' deliberations from the moment its translation was published in Italy. You could say both parties were wrong. Foucault denied there was any such thing as innate human nature, whereas Chomsky's concept of this innate human nature was so rigid and deterministic that he thought he could deduce a political programme from it. I believe this discussion ought to become the subject of renewed study and that we need to have it again, to find new answers to contemporary questions about the relation between human nature and politics. You see, today aspects of human nature have become sociological categories. One example is flexibility. Anthropologists like Gehlen teach that the hallmark of human nature is the absence of specialized instincts: we are the species without a specific milieu. Anthropology uses notions such as 'natural, unchanging truth' but, particularly in our day and age, such natural truths have become *sociological* truths and the phenomenon of flexibility and sub-phenomena, like migration, along with them. Another example: we human beings always remain children, we hold on to certain child-like aspects our entire lives, we are chronically childlike. This, too, has always been true but only now has lifelong learning become an issue. Yet another example: the metahistorical aspect that we are highly potential creatures. In the present context, this potential has become labour power. From this perspective we can speak of biopolitics, because biological features have become a sociological category – that is to say, a sociological category of capitalism. In no way do I mean to say that flexibility and capitalism are sociological laws of nature. Nothing stipulates that society has got to be organized in this way, on the contrary. There is an aesthetic base component in human nature which, in the present context, has become an aspect of economic production. That is why matters have to be dealt with on a fundamental level. The concept of labour power also includes an aesthetic component, beside a communicative and a linguistic aspect. The problem of and for art, both intrinsically and formally, is to show this aesthetic component of the production process. Does contemporary art indeed represent this widespread aesthetic dimension of present-day production? I cannot answer this question, but I do think it needs to be asked. Human nature, aesthetic component, post-Fordism, labour power: the discussion about art needs to be

held in this conceptual constellation. What is left of aesthetics in present-day production in the collaboration and in the communication that have become production power? Something transformed the extraordinary position of the aesthetic experience within society, for it is no longer extraordinary, singular and separate but has, conversely, become an integral part of production.

Let's go back a little, to Enzensberger's quip and the place where art is produced, does something like artistic autonomy exist anymore? Do artistically autonomous places exist?

I think so, but not as many as there used to be.

So is it still possible for art to remain disengaged? Can art be resistance and exodus?

I think it can. Linking the terms I used before to this question: the land of the pharaoh, from which the exodus takes place, is the universal. The exodus is away from the universal towards the general, however this occurs among the phenomena of the present context. The exodus involves the transformation of those very present phenomena. Nothing is external, there is no outside. The exodus occurs within post-Fordist production where linguistic production and collaboration, as labour and production power, create a public dimension that is not identical to the dimension of the state. It is an exodus away from the state and its machinery and towards a new public space that makes use of general intellect and general knowledge. During the exodus the general intellect no longer has the power to produce profit and surplus values but becomes a political institution. What comes to mind is the space in which a central 'we' is a realistic basis for a new political institution. I think the pre-individual dimension and the features of human nature that post-Fordism put to work and converted to cash (flexibility, chronically childlike, no instinctive orientation or specific milieu) also give us the opportunity to create new forms, but in a manner opposite to what happens in today's institutions – an exodus that provides what we can see happening in post-Fordism with a new form. Flexibility therefore, but interpreted as freedom. The chronically childlike understood as prosperity, on condition that it stops transforming into the necessity to learn lifelong as described by Richard Sennett. An exodus within the present landscape.

It is generally understood that post-Fordism's breakthrough as a global production principle took place in the 1960s and 1970s

together with the student revolts and the Fiat strikes. Do you think that prior to that time there were areas that ranked as kinds of social laboratories for this production process? You could say that immaterial labour commenced when Duchamp entered his urinal in the New York exhibition. Would you support the hypothesis that the laboratories of the present post-Fordism are to be found in artistic production itself, particularly in early modern readymade art? Max Weber showed that the spirit of capitalism is deeply rooted in Protestantism. Can you indicate locations (of an artistic, religious or subcultural nature) in society, in this Weberian or historical sense, where preparations are being made for post-Fordism as a mental structure?

You mean a genealogy of post-Fordism? I would be very interested in a genealogical perspective dating back further than the 1960s and 1970s. I think we could regard the culture industry of the 1930s and 1940s and onwards as the laboratory for post-Fordist production that anticipated that which was embodied in industry in general in the 1980s.

What would you consider examples of the 1930s culture industry?

Radio, film . . . to me, they anticipate post-Fordism for technical reasons: at that time, the unexpected becomes an indispensable element in the culture industry. The unexpected, which later becomes the pivot of post-Fordist production in the form of the *just-in-time* inventory strategy. There is no culture industry without an outside-of-the-programme factor. And that reminds me of what the two great philosopher-sociologists Horkheimer and Adorno wrote in their chapter on culture industry of their *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: culture, too, became an industrial sector and a capitalist assembly line but one with a handicap, for it was not fully rational yet. It is this handicap, not being able to foresee and organize everything, which turns the culture industry into a post-Fordist laboratory. The culture industry is the antechamber of present-day production techniques. For what escapes programmes is, indeed, that element of flexibility. And of course I also see that anticipation because the culture industry's base materials are language and imagination.

Today, we see artistic expressions and activities simply being situated at the centre of post-Fordist economy. Think about, for instance, artistic expressions in commercials or advertising but also about the incredible growth of the cultural and creative industries. Art, or at least creativity, has not been socially

marginal, which was how Michel de Certeau saw them for a long time. Yet even Wittgenstein and you yourself place creative space in the margin or as you call it, on a sidetrack. Might the discrepancy between margin and centre not be obsolete?

I see creativity as diffuse, without a privileged centre. As a no-matter-what creativity, under weak leadership if you can call it that, having no specific location, connected to the fact that we humans are linguistic beings: art is anybody's.

Does creativity transform when it is at the centre of the post-Fordist production system? Or, more concrete: is there a difference between a creative thinker or artist and a web designer or a publicity expert at the centre of the economic process? Are these two kinds of creativity, or is it about the same kind of creativity?

This is a complex dialectic. First, it is important to post-Fordist capitalism that creativity develops autonomously, so it can subsequently catch it and appropriate it. Capitalism cannot organize reflection and creativity, for then it would no longer be creativity. The form applied here is that of the ghetto: 'You go on and make new music, and then we will go and commercialize that new music.' It is important for creativity to have autonomy, because it forms in the collaboration that is general and consequently the opposite of universal. Creativity feeds off the general. I would like to elucidate this through the distinction Marx made between formal and real subsumption or subjection. In the case of formal subsumption, the capitalist appropriates a production cycle that already exists. In the case of real subsumption, the capitalist organizes the production cycle moment by moment. Now it seems to me that the existent post-Fordism in many cases implies that we have returned to formal subsumption. It is important for social collaboration to produce its intelligence and create its forms. Afterwards, that intelligence and those forms are captured and incorporated by the capitalist, who has no choice but to do so if he wants to acquire that which can only grow outside of him or outside his organization. So the capitalists want to seize autonomously and freely produced intelligence and forms: to realize a surplus value of course, not to realize greater freedom for the people.

A certain degree of autonomy or freedom is necessary and therefore permissible. Social collaboration has to be something with a certain degree of self-organization in order to be productive in a capitalist manner. If the work was organized directly by the capitalist, it would be unprofitable. To yield a profit and be useful from

the perspective of the capitalist, the work needs to some extent to be established through self-organization. It is difficult to grasp this complex dialectic by using theoretical categories. That which is really productive from an economic point of view is not the sum of the individual labourers' output, but the context of collaboration and interaction – provided that it follows its own logic of growth, investigation and invention to some extent. In other words, the process is subject to our own initiative. It is a condition for my exploitation that I produce intelligence and collaboration, and I can only do so when I am, to some degree, free. So I need to be granted a certain degree of autonomy in order to be exploited.

Can the myth of the autonomous artist be seen as a capitalist construction?

First and foremost I think about the autonomy that is functional in creating surplus value, the autonomy that is essential to innovation and to the optimization and development of collaboration. This is a patented and therefore a regulated autonomy, which is absolutely vital when labour has become linguistic and communicative. At that time, speaker-workers must be permitted autonomy. In Wittgensteinian terms it is a matter of 'language games' being used as a source of production. Language games do not just exist, they need to be developed and that is impossible within a rigid structure with all sentences and dialogues pre-recorded and scripted. Language games presume some degree of freedom or autonomy. However, I do not share the view that the present context includes more freedom and prosperity. A grinding poverty reigns in post-Fordism. The worst poverty you can imagine, for it is communication skills themselves that are claimed, exploited, and as capital, too.

Now that we are talking about exploitation perhaps we might address the question of how to fight it. Today in Rome we saw posters displayed by the opposition featuring the slogan 'Il lavoro nobilita. Il precariato no'. Whether or not there is nobility in labour remains to be seen, but we all agree that the precariat is a condition to avoid, a grinding exploitation. We urgently need forms of resistance, developed by and for 'precarious workers' or precari. What is your take on such forms of resistance? Are they, in keeping with what you said earlier, forms of life? Can they be artistic expressions as well? Can you concretize this?

Let's take the example of someone who works for Italian television and radio: thousands of people with an unclear and insecure

status . . . are being exploited. They form a so-called *precariat*. They have to work a lot, work hard, be inventive and focused all the time. They do not make a lot of money, are employed for three months and then unemployed for six more. How can these people organize? Not in the workplace: now you see them there, now you don't. As a rule, TV and radio's *precari* are well-educated creative people with a lot of cultural baggage, a rich cultural and social life: typical post-Fordist workers. However, what applies to them also applies to any example of a *precariat*, including Alitalia's. Developing forms of resistance from, for and by the *precari* means doing so within the very broad context in which they live their lives. It means involving every aspect of their lives, their place of residence, the places they spend their leisure, their communication networks. You cannot organize television people without involving the districts they live in. You cannot abstract from the theatres they visit. In short, the whole problem concerns so many aspects and vital dimensions that developing a form of resistance means inventing new institutions.

How should I concretize this? How do we invent new institutions? What can the forms of resistance of the *precari* look like? This is of course the big X on the European political scene. Politics in Europe means finding the *precariat* forms of resistance. There is a precedent, an example perhaps for this problem, in the IWW, Industrial Workers of the World. At the beginning of the 20th century no-one knew how to organize the mobile migrant labourers in the USA, either. They were highly scattered, very mobile and their resistance did not look as if it could be organized. Yet for about ten years the IWW managed to put up their seemingly impossible struggle with some success. Their importance therefore should not be underrated, even if they did lose in the end and get massacred. Perhaps today, we ought to look in the same direction, to a new kind of union that will find a new form of resistance. The strike no longer works. We need new forms that are much more linguistic and creative, much more collaborative. The *precari* are the extreme product of the big city experience and of post-Fordist capitalism. That is why they are a foothold for the onset of reflection. Organizing them means organizing lives and there is no model for that. It cannot be done without investigating the districts they move around in, their circuits of cultural consumption, their collective habits. The *precari* are actually the social individual, therefore they are always more than one, they are the counterpart of the 'general intellect'. But organizing the social individual is very hard for, as I said, they are more than one, scattered, a brittle faction. We need research. Philosophy, including

the philosophy of language, has to concern itself with the issue of what resistance forms may be developed starting from the *precari*. This is not a technical problem, on the contrary, it is an ethical matter and also an artistic matter. It is an institutional problem. Organizing the *precari* will mean finding new institutions in the broad sense of the word and the opposite of state sovereignty. The measure of resistance today depends precisely on dedication to this major objective.

This is an abridged version of
the interview with Paolo Virno.
The complete text is available at
www.opencahier.nl

Hito Steyerl

Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post- Democracy

01/06

e-flux journal #21 — december 2010 [Hito Steyerl](#)
Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy

A standard way of relating politics to art assumes that art represents political issues in one way or another. But there is a much more interesting perspective: the politics of the field of art as a place of work.¹ Simply look at what it does – not what it shows.

Amongst all other forms of art, fine art has been most closely linked to post-Fordist speculation, with bling, boom, and bust. Contemporary art is no unworldly discipline nestled away in some remote ivory tower. On the contrary, it is squarely placed in the neoliberal thick of things. We cannot dissociate the hype around contemporary art from the shock policies used to defibrillate slowing economies. Such hype embodies the affective dimension of global economies tied to ponzi schemes, credit addiction, and bygone bull markets. Contemporary art is a brand name without a brand, ready to be slapped onto almost anything, a quick face-lift touting the new creative imperative for places in need of an extreme makeover, the suspense of gambling combined with the stern pleasures of upper-class boarding school education, a licensed playground for a world confused and collapsed by dizzying deregulation. If contemporary art is the answer, the question is: How can capitalism be made more beautiful?

But contemporary art is not only about beauty. It is also about function. What is the function of art within disaster capitalism? Contemporary art feeds on the crumbs of a massive and widespread redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, conducted by means of an ongoing class struggle from above.² It lends primordial accumulation a whiff of postconceptual razzmatazz. Additionally, its reach has grown much more decentralized – important hubs of art are no longer only located in the Western metropolis. Today, deconstructivist contemporary art museums pop up in any self-respecting autocracy. A country with human rights violations? Bring on the Gehry gallery!

The Global Guggenheim is a cultural refinery for a set of post-democratic oligarchies, as are the countless international biennials tasked with upgrading and reeducating the surplus population.³ Art thus facilitates the development of a new multipolar distribution of geopolitical power whose predatory economies are often fueled by internal oppression, class war from above, and radical shock and awe policies.

Contemporary art thus not only reflects, but actively intervenes in the transition towards a new post-Cold War world order. It is a major player in unevenly advancing semicapitalism wherever T-Mobile plants its flag. It is involved in mining for raw materials for dual-core

processors. It pollutes, gentrifies, and ravishes. It seduces and consumes, then suddenly walks off, breaking your heart. From the deserts of Mongolia to the high plains of Peru, contemporary art is everywhere. And when it is finally dragged into Gagosian dripping from head to toe with blood and dirt, it triggers off rounds and rounds of rapturous applause.

Why and for whom is contemporary art so attractive? One guess: the production of art presents a mirror image of post-democratic forms of hypercapitalism that look set to become the dominant political post-Cold War paradigm. It seems unpredictable, unaccountable, brilliant, mercurial, moody, guided by inspiration and genius. Just as any oligarch aspiring to dictatorship might want to see himself. The traditional conception of the artist's role corresponds all too well with the self-image of wannabe autocrats, who see government potentially – and dangerously – as an art form. Post-democratic government is very much related to this erratic type of male-genius-artist behavior. It is opaque, corrupt, and completely unaccountable. Both models operate within male bonding structures that are as democratic as your local mafia chapter. Rule of law? Why don't we just leave it to taste? Checks and balances?

02/06

Cheques and balances! Good governance? Bad curating! You see why the contemporary oligarch loves contemporary art: it's just what works for him.

Thus, traditional art production may be a role model for the nouveaux riches created by privatization, expropriation, and speculation. But the actual production of art is simultaneously a workshop for many of the nouveaux poor, trying their luck as jpeg virtuosos and conceptual impostors, as gallerinas and overdrive content providers. Because art also means work, more precisely strike work.⁴ It is produced as spectacle, on post-Fordist all-you-can-work conveyor belts. Strike or shock work is affective labor at insane speeds, enthusiastic, hyperactive, and deeply compromised.

Originally, strike workers were excess laborers in the early Soviet Union. The term is derived from the expression "udarny trud" for "superproductive, enthusiastic labor" (udar for "shock, strike, blow"). Now, transferred to present-day cultural factories, strike work relates to the sensual dimension of shock. Rather than painting, welding, and molding, artistic strike work consists of ripping, chatting, and posing. This accelerated form of artistic production creates punch and glitz, sensation



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and impact. Its historical origin as format for Stalinist model brigades brings an additional edge to the paradigm of hyperproductivity. Strike workers churn out feelings, perception, and distinction in all possible sizes and variations. Intensity or evacuation, sublime or crap, readymade or readymade reality – strike work supplies consumers with all they never knew they wanted.

Strike work feeds on exhaustion and tempo, on deadlines and curatorial bullshit, on small talk and fine print. It also thrives on accelerated exploitation. I'd guess that – apart from domestic and care work – art is the industry with the most unpaid labor around. It sustains itself on the time and energy of unpaid interns and self-exploiting actors on pretty much every level and in almost every function. Free labor and rampant exploitation are the invisible dark matter that keeps the cultural sector going.

Free-floating strike workers plus new (and old) elites and oligarchies equal the framework of the contemporary politics of art. While the latter manage the transition to post-democracy, the former image it. But what does this situation actually indicate? Nothing but the ways in which contemporary art is implicated in transforming global power patterns.

03/06

Contemporary art's workforce consists largely of people who, despite working constantly, do not correspond to any traditional image of labor. They stubbornly resist settling into any entity recognizable enough to be identified as a class. While the easy way out would be to classify this constituency as multitude or crowd, it might be less romantic to ask whether they are not global lumpenfreelancers, deterritorialized and ideologically free-floating: a reserve army of imagination communicating via Google Translate.

Instead of shaping up as a new class, this fragile constituency may well consist – as Hannah Arendt once spitefully formulated – of the "refuse of all classes." These dispossessed adventurers described by Arendt, the urban pimps and hoodlums ready to be hired as colonial mercenaries and exploiters, are faintly (and quite distortedly) mirrored in the brigades of creative strike workers propelled into the global sphere of circulation known today as the art world.⁵ If we acknowledge that current strike workers might inhabit similarly shifting grounds – the opaque disaster zones of shock capitalism – a decidedly un-heroic, conflicted, and ambivalent picture of artistic labor emerges.

We have to face up to the fact that there is

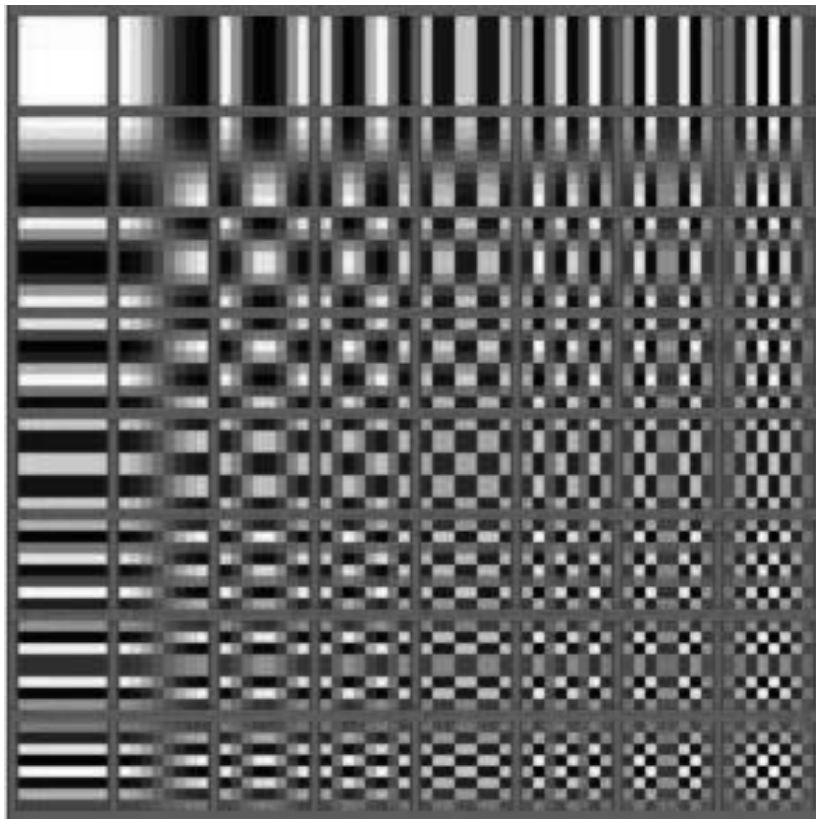


Image found in a technology news website accompanying the following opening sentence "The multinational Joint Photographic Experts Group, responsible for the JPEG standard (...) has announced the next iteration of its format will be based on the format Microsoft HD Photo." see <http://noticiastech.com/wordpress/?p=9919>.

no automatically available road to resistance and organization for artistic labor. That opportunism and competition are not a deviation of this form of labor but its inherent structure. That this workforce is not ever going to march in unison, except perhaps while dancing to a viral Lady Gaga imitation video. The international is over. Now let's get on with the global.

Here is the bad news: political art routinely shies away from discussing all these matters.⁶ Addressing the intrinsic conditions of the art field, as well as the blatant corruption within it – think of bribes to get this or that large-scale biennial into one peripheral region or another – is a taboo even on the agenda of most artists who consider themselves political. Even though political art manages to represent so-called local situations from all over the globe, and routinely packages injustice and destitution, the conditions of its own production and display remain pretty much unexplored. One could even say that the politics of art are the blind spot of much contemporary political art.

Of course, institutional critique has traditionally been interested in similar issues. But today we need a quite extensive expansion of it.⁷ Because in contrast to the age of an institutional criticism, which focused on art institutions, or even the sphere of representation at large, art production (consumption, distribution, marketing, etc.) takes on a different and extended role within post-democratic globalization. One example, which is a quite absurd but also common phenomenon, is that radical art is nowadays very often sponsored by the most predatory banks or arms traders and completely embedded in rhetorics of city marketing, branding, and social engineering.⁸ For very obvious reasons, this condition is rarely explored within political art, which is in many cases content to offer exotic self-ethnicization, pithy gestures, and militant nostalgia.

I am certainly not arguing for a position of innocence.⁹ It is at best illusory, at worst just another selling point. Most of all it is very boring. But I do think that political artists could become more relevant if they were to confront these issues instead of safely parade as Stalinist realists, CNN situationists, or Jamie-Oliver-meets-probation-officer social engineers. It's time to kick the hammer-and-sickle souvenir art into the dustbin. If politics is thought of as the Other, happening somewhere else, always belonging to disenfranchised communities in whose name no one can speak, we end up missing what makes art intrinsically political nowadays: its function as a place for labor, conflict, and...fun – a site of condensation of the contradictions of capital and of extremely entertaining and sometimes devastating

misunderstandings between the global and the local.



Fashion production for Harper's Bazar, September 2009, titled *Peggy Guggenheim's Venice*.

The art field is a space of wild contradiction and phenomenal exploitation. It is a place of power mongering, speculation, financial engineering, and massive and crooked manipulation. But it is also a site of commonality, movement, energy, and desire. In its best iterations it is a terrific cosmopolitan arena populated by mobile shock workers, itinerant salesmen of self, tech whiz kids, budget tricksters, supersonic translators, PhD interns, and other digital vagrants and day laborers. It's hard-wired, thin-skinned, plastic-fantastic. A potential commonplace where competition is ruthless and solidarity remains the only foreign expression. Peopled with charming scumbags, bully-kings, almost-beauty-queens. It's HDML, CMYK, LGBT. Pretentious, flirtatious, mesmerizing.

This mess is kept afloat by the sheer dynamism of loads and loads of hardworking women. A hive of affective labor under close scrutiny and controlled by capital, woven tightly

into its multiple contradictions. All of this makes it relevant to contemporary reality. Art affects this reality precisely because it is entangled into all of its aspects. It's messy, embedded, troubled, irresistible. We could try to understand its space as a political one instead of trying to represent a politics that is always happening elsewhere. Art is not outside politics, but politics resides within its production, its distribution, and its reception. If we take this on, we might surpass the plane of a politics of representation and embark on a politics that is there, in front of our eyes, ready to embrace.

x

This text is dedicated to the people who bear with me through digital hysteria, frequent flyer syndrome, and installation disasters. Thanks especially to Tirdad, Christoph, David, and Freya. Also Brian for the edit, as always.

05/06

Hito Steyerl is a filmmaker and writer. She teaches New Media Art at University of Arts Berlin and has recently participated in Documenta 12, Shanghai Biennial, and Rotterdam Film Festival.

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1
I am expanding on a notion developed by Hongjohn Lin in his curatorial statement for the Taipei Biennial 2010. Hongjohn Lin, "Curatorial Statement," in *10TB Taipei Biennial Guidebook* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2010), 10–11.

2
This has been described as a global and ongoing process of expropriation since the 1970s. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). As for the resulting distribution of wealth, a study by the Helsinki-based World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University (UNU-WIDER) found that in the year 2000, the richest 1 percent of adults alone owned 40 percent of global assets. The bottom half of the world's adult population owned 1 percent of global wealth. See http://www.wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en_GB/05-12-2006/.

3
For just one example of oligarch involvement, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/nyregion/28trustee.html>. While such biennials span from Moscow to Dubai to Shanghai and many of the so-called transitional countries, we shouldn't consider post-democracy to be a non-Western phenomenon. The Schengen area is a brilliant example of post-democratic rule, with a whole host of political institutions not legitimized by popular vote and a substantial section of the population excluded from citizenship (not to mention the Old World's growing fondness for democratically-elected fascists). The current exhibition "The Potosi-Principle," organized by Alice Creischer, Andreas Siekmann, and Max Jorge Hinderer, highlights the connection between oligarchy and image production from another historically relevant perspective.

4
I am drawing on a field of meaning developed by Ekaterina Degot, Cosmin Costinas, and David Riff for their 1st Ural Industrial Biennial, 2010.

5
Arendt may have been wrong on the matter of taste. Taste is not necessarily a matter of the common, as she argued, following Kant. In this context, it is a matter of manufacturing consensus, engineering reputation, and other delicate machinations, which – whoops – metamorphose into art-historical bibliographies. Let's face it: the politics of taste are not about the collective, but about the collector. Not about the common but about the patron. Not about sharing but about sponsoring.

6

There are of course many laudable and great exceptions, and I admit that I myself may bow my head in shame, too.

7
As is also argued in the reader *Institutional Critique*, eds. Alex Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009). See also the collected issues of the online journal *transform*: <http://transform.eipcp.net/transform/0106>.

8
Recently on show at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo was "Guggenheim Visibility Study Group," a very interesting project by Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas that unpacked the tensions between local (and partly indigenist) art scenes and the Guggenheim franchise system, with the Guggenheim effect analyzed in detail in a case study. See <http://www.vilma.cc/2G/>. Also see Joseba Zulaika, *Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa: Museums, Architecture, and City Renewal* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2003). Another case study: Beat Weber, Therese Kaufmann, "The Foundation, the State Secretary and the Bank – A Journey into the Cultural Policy of a Private Institution," <http://transform.eipcp.net/correspondence/1145970626>. See also Martha Rosler, "Take the Money and Run? Can Political and Socio-critical Art 'Survive'?" *e-flux journal*, issue 12, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/107>, and Tirdad Zolghadr, "11th Istanbul Biennial," http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/11th_istanbul_biennial/.

9
This is evident from this text's placement on e-flux as an advertisement supplement. The situation is furthermore complicated by the fact that these ads may well flaunt my own shows. At the risk of repeating myself, I would like to emphasize that I do not consider innocence a political position, but a moral one, and thus politically irrelevant. An interesting comment on this situation can be found in Luis Camnitzer, "The Corruption in the Arts / the Art of Corruption," published in the context of The Marco Polo Syndrome, a symposium at the House of World Cultures in April, 1995. See <http://www.universes-in-universe.de/magazin/marco-polo/s-camnitzer.htm>.

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