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Editors
Julieta Aranda
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Anton Vidokle

Intern
Orit Gat

Copy Editor/Proofreader
Phillip Stephen Twilley

Graphic Design
Jeff Ramsey

Layout Generator
Adam Florin

PDF Design
Mengyi Qian

PDF Generator
Keyian Vafai

For further information, contact **journal@e-flux.com**

www.e-flux.com/journal

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Editors

Editorial

The aesthetics of political engagement has become common currency within artistic production and discourse, and the abundance of works and exhibitions now announcing themselves as politically charged are often criticized for their distance from actual social forces outside art. While institutional critique successfully identified certain parallels between these forces and the workings of art institutions, it seems that this has simply given way to a more nuanced (and however richer) discourse for understanding the way power operates within the micro-economy of art itself. Through this, a collective desire for some form of rupture within art has come to constitute an economy of precious theoretical objects all its own—judged and appraised by their capacity to symbolically dismantle the current regime.

If we invert the claims of institutional critique by acknowledging that the actual political operations of governments, states, and judicial bodies are themselves severely limited by their own symbolic economy of signs, gestures, rituals, and purely speculative actions, then for politically engaged art, this would mean that the romantic attraction to the feeling of a police baton striking one's head can be taken as shorthand for a simple desire for artistic material to be charged with a certain immanence—and this is less a matter of subverting dominant paradigms than of identifying what is immediately necessary. And this in itself has produced some fascinating situations in which art has completely surpassed the limits of what institutions can contain.

Continuing his series revisiting influential pieces of art writing, **Simon Sheikh** revisits Lucy Lippard's "Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power" at a time when a great deal of art in heavy circulation is concerned with politics. But where the Trojan Horse signified a way for activist art to enter art's stronghold in the guise of an aesthetic object, one can now speculate upon how politically engaged approaches have become the precious objects that guarantee entry into the museum. The question would then be: what do these forms release from their bellies once night falls?

Nina Möntmann looks at Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here...*, the massive and controversial three-part exhibition and discursive series organized by Rosler in 1989 to investigate the causes, effects, and possible solutions to the problem of homelessness. Möntmann reads what was then taken to be a polemical activist infiltration of the art institution as something that can now be understood as a far more multifaceted and radical destabilization and reconfiguration of the space of art itself, as well as a forerunner to the many spatially conscious, concrete, and socially engaged approaches that soon began to emerge in and around the art establishment in the 1990s.

What happens when the Trojan Horse travels both ways? As a result of a provision requiring that a percentage of any publicly funded project in Holland be used towards the production of art, the Dutch secret service "hired" **Jill**

Magid for the job. The choice was clear: Magid often assumes the role of a secret agent in order to produce works that expose the institutional mechanisms and technologies that govern civic life. In many cases, she has done this by appealing to the humanity of institutional officials and operatives, and a number of Dutch secret service agents were themselves seduced by the sympathy of her approach to their own practices. However, the project went on to take a peculiar turn when the secret service determined that there was indeed a conflict of interest in inviting a "double agent" such as Magid into the inner sanctum of national security under the ethical imperative of rendering it transparent to the public. In this way, the project came into direct contact with a curious threshold between notions of transparency and secrecy in a public institution whose very existence hinges upon a curious and unstable alchemy of the two.

In "Subjects of the American Moon: From Studio as Reality to Reality as Studio" **François Bucher** deploys conspiracy theory as a critical tool for reading the transformation that took place when the cinematic image was replaced by the live broadcast. Marked by the broadcast of the 1969 moon landing, the performative image that announced itself as such (cinema) became a document of reality that controls its viewers by concealing its own production. The suspicion generated by images whose very technology proclaims "reality" inevitably produces conspiracy theories as a means of locating a form of truth through an ability to read the image.

And the ability to read and write is critical for determining whether an individual produces reality or simply receives it. Dovetailing from his essay "Art and Literacy" from issue #3, the first of **Luis Camnitzer**'s two-part series considers how literacy education can determine the degrees to which one is able to code and decode the world around them, especially when, from the very earliest stages, "alphabetization" functions as a subtle form of indoctrinating subjects as receivers of meaning rather than producers: "Instead of being guided in a search to name unnamed things, I was forced to learn the names of known things."

Academy, Asperger, Esperanto, Freud, and the Secession all overlap in **Sean Snyder**'s continuation of his last "self-interrogation." Travelling and watching the news, giving talks and making work, Snyder simply finds enough information circulating through the art world as real world as art world as real world to render the borderlines of institutional protocol completely irrelevant.

—Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

X

Julieta Aranda is an artist and an editor of *e-flux journal.*

Brian Kuan Wood is an editor of *e-flux journal.*

Anton Vidokle is an editor of e-flux journal and chief curator of the 14th Shanghai Biennale: Cosmos Cinema.

François Bucher

Subjects of the American Moon: From Studio as Reality to Reality as Studio

> That is why this story from ancient Egypt is still capable after thousands of years of arousing astonishment and thoughtfulness. It resembles the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up air-tight and have retained their germinative power to this day.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*[1]

> Information isn't memory, and it does not accumulate and store for memory's sake. It works exclusively for its own profit, which depends on the prompt forgetfulness of everything clearing the way for the sole, and abstract, truth of the present to assert itself and for information to cement its claim to being alone adequate to that truth.

—Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*[2]

From the end of World War II until the moon landing, cinema could no longer be linked to "a *whole* thought, triumphant, collective, but to a hazardous singular one."[3]

After the war, a kind of *pedagogy of perception* came about, with the formal, moral articulation of Neo-realism, and its emphasis on the sequence shot. The spectator was left to wander *inside* the phenomenological reality of the film on his or her own terms—alone, as an individual. World War II had made collective *projection* impossible to stomach. The very nature of the spectacle's *completeness*—which developed concurrently in Hollywood and Nuremberg, as Paul Virilio points out—was viscerally repellent for being fascistic and intrinsically manipulative.

Deleuze wrote that "montage could become secondary with the sequence shot's new forms of composition and association. Depth, the depth of the image is assumed as delusion (state propaganda), so the image assumes its flatness as 'surface without depth.'"[4]

However, this state of affairs only lasted until the most sophisticated rhetorical device of our time silently appeared, allowing for a newly "triumphant, collective" narrative to take shape again, fully formed. This new narrative was totally invisible—not claiming to be a projection of any ideology whatsoever, so much as a

mere peephole, a telescope to the stars. As Tom Levin points out: the rhetorical apparatus of LIVE is somewhat analogical to the traditional rhetorical power of the indexical iconic photographic image.[5] In other words, a photo says "this is it, this is proof," and LIVE was the inheritor of this incommensurable power. Nowadays it is clear that LIVE is also a form subject to post-production: LIVE is a filter that can be applied to an image much like the way a fake patina is applied to a copper surface for an inverse effect.

Love, Affair

What is cinema? The word for a love affair with a moving image in the dark—an experience of "blocked vision" in which the body accepts its stillness in order to allow for the magic trick of movement to unfold in front of it, or rather within the internal screen of the mind. Cinema is a being who could only show its true face in the moment when it was dying prematurely. It is a verb rather than a thing (as authors such as Dominique Paini have treated it), an unfolding which began with the lit vitrines in the natural history museums of the nineteenth century: a succession of images, one after another, in the darkness. A verb that went into a loop, a cliché, a halt, when it walked absent-mindedly through an invisible threshold to another apparatus, one that broke the continuity of its own history: a new apparatus that placed the image in a non-site, divorced from the body, where the image no longer affirmed or denied anything but its eternal presence. The machine of LIVE: broadcast television and the 24-hour vacuum-packed continuum.

The transition from cinema to television is a transition from a realm of ethics/aesthetics to a realm of the purely technical (*one to one*, that which has no supplement). As a paradigm, cinema projects and pronounces that it *is* a language, whereas media or television constitutes a disappearing act—appearing as nothing more than "that which *only* shows what is already there." Business and advertising lubricate the wheels of this machine for which a single word crystallizes its every facet: "infomercial." Something is being sold or negotiated while it is presented as information. In this way, the image enters a Möbius strip. What is a cliché but that which can no longer move forward? A history that has reached its end and loops back on itself in a state of paralysis.

French journalist Serge Daney has a revelation at an early age, when he reads in an article by Jacques Rivette about a traveling shot in Gillo Pontecorvo's film *Kapo*.[6] Rivette speaks about the camera traveling on a body hanging on barbed wire in a concentration camp. *Kapo* is one of the first films about the Holocaust, and Daney, following Rivette, sententiously identified this traveling shot as a pornographic image. Something changed in the camps for Rivette and for Daney, something related to the image. This traveling shot in a movie he never saw was for Daney the point of no return: his own paradigm as a writer for the rest of his life. The *Kapo* travelling shot represented what could no longer be shown—true horror had now become impossible to depict. The first death of cinema took place in a desert, on the ruins of Berlin, if you will—in a mute world whose coordinates had collapsed. There was no longer a clear path from original, savage barbarity to the bright lights of rationality. Then came cinema's second death, which was called television.

Since the dawn of television, all images have been conspiratorial. Television is a sort of cross between Méliès and *The Wizard of Oz*—a means of controlling society by way of the rhetorical device of LIVE. Television and cinema are ultimately two epistemological metaphors that can be spun and woven into a history, and this history always ends up being our own. We are double helix beings: the thing and its representation are always coiling around each other.

Georges Méliès, A Trip to the Moon (Le voyage dans la Lune), 1902. film still.

Spin

Here we will look at two conspiracy theories, but not in the interest of playing detective in a game of confirmation or denunciation, but rather in order to approach a history of the image with the premise that they might be true. Let us first distinguish ourselves from rogue conspiracy "experts" such as Bart Sibrel who have devoted themselves to uncovering the falsification of the 1969 moon landing, or the many others who seek to prove that Flight 77 did not in fact crash into the Pentagon (it didn't). Let us be anti-experts who speculate only with our available rhetorical capacities, and without evaluating for truth or falsity. Let us refrain from entering the labyrinth where logic and the occult become further and further entangled. Instead, we will simply take the images upon which our historical perception is based and alter their course,

project them in a different direction—backwards, for example—starting from an ethical premise that sets off for the past from the present like a silent drone. All this without seeking the history that does justice to truth, but rather the truth that does justice to history.

Gods

The story begins with Richard Nixon. Nixon, as is well known, was broad-minded and receptive enough to understand the ambiguities of fact and fiction. He was, after all, the American president who in 1971 broke the ties between paper money and the solid gold locked away in the Federal Reserve Bank. So when the time came to produce a much-needed sense of destiny for the American people in the midst of the grimness of 1969, he fully understood destiny to be a simple matter of image, nothing more.

Nixon was a producer of the same kind as Jeremy Prokosh, a character in Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt.* Prokosh is based on the famous Hollywood producer Joe Levine (one of Godard's *bête noires*). Prokosh—played by Jack Palance—famously says, "I like gods... I know exactly how they feel," as he works on a film adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey*.[7]

To be more concrete: let's assume that the trip to the moon was a film production. For the sake of argument, let's consider it a fact. In refraining from arguing over what is possible or impossible, true or false, feasible or unfeasible, we will not deal with the shadows of moon rocks pointing in different directions though there is only one source of light. We will not note the absence of stars behind the astronauts' heads and we will not ask why they are lit from both the front and back simultaneously, nor why the dust under the lunar module shows no trace of disturbance from landing, and so forth. Rather, we can simply take the conspiracy theory to be true and proceed to embark upon a brief journey through the twentieth century with this premise in mind—a journey different from one premised on certain events understood to have changed the course of history. However, the possibility remains that this digression is actually our true history. Or rather we can suppose that this *can* be our reality, as a proposal or projection from the present into the past.

The general argument also requires accepting a second, more recent conspiracy theory about what happened in 2001: the allegation that it was not American Airlines Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon on September 11, but a missile or fighter plane. According to this idea, the lunatic Donald Rumsfeld would link these two monumental historical fabrications: he was a top Nixon aide in 1969 and famously manned the Pentagon in 2001 as Secretary of Defense. Rumsfeld would in this case be not so much an implacable warrior, but rather the true inheritor of Méliès' legacy: the artist/trickster who understands the position of the image at a certain historical juncture—what it can do and what charm the illusion requires within new historical paradigms. Was this not the man who formulated the intricate philosophical question about "known unknowns and unknown unknowns" in anticipation of a possible insurrection in Iraq? Could anyone argue against this kind of geniality?

Hearing this voice, we can easily imagine Rumsfeld exclaiming during a meeting at the White House, at a moment when he suddenly understands cinema: "The event of the moon landing is an image of an event, not an actual event!" And the man to catch that curveball happened to be sitting right in the Oval Office. One must remember how urgently the moon was needed at the time: the 'Nam jungle was creeping over, and it was crucial to counter the image of a people choking on their own Napalm with that of the shining city on the hill, a people endowed with a mission. In this way "reality as imagination" and other such utopian prescriptions of May '68 found their real application on Nixon's desk.

Richard Nixon & Jackie Gleason. © Dirck Halstead - UT Center for American History.

Scanlines

> The function of government is to inspire its citizens to believe that they can do great things.
>
> —Neil Armstrong, private conversation

In 1961, a reckless John F. Kennedy projected the moon onto the abstract screen of 1969—"before the end of the decade," as he boldly asserted. When his Camelot image became that of the Dallas martyr, the prophecy became irrevocable, a destiny sealed. In 1968, NASA posited only a 1% chance of a man reaching the moon, and yet it all took

place the following year without a hitch. Here lies the passage from terrestrial, logocentric reality to Walpurgis night, when shadows become indistinguishable from objects and all becomes a lunatic's dream.

In any case, the question is an ethical one: America must not be seen to be cheating in order to reach the top of the mountain before the USSR. One must think of this projective idea of what a government can be (see Armstrong's quote above): something related to fulfilling destiny, creating an affirmative teleology, a new measure for man. And this teleology is nothing but an image, in the broadest sense of the term—no different than the Hollywood mindset and film sets that were jump-started in Germany in 1933. A superior race there, a flag on the moon here. And in both cases the idea of a Soviet flag flying over the moon or the Reichstag was the greatest disaster fathomable.

Sen. John F. Kennedy (L) playing peek-a-boo with his daughter Caroline in her crib. Photo by Ed Clark for Life Magazine, 1958. from here.

Lost

> Deleuze says that any act of creation is an act of resistance, but an act can only resist if it can de-create the facts. Otherwise no resistance is possible, the facts are always stronger.

—Giorgio Agamben, *Le cinéma de Guy Debord*[8]

NASA recently discovered that it lost all the original tapes of the moon landing.[9] The only ones available for inspection are recordings of live footage that NASA transmitted to television networks in 1969. Supposedly, the resolution of the original video images sent from the moon had too many scanlines for public television. The makeshift solution that produced the footage we now associate with the landing came from a camera pointed directly at a television screen. While the clarity of the original is crystal clear, the second-generation video (a copy of a copy) is grainy, blurry, and over-contrasted—the way we are now accustomed to seeing the moon: an elegant stylistic decision by NASA, which chose a sort of impressionist surrealism over hyperrealism. It is fascinating to think that the moon landing endured the same destiny as the *Odyssey*: all we are left with is a secondary text from a troubadour who forgets somes lines (scanlines) from the original tale; someone who heard it from someone who heard it from Homer.

To return to the moon landing production: in 1969, television was consolidating its power around the world. Hollywood's image factory had reached its peak and was being pushed aside by a new apparatus for the moving image, defined by a totally different paradigm—one that made us understand ourselves as super-endowed animals who could see beyond the horizon. TELE-VISION—the ideological device whose secret codename is "social control"—hides representation and presumes unmediated transparency while simultaneously calling itself *the media*. By 1969, the spider web of television encompassed the developed world just in time for it to witness the moon landing from its living room sofas.

The moon provides the most perfect parable for cinema: opening in 1902 with a trip to the moon and closing with the moon landing in 1969.[10] Yet the 1969 landing is contaminated by a mortal, outlandish virus from which cinema will never recover. In one sense, the moon landing is the epitome of the cinematic: a collective destiny *projected* towards an END; but in its other face the moon is also ipso facto the very place where the origin of an image *as image* is hidden forever. The advent of television.

Television and cinema are on two parallel parabolas, one rising and one descending. The descending curve is the function of cinema as a literal and metaphorical *projection*—a collective destiny, projected into the future. As the image that reveals its origin in a projector emitting light, a creator projecting a vision, and the aforementioned idea of an END. Cinema opens a discourse in which a world emerges from an image. "Our collective dream of growing and becoming subjects," as Jean-Luc Godard says in his video *Soft and Hard*.[11] The second, rising curve is the function of a monster closing in: television. The key word here is, again, *control*: if cinema is a *projection*, then television is essentially a control device. But at its dawn, television is still influenced by the profile of its forebear, cinema. And in this sense, the moon production has two faces: one that darkens as the other grows lighter, as night descends upon the image.

The moon marks cinema's point of no return—a transformative moment of self-lucidity, the bluish light of the TV set invades the room, so to speak. Cinema understands itself in light of the power of a new device promising that what is being shown is reality and not a

projection—a rhetoric that in itself marks the monopoly of the real. Television is the place from which cinema could perceive itself, as a planet seen from a satellite in its orbit. The sleepless vigil of the electronic medium was perhaps a culture's first glance at its affair with an image in the dark.

simile from a metaphor, we learned that the moon is not "like cheese," but that it " *is* cheese." Mission accomplished: we are the subjects of the American Moon. It made the people of the United States *universal* just before its echo was blown into the endless cave of 24-hour *live*.

Peter Clifton with his forgotten moon landing footage. Photo: Tanya Lake. from here.

Poetry

What is the moon but the ultimate illusion, the original projection in the dark? What is the moon as opposed to the sun? The beam of white light isolated in the theater of darkness, not the light of day that flattens the real, but the artificial, phantasmatic, photomatic, that draws demons and angels in the dark and makes nightmares gallop over clouds. The moon is crafty like witchcraft, and like cinema—an illusion whose founding myth in the twentieth century was the funky animated trompe-l'œil staging of Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* in 1902. Has any story been more perfect and coherent?

In 1969, the moon is the epitome of an *image*, whether of the cinematographic dream or of the poem that humanity has written through the centuries. Taught to differentiate a

Pentagon and Full Circle

Time to get back to my life.

—Paris Hilton, *Paris Hilton's My New BFF*

Now for the part about the Pentagon. If the moon production stands at the summit of Hollywood's camera, then the Pentagon is the cylinder of another lens—one that the world can't get enough of. If you set out to fake an event in '69, then you stage it in the grand old tradition of the studio setup. But if you want to fake an event in 2001, you do it in front of a surveillance camera. This is the

space odyssey we've travelled through in the last thirty years. Suspicion is everywhere except in front of that surveillance camera, whose rhetorical power lies in its transparent, showbiz costume. The real destiny of *tele* vision (as was already embedded in its name) was surveillance—CCTV or Reality TV, which are the many faces of the same crystal ball. Surveillance is television finally coming down to the bone and gnawing on it, what it set out to become from the beginning: a long-range articulated peeping hole, the promise of periscopic vision—in short, the promise of transparency, the most complex fabrication of language. The world making its own cinema without anyone's help. And like the lotus-eater of the *Odyssey,* whose name comes from what he eats, the television viewer can only ask questions to the screen using the vocabulary that the screen has previously offered him. All plays out as reformulation.

Coming back to the point: the expression in the Pentagon's think tank this time must have been: "It doesn't matter that the whole planet sees X image. Images no longer *mean*, they can be made to *spin* in any direction." In metaphorical terms, it is no longer the image of an event that counts, but rather the event of an image—less a question of what happens *in* the image as what happens *to* the image. *Reality* is a matter of having twenty cameras pointed at a person going about "real" life. The subject is not an actor—that's the point. The subject is the real thing: she is having a real conversation in a real office in a regular day of her internship at *Teen Vogue* in Los Angeles. Like a neo-futurist, neo-cubist painting, the countershot of her face as she reacts to her new boss' words is composed in an editing suite. There are so many takes and so many angles on her face in each second that literally any expression can be fabricated by splicing them together. Though she is not an actress and she is not in a studio, one can no longer make out the difference. She is raw material acting for the post-production stage (just as the effect of LIVE can be post-produced).[12] Imagine a cartoon modeled on her, and notice how there is basically no difference between her body and her *animation*—she *is* the animation. We are in the very moment when virtual reality has become literally indistinguishable from its double; a believable image needs to look imperfect, or else it will be unconvincing. Our flight away from the paradigm of *image as proof* has taken us so far up into the ether that no safety net could ever catch our fall.

Not much needs be said about the ghost plane that hit the Pentagon. The plane cannot be seen on tape, though it passed in front of some eighty-five surveillance cameras whose tapes were confiscated by the FBI minutes after impact. The three videos that the FBI did release (after a lawsuit) can still be watched, over and over again, on YouTube—which in its turn is killing television just as television did cinema in.[13] Only this is a different kind of death. This is death from the inside, like the way a parasite consumes an animal. Yet it is still unclear exactly what YouTube is, though one can already make out a sliver of its profile. While the Web 2.0 paradigm is from a certain angle a beautiful means for the *user* to take command of content, this takes place at the time when a machine similar to that of Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" has written its sentence so deep into the body of the culture that it can do nothing but repeat the phrase imprinted in its flesh. So the user channels the history of television as his or her own history, digitizing advertisements from the '80s because that is where his or her affective memory lies. In spite of all the *YouTube–MySpace–iChat* freedom, this brave new user has already consumed so much television from birth onward that the television already installed in the user's consciousness continues to be fully operative. Like a parrot raised in captivity, there is no channel for freedom, even when that channel is open source.

To draw a circle here: a new mega-historical fabrication—a contemporary moon landing—would supposedly be shot by a user and posted on YouTube. The original tape would be lost, and the pixelation would serve as an art historical correlative to the grain of the moon video—what Seurat is to Monet, what Paris Hilton's erotic night vision is to the terrifying night vision from the Baghdad Hilton in 1992, when CNN saw its golden opportunity to go *24 hours live*. At the moment it remains unclear whether YouTube can be considered alongside cinema and television as a third force in the chain of cataclysmic events within the ecology of the moving image. As Chairman Mao put it when asked what he thought of the French Revolution: it is too early to say. Yet there is also no need to be pessimistic about its possibilities for fostering a collective contestation of the discourse of the media. Perhaps YouTube may still live up to the promise of its affirmative *You*.

X

François Bucher is an artist from Cali, Colombia, now living in Berlin. Bucher has been reflecting on the moving image's passage from cinema to television in a series of writings since 2001. His reflections on this subject are condensed in a series of essays: "Attaining the Body," Saving the Image: Art after Film, Center for Contemporary Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, Tanya Leighton, Pavel Büchler eds. Glasgow, 2003., "Television (an address)," Journal of Visual Culture, Vol. 4, No. 1, 5-15 (2005) 2004., "A Movement in the Mystery," In the Poem about Love you don't Write the Word Love, Lucas & Sternberg, Berlin, 2006., and "Subjects of the American Moon: From Studio as Reality to Reality as Studio," e-flux journal. The process on this reflection will conclude with a 5th essay on "clairvoyance and television," currently a work in process.

1
Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* , ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 90.

2
Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 157.

3
Gilles Deleuze, "Optimisme, pessimisme et voyage: Lettre à Serge Daney," in Serge Daney, *Ciné journal* , vol. 1: 1981–1982 (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque des *Cahiers du cinéma*, 1998).

4
Ibid.

5
See Thomas Levin, "Rhetoric of the Temporal Index: Surveillant Narration and the Cinema of 'Real Time,'" in *CTRL Space: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. Thomas Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: Center for Art and Media, 2002), 578–593.

6
See Serge Daney, "The Tracking Shot in *Kapo*" (1992), trans. Laurent Kretzschmar, *Senses of Cinema* 30 (January–March 2004), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2004/feature-articles/kapo_daney/ .

7
Then there is *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), whose maker Stanley Kubrick is said to be the director of the trompe-l'œil moon landing film in a famous urban legend that goes by the name of "Area 51." Everything seems to correspond here, since, that film is made a year before the moon landing movie and the link to the year 2001 will be vital to our argument. William Karrel's mockumentary "Dark Side of the Moon" is a beautiful elaboration on this myth; it has interviews with Donald Rumsfeld, and it is shot in 2002...

8
Giorgio Agamben, "Le cinéma de Guy Debord ," in *Image et mémoire* (Paris: Editions Hoëbeke, 1998), reproduced at http://perso.wanadoo.fr/espace.freud/topos/psycha/psysemcinedebo.htm (accessed February 15, 2004).

9
Believing this story entails also believing that a certain film producer in Australia, who had borrowed some of this footage in 1979 for a film on Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* came to think he was the haphazard savior of one of the most important documents in the History of mankind. But that story was never followed through. See Carmel Egan, "One Small Step in Hunt for Moon Film World Didn't See," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 20, 2006, http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/one-small-step/2006/08/19/1155408073519.html .

10
"Le voyage dans la lune," directed by Georges Méliès (1902).

11
Soft and Hard (A Soft Conversation Between Two Friends on a Hard Subject) , directed by Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, (1985).

12
This is similar to the way in which the outcome of a presidential debate could be tampered with retroactively in a very dark place nicknamed "spin alley," at the height of the dizzying second Bush presidential campaign.

13
Here we don't speak of a new camera; still, the dimension shift, literally and metaphorically, may be as radical as the one that goes from cinema to TV. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=US&v=bX_8FHEuHGU .

Luis Camnitzer

ALPHABETIZATION, Part I: Protocol and Proficiency

> To read is to resuscitate ideas buried in paper. Each word is an epitaph.
>
> —Simón Rodríguez [1]

I started learning to write and read at age six and received my first serious art education when I was 14. These periods mark two points in my biography at which my instincts for exploration were seriously curtailed. Instead of being guided in a search to name unnamed things, I was forced to learn the names of known things.

These memories truly trouble me—but that's not all. They also make me wonder: Why were reading and writing taught separately from drawing and looking? Why was the first pair considered an obligation for everybody and the second reserved for a later vocational choice? Why was the system designed to formulate answers to other people's questions rather than pose my own?

Turning to look at the present, other things bother me as well, for example: Why is good art an elitist affair and bad art a more popular one? Why are most incentives to improve one's work, or indeed achieve anything, external to the learner and not embedded in the learning? Are these questions a symptom of bad pedagogy? And is a solution to be found in a better approach to pedagogy?

Beyond learning how to read and write, I've never paid much attention to literacy until very recently. I always presumed that the knowledge of reading and writing was something of absolute value, lacking any internal contradictions. Like many, I associated illiteracy with ignorance and socially dysfunctional traits. Focusing on art, I took no notice of the New Literacy Studies movement and the concept of "multiliteracies" that emerged during the nineties. In thinking about art education and using terms like "visual literacy," I gave only superficial thought to the possibility that art and literacy are two connected sub-categories of coding and decoding, and more in general to the subject of the translation of ideas from one code into another. Telepathy would be my ideal instrument for all this, but I have never managed to make it work. Beyond my personal shortcomings in this area, telepathy also poses problems of storage and retrieval.

A Single Letter

With "telepathy banks" out of the question, I have considered the alternative of compressing all knowledge into one letter. Literacy then would be a snap, like taking a

Hassan Khan, from The Alphabet Book, 26-page book, 80x40cm laid open, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

pill, and there would be no need to keep art separate from it. We have not one but twenty-six letters in the basic modern Latin alphabet, which is still impressive, given how much knowledge, evocation, and inquiry can be put into those scribbles. Add to that the limited repertoire of signs available in art, and a lot of ground is covered.

The single-letter idea is closer to Borges' Aleph than to any letter in an alphabet, and it may sound a little too mystical. In any case, I once mentioned this idea to someone who informed me that the Dzochen Tibetan tradition already has it. It is a special letter "A" that serves as a symbol for the "body of light" and is said to contain all primordial knowledge. Later I discovered that this single-vessel concept is also recognized in secular theory. Talking about algorithms, mathematician George Chaitin describes "elegant programs" as "the optimal compression of its output, it is the scientific theory for that output, considered as experimental data."[2]

In art (including creative writing) compression is central to power and effect, encompassing not only empirical data, but also, and perhaps, particularly, the non-experienced and the unknown—indeed, that is what often makes art interesting. We are talking about a form of compression that satisfies Chaitin's conditions, and a decompression that surpasses them. In art, the decompression resorts to evocations and the completion of the work takes place in the viewer's experience.

There is something else implicit in Chaitin's definition: the program (or the sign, or the coded message) is a meeting point where writer and artist encounter reader and viewer. The sign—or combination of signs—is therefore not only a product or an object; it is also a space of passage. In this sense, perhaps one of the faulty notions picked up in the course of my schooling was that a text or a piece of art is a thing and not a place. And further, that this thing exists only in order to tell me about other, already known things.

This would serve to explain why there are two types of pedagogy: one directed at the transmission of knowledge, and another—used less often—aimed at developing creativity. And there are separate social attitudes attached to each: one of submission to a given order of things, and another—less often found—fostering the critique of that order. This in turn also explains why, when we want to give primacy to the search for unknown things, we are forced to unlearn a lot of what we have previously learned.

Protocols

Teaching a craft is easy. Craft is a relatively closed system, dealing with objective data in a given order. It only requires time and patience. But the separation of craft from meaning comprises a de facto indoctrination: In disciplines like history or literature, or in the social sciences, when the memorization of facts is divorced from interpretation, a subtle form of coercion takes place. The student is left not only ignorant of the underlying ideologies, trained to think it is possible, even desirable, to be apolitical, when in fact that is itself a political position. Meaningless craft, similarly, has its own meaning. It

Hassan Khan, from The Alphabet Book, 26-page book, 80x40cm laid open, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

equally reflects an ideology, and a superficial one at that—it is the product of the unexamined assumption that this certain way of teaching is non-ideological. Protocols—the rules that guide how an activity should be performed—share this same ideology of non-ideology. That is why this kind of pedagogy emphasizes training and not education.

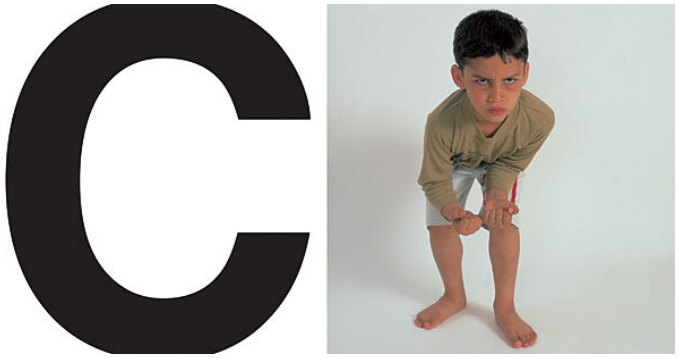
Teaching adheres to tight protocols—codes that define the space within which teaching is performed. The most basic protocol at work here is doubtless the separation of teaching from learning: a teacher giving information on one side, students receiving it on the other. The protocol-space represents this preset distribution of power, and only those modes of pedagogy that fit that space and comply with that distribution can be used.

Protocols are not necessarily rational, and if they are they are slow to be updated, they may outlive their original rationale. In the forties, when I was in grade school in Uruguay, we often had to read aloud in front of the class, standing at the blackboard facing the class. It was a formal activity for which we were forced to use Castilian pronunciation. Normal speaking was declassed because protocol determined that Castilian was the refined, correct, and classy way to pronounce while reading to an audience. A leftover from Spanish colonization two centuries earlier, it was a protocol nobody had bothered to revise. [3]

Four decades later I was teaching in a U.S. college and one day it was my turn to take minutes in a meeting of department chairs. Bored, I decided to write descriptive minutes. I not only quoted, but also described the demeanor and expressions of those being quoted. I breached secretarial protocol and, my realism interpreted as caricature, elicited indignation.[4] The protocol of secretarial work demands machine-like, objective anonymity, without the possibility of personal accountability.

In my grade school, protocol forced us to be ridiculous. In my meeting, protocol prohibited exposing the ridiculousness of others.[5] And in spite of stated assumptions, both protocols were highly ideological in that they reduced the possibilities for our expression and revelation, fitting us into an institutional mold.

Protocol is an important word here. Because protocols are created by or associated with power (somebody composes the rules, somebody implements them), to focus critically on protocol helps us to see where power is placed, and what it does. Therefore, inasmuch as teaching follows protocol in its general ideology and in its concrete representation (expressed in the form of syllabi), it can be seen as a form of colonization. Colonization and the teacher as colonizer, therefore, can be used as negative metaphors for education.



Hassan Khan, from The Alphabet Book, 26-page book, 80x40cm laid open, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

The Urgency to Communicate

Literacy is primarily conceived of as a "known thing" to be somehow handed over. The teacher is literate and the learner is not. The knowledge, mostly defined as a skill, is transmitted from one to the other and the job is done. Over time, however, ideas about literacy have become increasingly complex. With the changes in capitalism during the last half century, different concepts have emerged. Ideas about literacy are no longer limited to traditional methods of strict skill acquisition, with a choice between phonic approaches or comprehensive understanding of meanings. With resistance against social and economic exploitation came the recognition of a need for political awareness and sensitivity to local needs. Attempts to analyze literacy had to factor in the environment of the learner. Paulo Freire politicized such study by showing how the development of literacy was connected to the social conditions that cause and maintain illiteracy. Recent research by Ana Lúcia in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, adds a psychological dimension to the social situation, revealing that the strongest feelings of adults who acknowledged being illiterate are "humiliation and impotence."[6] This, among other things, makes it difficult to identify those in need.

Meanwhile literacy has not remained limited to traditional reading and writing. According to Robert Reich, for the last twenty-five years routine work as a percentage of all work is diminishing, while work requiring creativity and abstract analysis is increasing. Consequently an elite form of literacy has developed: that of the "symbol analysts." And this new complexity has created a number of new social classes and forms of illiteracy not yet fully registered.

All this may have enriched pedagogical theory, but the classroom situation has not changed very much.[7] In a world increasingly organized by algorithmic thinking, symbol analysis is still considered a form of specialization. Education continues to function primarily as a social lubricant, and basic literacy continues to be an essential part of the lubrication process. The regrets of functionally illiterate individuals reflect this situation. Their incentive to learn how to read and write comes from the prospect of being able to attend to their business in the bank or take a bus, and not from equipping themselves for a better communication or inquiry.[8] In spite of many efforts by progressive thinkers, the classroom has been kept free of critical inquiry and of any challenge or exploration of the unknown.

Basic literacy education and basic art education tend to start from a common ground. In their own ways, they define the starting point as knowledge of the ABCs of language and then proceed to develop the skills to use them. The assumption is that the primordial core of a language lies in irreducible discrete units that will later be strung together, rather than in the urgency to communicate. In literacy, the units are literally the letters. In art, according to aesthetic ideology, they are life drawing, abstract composition, and so forth. But in literacy as in art, the reason for learning them is to be revealed only after the achievement of proficiency. There may be a strong reason for wanting to learn (improvement of social class, art historical fame), but the target usually lies outside and beyond the development of the skill. Meanwhile children are able to assemble their own language with minimal rules while playing charades or drawing freely. When language acquisition does serve the urgency to communicate, children use the necessary tools in an integrated manner, without a classroom, and without any noticeable effort.

In spite of the common aspects shared between skills-through-building-blocks and insulation from communication goals, even in the most traditional pedagogies basic literacy and basic art part ways very quickly. One of the reasons for this is that literacy prioritizes reading over writing, while art stresses making over seeing. As James Paul Gee points out, reading is understanding and writing is producing.[9] This puts reading in a category together with art appreciation and writing in a category with art making. Or, more schematically, one category refers to decoding while the other refers to coding.

Art and literacy therefore come to be considered as completely separate entities. Reading is the decoding of writing and thus together they presumably constitute a distinct and inseparable couple. Given the general expectations of the learner, literacy leads to an understanding of what other people have done or discovered. Meanwhile, the expectation for art (including creative writing) is that it leads to an ability to handle urgent needs of expression and to explore things yet unknown. The consequence is that society expects the written word to inform, while art is expected to reveal. Where they curiously find common ground is in how, despite differing definitions and expectations, both arrive at their destination only through proficiency.

This common ground—making proficiency the foundation—is a curse for both. In the case of literacy, the student is trained to see mastery of the craft of written language as the definitive route to freedom of expression, when the code itself embeds limits to possible meanings. In the case of art, the student is trained in the code of the craft, but without the luxury of being able to think that mastery of the craft will lead to success. For the student of art, the messages are mixed, even contradictory. On the one hand, craft is considered separately from meaning. On the other, in the world of art, the aspiring student knows well that the only way to achieve any recognition is by breaking away from the protocols of craft to find an identifiable voice. The student learns how to do things but not how to dream or speculate. This is not solely a misconception, but also a sign of pedagogical laziness. The bar is placed so as to confirm and maintain the lowest level, rather than to identify the learner's energy and employ it to raise the bar. As P. D. James says, seething imagination is being disciplined.[10]

Hassan Khan, from The Alphabet Book, 26-page book, 80x40cm laid open, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

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→Continued in issue #11: *ALPHABETIZATION, Part Two: Hegemonic Language and Arbitrary Order*.

Luis Camnitzer is a Uruguayan artist who has lived in the USA since 1964, and an emeritus professor of art at the State University of New York, College at Old Westbury. He was the Viewing Program Curator for The Drawing Center, New York, from 1999 to 2006. In 2007, he was the pedagogical curator for the 6th Bienal del Mercosur. He was pedagogical curator for the Iberê Camargo Foundation in Porto Alegre, and is presently pedagogical advisor for the Cisneros Foundation. He is the author of *New Art of Cuba* (1994/2004) and *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (2007), both from University of Texas Press.

1
Simón Rodríguez, “Consejos de amigo: Dados al Colegio de Lacatunga” (ca. 1845), in *Obras C ompletas* (Caracas: Ediciones del Congreso de La República, 1988), 2:45.

2
Gregory Chaitin, *Meta Math! The Quest for Omega* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 125.

3
The relation between language and social class of course continues to inform distinctions such as “well spoken” and “vulgar.” Recently a Uruguayan presidential candidate (a former president of the senate and minister of agriculture who had been imprisoned for twelve years as a “subversive”) was derided in an editorial for his language: “(He) introduced onto the political battlefield a language completely alien to our traditions. Formally, he resorted and continues to resort to vulgar expressions, inappropriate to a life of cultivated relations.” (Introdujo en la lid política un lenguaje completamente ajeno a nuestras tradiciones. Formalmente, recurrió y recurre a expresiones vulgares, impropias de una vida de relación culta.) *El País*, June 16, 2009.

4
In my minutes I had described the chair of the meeting as chewing her lunch while she was expressing her thoughts. I concede that I didn’t like this person.

5
The incident came back to mind when I read Elsie Rockwell’s “The Uses of Orality and Literacy in Rural Mexico: Tales from Xaltipan,” in *The Making of Literate Societies* , ed. David Olson and Nancy Torrance (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

6
“Analfabeto se sente impotente, diz pesquisadora,” *Folha de São Paulo* , June 14, 2009.

7
As early as the late 1980s it was already established that the use of computers, by placing emphasis on e-mail correspondence and other activities separate from skill acquisition, sped up the literacy process. See Jo Anne Kleigfen, “Computers and Opportunities for Literacy Development,” *ERIC/CUE Digest* 54, http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9213/computers.htm .

8
Ibid.

9
James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33.

10
PD James, *The Murder Room*, Penguin Books, London 2003, p.12

Jill Magid

Becoming Tarden — Prologue

Living in Amsterdam in the spring of 2004, I received a letter from a senior advisor to the Netherlands' chief government architect. Enclosed was a job description, translated from Dutch. The Government Buildings Agency was hiring on behalf of the Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, or the Dutch secret service. The Organization had doubled in size over recent years due to the new wave of global terrorism and was thus moving to a larger building. As a government building funded with public money, federal law required a percentage of the project's total budget be used to commission a new onsite artwork. The Agency's mission was to appoint someone whose work would support the mission of The Organization, as paraphrased below.

The Organization's reluctance to commission an artwork was clear from the document enclosed, which excited me even more. It described its task as to protect the interests of the nation by researching groups and individuals, both domestic and international, which pose a threat to the democratic order of the state. Society, it wrote, expects The Organization to know what those threats include. At the same time, citizens require legal protection against techniques used by The Organization that invade the personal domain, such as audio and physical surveillance. The Organization acknowledged that just how far it is permitted to go in fulfilling its task without compromising the cornerstones of society—openness, democracy, and civil rights for all—is constantly in question. "Sometimes," the letter concluded, "the information that is assembled cannot be made public. Where possible the organization tries to be open."

Applications should include a resume, mission statement, and examples of relevant work.

In sending me the letter, the senior advisor had clearly recognized what I did: this job was perfect for me. It was the logical next step in my career, which had come to involve an experiential investigation of secrecy and government institutions—often by my infiltrating them. I sat down at my improvised desk in the canal house at which I was staying and prepared my application. I wrote it in a voice which the Government Buildings Agency and The Organization would identify with, or even think they might be able to exploit—a skill I had learned from experience.

The letter arrived just as I was planning to leave the country permanently. My desire to work with The Organization put that move on hold. I called the friend who was subletting my old apartment. We had agreed that if living with my boyfriend did not work out and I remained in Holland, I could reclaim my flat. I suggested he start making other arrangements, just in case.

Three weeks later, the Agency advisor informed me that I'd passed the first screening. One step closer to The Organization, I decided to wait it out. I notified my sub-lessee. He had until the end of the month to vacate.

On June 22, 2004, I was asked to meet with The Organization's selection committee at the Government Buildings Agency office in The Hague. The committee was already assembled when I arrived—they'd been screening other candidates that morning. The interviews were being conducted in a semiprivate room closed off from the rest of the office by soundproofed glass walls. The desks closest to the room were vacant; I assumed that they'd been cleared. The committee, seated around a black oval table, numbered around fifteen people. All the men were in business suits; most of the women wore mid-length skirts or dress pants with silky blouses buttoned to various heights. The amount of cleavage revealed depended on the women's ages, which ranged greatly. The younger committee members greeted me with a smile; the elders barely nodded.

The advisor dimmed the lights. Using carefully selected images, I traced the stages of my development. I began with a slide that showed my hand holding a thin rod with a small mirror attached to its end, cut in the shape of a skyscraper. The mirror reflects the Empire State Building. It appears as if I'm holding the actual building. The next image is of a stiletto shoe that I fitted with a small security camera attached to its heel. On the underside of the shoe sole is a wireless transmitter, about the size of a stick of gum. The following slide displays the transmitted image from the camera: a view up the side of my body, distorted by the camera's wide-angle lens, with the city of Boston in the background. I am as tall as the buildings. The next slide shows a similarly distorted image of my body through a surveillance camera lens. Unauthorized, I'd hacked into a university's security system and projected a live video stream from a camera beneath my clothes. The next image was taken in Amsterdam. It is a detailed shot of an outdoor security camera that I covered in rhinestones. The next image is of myself, at the top of a ladder that is leaning against the facade of the headquarters of the Amsterdam police department. I am covering the building's security cameras with jewels. The next image is of one of the police administrators (I wonder if anyone on the selection committee recognized him?) who had hired me for the job, admiring a glittering camera from the sidewalk. Lastly, I showed images from my time in Liverpool where I had recently worked with the city's police department and its citywide CCTV system. I am the subject of video stills taken with the police's cameras, always wearing the same red trench coat. The stills are rich in color and cinematic in scope. The detailed shots of my face feel intimate. I let those linger. Over these images, I described to the committee my process of working closely with government institutions to identify with them personally and locate their human side. I inferred that I could do the same for The Organization.

I then thanked the committee and the advisor escorted me out of the room. Before attending to the next candidate, he squeezed my arm and whispered, *That was very good*.

A few days later, I was strolling through Dam Square with a former classmate of mine who was visiting the city on business. As we discussed the pros and cons of living in Europe versus the States, I got a call from the Agency. The advisor notified me that The Organization had offered me the commission. I grabbed my friend by the shirtsleeve and silently mouthed, *Yes!* The advisor explained that he would continue to work with me on this assignment on behalf of the Agency as a mediator between The Organization and myself. I had until the end of the year to prepare my angle and outline exactly what I proposed to do for The Organization.

I resettled easily and quickly got to work. The Agency had sent me a large parcel with The Organization's renovation plans for its new building, including computer-generated drawings of its completed design. As was the case with all of its commissions, the Agency expected me to propose an artwork for a specific location within The Building. I had no intention of importing something I'd made in the studio. I wanted to be intimately involved with The Organization, to penetrate it. I studied The Building's blueprints to gain insight into its administrative structure but to no avail. Originally designed as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the construction was a conglomerate of hexagonal clusters, like the cross section of a honeycomb. If there was a central point within The Building from which power would emanate, it was impossible to locate from its architecture.

Also enclosed in the parcel were a number of thin booklets published by The Organization about its work. Their titles included *About Positions Involving Confidentiality and Security Investigations, Recruitment for the Jihad in the Netherlands, Terrorism at the Start of the 21st Century*, and my favorite, *Espionage and Security Risks: Invisible but Still Existing*. I was inspired by their opaque, poetic use of language. I copied terms such as "vulnerability analysis," "declaration of non-objection," and "risk orientation" into my notebook and compiled a list of questions about The Organization's methodology to present to the committee.

I visited The Building on November 17, December 12, and again on the twenty-second, accompanied by the Agency advisor. We met with the Committee Head—who became deeply interested in my practice—and various committee members. I posed to them the questions from my notebooks. I asked them to explain how confidentiality and security screenings were conducted, and to clarify the differences between security clearance levels A, B, and C. I wanted to know what security level I would be granted if I became an agent, and what kind of access that would allow me; how citizens go about applying the Freedom of Information Act to see their classified files; and if The Organization would keep a file on me now that I was working for them. I asked about surveillance practices and searches of homes, and what they referred to as "closed objects." I'd read that suspect objects were sometimes removed discreetly from private residences, analyzed, and reinserted back into place within three days. I asked how

The Organization trained agents to conduct these searches, what tools were used, how the results were analyzed and documented, and if they would teach me how to do it. Many of my questions were passed over without being answered. They responded whenever they could.

Inside The Building, I was never left alone. If I used the bathroom before entering the conference room, whomever I was meeting would stand outside the door. The advisor commented that this seemed suspect, as if I were wiretapping myself.

On my last visit, the Committee Head showed me the Organization's collection of "dead-letter boxes"—objects that had been used to hide things. There was a block of cement containing a roll of film that could only be seen with an x-ray, attaché cases with false backs and hidden pockets, shoe heels with cavities in which to hide devices. They were old, beautiful, analogue. I wondered aloud how The Organization did this now, with so many digital options. *It is difficult*, he admitted.

Meanwhile, I spoke with those on the outside who eyed The Organization with suspicion. I asked people around town what they thought of the service, whether they approved of it and, if not, why they didn't. I delved into the service's past practices. I located activists who had dedicated their lives to watching its every move in the hopes of countering them. I'd been in Amsterdam long enough to have made useful connections. I knew prominent academics in the city's universities as well as some infamous hackers. I told a select few about my commission. Networks opened up; people emerged. Many who agreed to meet with me had their own agendas. A few wanted me to wear a wire the next time I went to The Building. I listened to them all without judgment, careful to remain open to who or whatever The Organization might be beyond their speculations.

I wondered if The Organization knew I was doing this behind its back. I fantasized it was aware of my every move. I visited a man at his house on the outskirts of the city, where he kept a small workshop full of phones he had hacked to sneak an ear into The Building. He also rewired people's phones so that agents could not tap them. I wondered if anyone was really listening in on them or if they were simply fantasizing like me.

Back in the city center, I wandered into the American Book Center on Spuistraat, not far from the canal house at which I'd stayed. I had lived in Amsterdam for four and a half years but still did not speak the language. Preferring to remain a perpetual visitor, I hadn't tried to learn. I headed to the fiction section, picked up a book by a familiar author, and skimmed the commentary inside. A reviewer compared the novel to those of Jerzy Kosinski. I had never heard of him, so I moved to the K section and scanned his titles on the shelf. I reached for one called *Cockpit*. The back cover described the novel's protagonist as a former operative for a mysterious government agency, living a life free of identity, erased from all dossiers and transcripts. As a fugitive, he moves across the landscape in search of adventure and intrigue. Feeling certain that the book had chosen me as much as I had chosen it, I made a beeline to the checkout counter.

At my desk, I continued digging through everything I could find on The Organization, searching for a clause, a loophole, my point of entry. In *The Kingdom of the Netherlands Bulletin of Acts, Orders and Decrees*, I came across Article 12, which appeared to provide the door. It read: "There is no processing of personal data on the basis of a person's religion or convictions about life, or on the basis of his race, health, or sexual life." I laughed to myself—what else is there? The document then outlined the various jobs within The Organization, including the position "Head of Service." Heads of Service are responsible for maintaining the secrecy of sensitive information; protecting the sources from which information is derived; and ensuring the safety of the persons cooperating in the collection of information. Head of Service seemed the appropriate job for me.

On February 10, 2005, the Agency arranged a meeting for The Organization's selection committee to hear what I had to offer. I met them at their building, accompanied by my advisor. Before we could enter, I was searched. The guards took my phone and all other digital devices. I was led to a room with white walls, a mint green carpet, and a large table with no center—an enormous zero.

I proposed that The Organization hire me as its first Head of Service of Personal Data. As Head of Service, I would gather personal data from agents in The Organization as defined by Article 12, beginning with members of the committee. Personal information would be disclosed during private meetings between the agents and myself. These would be conducted at sites of the agents' choosing anywhere in the country, including within The Building. I proposed to write a report based on these encounters, to be publicly available, combining the personal data of the individual agents into a collective file sketching the face of The Organization.

The committee came back with conditions. I could not use agents' real names in my report. They would need aliases. The Organization had two press people, Vincent and Miranda, whose names and faces were publicly known. I would refer to all of my agents as Vincent or Miranda. Every agent I interviewed must have volunteered. The Organization would provide a contact through whom all meetings would be arranged. Only my contact would know who the agents were, and only I would know what they said. My report must build a positive image of The Organization's role within society, and provide it with a human face. If my proposal were approved, I would have to be investigated.

I encouraged them to do so.

And so began my vetting. The Organization had hoped to avoid this: vetting is an expensive and time-consuming procedure but, considering the nature of my proposal, the task was unavoidable. The inspection process was meant to take approximately eight weeks. For the next two months I watched my back.

During that time I did not know what The Organization saw of me or how deeply it explored me. None of my family, friends, or peers told me they'd been questioned. I stopped meeting with anyone who did not endorse or trust The Organization. The weeks passed without incident. I did not sense anyone watching me nor did I see anyone following me. I feared that The Organization did not care, that I was too insignificant, that it did not take me seriously, that it was not vetting me at all.

By mid-March I'd still heard nothing, so on March 17 I called the Committee Head and asked him to meet me the following Sunday at a public art gallery where some of my work was being shown. I hoped that by meeting him alone, without the committee, I could gather inside information on the status of my vetting. I sensed from our preliminary meetings at The Building that he wanted me to pass.

He arrived wearing a suit. We strolled casually through the exhibition until we came to a darkened room in which my videos were projected. Surveillance footage of Liverpool flashed before us silently. We sat down in the shadows, in two of the black leather chairs I'd selected for the installation. *Hmm*. He leaned back in his seat. *I've been curious to see this footage ever since you showed us stills from it in your interview*. The camera pans across a crowd until it finds me, a woman in a red coat, sitting on the edge of a public fountain. It then approaches me slowly—you can feel the controller's hand—until my face fills the screen. The video resolution is low, the contrast high. My skin glows white, my hair and eyes are almost black. I watched the Committee Head meet my pixilated gaze, and basked in the warm tension that our triangle of voyeurism had created. When the scene suddenly cut to an empty street corner, he turned in his chair to look at me.

I confided in him that I'd met with individuals who were opposed to The Organization, and was worried about my vetting. He doubted the exchanges would count against me. As for himself, he said, he had stopped paying attention to the conspiracy theorists. *It takes too much time and energy. They treat it like a religion.*

He explained The Organization as a networking system that manages an overflow of information. He drew an imaginary diagram in the air. *Person A is talking to Person B who then talks to Person C.* The Organization has to streamline that data and make it more focused. *We miss a lot of data by filtering it, but it's the only way to make it manageable.*

I told him that the conspiracy theorists I'd met overestimated The Organization, but he said, *No. They are not all wrong. The service processes a lot of information, more than you would imagine.*

A young couple entered the room and he stopped talking. I suggested we leave and get coffee, so we walked across the street to an upscale patisserie. His dark suit and large physique were a funny contrast to its pink decor. He ordered Lady Grey tea and two pastries, one with red and grey striped icing and one with custard. Then he led me to a corner table, hidden away from the rest of the café by the pastry counter.

Once we were settled, he asked about my plans. *Do you plan to return to the States? I could imagine that, after working with the police and now my organization, you might be ready to move on.* He lifted his delicate teacup to his mouth; it looked awkward in his grasp.

I replied that it all depends on how my assignment with his organization unfolds—my whereabouts might not matter. I asked if he was familiar with *L'Avventura*, a film by Michelangelo Antonioni that I'd rented the night before; he wasn't. The female protagonist disappeared from the screen after the first twenty minutes, never to return, and yet she still remained the protagonist.

I turned to the subject of my vetting, and asked how it was going.

He said the very fact it was being conducted was unprecedented. *Under any other circumstances, my organization would never vet someone like you; you meet none of our criteria*. Nonetheless, he felt confident I'd pass. He explained that vetting would not give me a title but a security clearance. As a Head of Service I would be entitled to a salary and retirement benefits. *That is not possible.*

I told him I'd need a title. He grinned. *Perhaps you can be a consultant.*

I asked if he knew of others like me who had been hired by The Organization.

No, he said.

We left the patisserie and strolled along the canal. The sun was setting and the sky was purple. Things felt relaxed between us. He confessed that it would take him a while to understand the way I worked, and it would probably take the other committee members even longer. He asked me to be patient, and promised to offer his advice whenever he could. *We will make this assignment work.*

He said *we*.

Then he added—in a straightforward, typically Dutch manner—that I had a funny way of dressing. *It is half-classic and half, well...* He searched for the word.

I offered *strange*.

Yes. Your bag, for instance.

I was carrying a small leather purse with a handclasp. I had bought it secondhand. I told him I like it because the leather is soft and feels nice to the touch. *Here*, I said. *Feel it*. I motioned for him to stroke it and he did. Then I asked, *Do you always dress so conservatively?*

Is this conservative? He seemed insulted.

I tried to recover. *Next time we meet you should wear leather pants*. He blushed and smiled shyly. *Anyway, how a person dresses does not say everything about who he really is.*

He looked himself over and said, *This is who I really am.*

Well, I thought, we'll see.

It was almost dark. We kissed one another goodbye and said we'd see each other soon at The Building. I watched him walk away. He waved and turned the corner. I stood where I was, watching the empty street.

I had found my breach.

One week later I received a phone call from the Agency advisor. He informed me casually that the Committee Head was leaving his position and would be replaced by another agent in a different department. This was a terrible setback. I explained the gravity of the decision to my advisor, but he did not understand. Advisors rarely do. Projects such as this cannot be mediated by institutions in an official manner, but must be delicately handled by me personally. I knew this from working with both the Dutch and British police.

Later, as I learned more about The Organization and its policy on "agent loving," I came to wonder if the replacement of the Committee Head was not one of The Organization's precautionary steps. Agent loving is defined by The Organization as an inappropriate, intimate attachment between agents. An agent from the service typically becomes too close to an agent in the field—a member of the public hired by that agent to gather information. The fear is that the bond between the two will supersede their commitment to the service, leaving it vulnerable. Perhaps The Organization had sensed, as I had, the potential for agent loving between the former Committee Head and myself.

Unaware of the term at the time, and feeling no bond or loyalty to The Organization in the first place, I contacted the now-former Committee Head of my own accord and planned to meet with him again.

The rest of the year passed with little contact from The Organization. I kept busy and continued to work on related projects—I always have a few at a time on the go until one gains momentum and overtakes the rest. Since I did not know if and when my vetting would go through, I thought it best to stay local. I rented a workspace in another part of the city, in a former hospital complex. It was above the old crematorium, with high ceilings and exposed piping. I hung large drawings and graphs I'd made on the walls, pinned up my lists of questions for The Organization as well as their answers, and printed out film stills that conjured the inside of The Organization as I imagined it as well as the characters I might find there. I read *Cockpit* during coffee breaks. The novel was written from the perspective of Tarden, the protagonist and rogue operative, and organized into short scenes that followed one another like beads on a string, without climax or resolution. In each scene, Tarden enters into someone else's life, altering it irrevocably, for better or for worse. I read them as proposals. Often on my evening bike rides home I rented relevant films to watch later that night in bed, under my pitched roof. I regularly checked in with my advisor to see if there'd been any progress, but he rarely knew more than I did. I got into the groove of waiting, which was good. As I would come to learn, waiting and its source, bureaucracy, are conditions of working with the service.

It was December 12, 2005, when I finally received my vetting results in the mail. The letter was written in Dutch. The sparseness of the document signaled to me that I'd failed, or worse, that I'd been dismissed—perhaps for speaking with the activists—and taken off the commission. I called my advisor and nervously recited the Dutch for him to translate. I'd passed. It was a certificate of non-objection and my security clearance, vetting number 2485536/01. I had permission to begin.

The Organization's communications department contacted me almost immediately. They asked me to make an infomercial in which I introduced myself to the agents, as I'd need them to volunteer to meet with me and offer their personal data.

That night I met my friend I'll call M, a Dutch designer fifteen years my senior, for drinks at his favorite bar. Meeting him in the evenings had become a habit of late. The bar was close to his house, in a residential area near a retirement home, at the foot of a small and charming bridge no more than a three-minute bike ride from Nieuwmarkt. He knew most of the pub's regulars. Some of the ladies, who beneath their pink lipstick and heavy concealer looked like they'd been through some rough times, flirted with him familiarly. During that period of intense research, talking to M had become akin to sketching. Ideas crackled between us like electricity, taking unpredictable and exciting turns. I inevitably drank and smoked too much with him but he took care of me, often cooking elaborate meals for me after I'd worked too long and too late in my studio. By this point my relationship with my boyfriend was over. He'd moved back into his newly renovated flat, and our place on Spuistraat had

become just another canal house I would bike past. M kept my mind sharp and my belly calm. He grounded me in a way that this city, and those I had known here thus far, had never quite managed.

Over white wine and cheese, I told M about the infomercial. Our conversation turned to the film I'd rented the night before, Godard's *Weekend*, and an early scene that had particularly inspired me. In describing it to him, I became so involved in the retelling that I began to reenact it. He sat back against the window with a wineglass in one hand and a cigarette in the other, watching me. When I had finished, he nodded. *That's your video*.

A few days later we hired a friend of his, a Dutch documentary filmmaker, to do the camerawork, and made the infomercial at M's house.

I am sitting on a chair with my shirt falling provocatively off my shoulder. I describe the scene in *Weekend* in which the female protagonist tells her story: "He always starts with these really beautiful women—" The screen cuts to the word DATA on a black background. A dramatic chord of music drowns out my voice, just as happens to the girl in *Weekend*. It cuts back to a close-up of my face. "—and this one is no exception. She is young, beautiful, wearing only her underwear, sitting on a desk." I bring my feet up onto the chair. I am wearing tight-fitting jeans. "The light in the room is dim, tinted orange by curtains closed before the window." M created this effect by laying manila paper over the sliding glass doors. "Behind the desk sits a man. He is in a vest, smoking a cigarette, taking notes." I move my hand as if smoking. "As he listens, she recounts her experience of the night before, engaged in a ménage à trois." In the video, as I had done in the bar, I recount her account.

I sent copies to the communications department and my newly assigned contact at The Organization. My contact said she appreciated the video's elliptical approach but was concerned that many of the agents wouldn't understand its intention. The man at the communications department was one of them. Furthermore, he complained, a six-minute monologue was too long.

I edited it down. I took only a short clip from the last minute of the video. By that point, I have finished my story and am smiling into the lens, waiting for the record light to go off. It doesn't. Confused, I raise my eyes to M's. He is standing above the cameraman, grinning with his arms folded. He nods and I understand what they want: I should stay as I am, staring into the lens. I engage the camera again. In the absence of my voice, I feel exposed and almost laugh. My body temperature rises. I become aware of the cameraman and his lens as a thin and fragile veil. Through it, we hold each other's gaze. When the record light finally dims, we are both sweating.

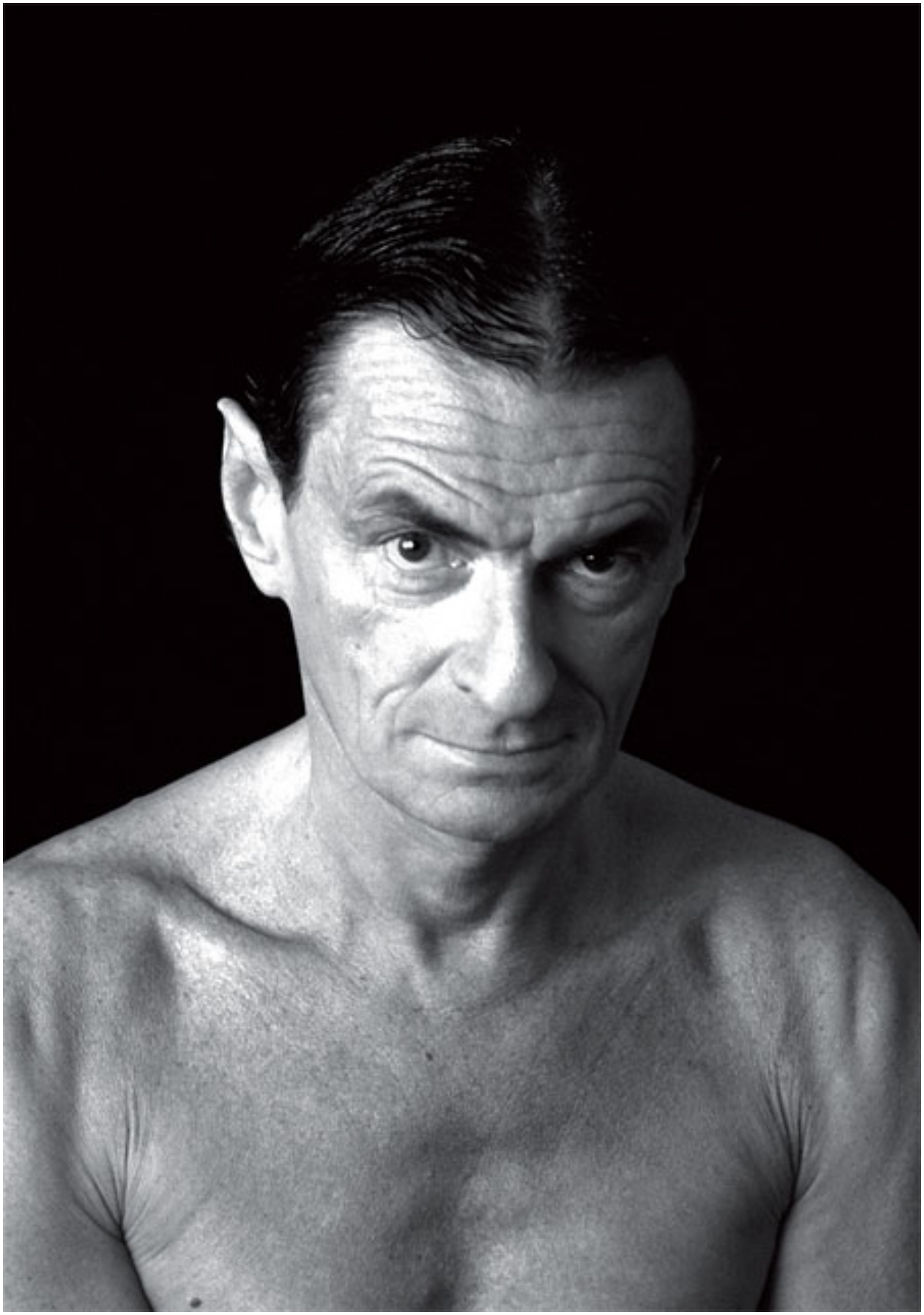
I sent the one-minute clip to the man in the communications department and this time he distributed it. The video was broadcast throughout The Building on its informational monitors, interspersed between news updates and other feeds to which I did not have access. The communications department added a link at the end, directing agents to an intranet site on The Organization's server that offered further information on my project and how to reach my contact. The original edit was also available there, but it took a few more clicks to reach it.

The video was a success. Agents were drawn in. They called my contact to volunteer and meetings were arranged.

And then it all began. The front door of The Building opened, and a series of its employees filed out. Before the year was through, I had met privately with six different agents. Each time I awaited one, I didn't know whom or what to expect. I trusted them to recognize and approach me. At restaurants, bars, airport meeting points, and anonymous rooms within The Building I spoke with them for hours. I listened as The Organization had commanded, without the aid of any recording devices, using only pen, paper, and memory. I compiled a series of notebooks on the agents, always circling back to the subject of The Organization. I used what I learned from one agent and applied it to the next. In these early meetings, I focused less on The Organization and more on their personal lives.

By this time my copy of *Cockpit* had become heavily underlined, with several sections starred, most notably page 100, the passage about hummingbirds:

> I was one of the specially trained groups of agents called "the hummingbirds." The men and women of this group are so valuable that to protect their covers no central file is kept on them and their identities are seldom divulged to other agents.
>
> Most hummingbirds remain on assignment as long as they lead active cover lives, usually as high-ranking government officials, military or cultural officials based in foreign countries. Others serve as businessmen, scientists, editors, writers and artists style.
>
> But I always used to wonder what would happen if a hummingbird vanished, leaving no proof...



Portrait of Jill Magid as Jerzy Kosinski. Photo: Czeslaw Czaplinski.

X

An extended version of this text appears in *Becoming Tarden*, a novel by Jill Magid.

Jill Magid was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1973 and lives and works in New York. She received her Master of Science in Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge and was an artist-in-residence at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, 2000–2. Magid has exhibited in various institutions around the world including Tate Liverpool (2004), the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (2005), Gagosian Gallery, New York (2007), Sparwasser, Berlin (2007), Centre D'Arte Santa Monica, Barcelona (2007) and Yvon Lambert, Paris and New York (2009).

Nina Möntmann

(Under)Privileged Spaces: On Martha Rosler's "If You Lived Here..."

> *The big social groups (consisting of classes, parts of classes, or institutions ...) act with and/or against each other. From their interactions, strategies, successes, and defeats grow the qualities and "properties" of urban space.*

—Henri Lefèbvre

(Under)Privileged Urban Spaces

By the end of the 1980s, during the period in which Martha Rosler was realizing her three-part exhibition and action project *If You Lived Here...,* New York was frequently described as the city where social distinctions and disintegration were the most blatantly visible, a "localized unity of the sharpest contradictions," a "city of contradictions, of rich and poor, of glitz and gloom."[1] The homeless here represented the tip of the iceberg of unbalanced state and urban social policies, the "principal conservative government objective being to make these people invisible, to get them out of the way, to neutralize them."[2] In 1990 there were 70,000–80,000 homeless in New York and 250,000 who were at risk of losing their homes.[3] The drastic cuts in social spending, together with the increasing rate of inflation due to the worldwide financial crisis at the end of the 1980s and the cutbacks in jobs, entailed a rapid pauperization among the middle and lower classes. Additional cuts in state subsidies for affordable housing further exacerbated the housing situation:

> The Reagan Administration slashed low-income housing funds steadily (from $32 billion to $7 billion) while inflation rose, the minimum wage stagnated, deindustrialization threw tens of thousands out of work, and social "entitlement" programs were cut.[4]

The (in)visibility of the socially underprivileged and the properties of the urban spaces they inhabit formed the starting point for the *If You Lived Here...* project, a concrete and participatory realization of Rosler's thinking on the topic.

One of the artist's first concerns in the project was to revise the definition of homelessness as restricted to those visible on the streets. For it is not only these people who are homeless, so are all those living in "shelters" or staying with relatives or friends. A more rigorous definition

Martha Rosler, "Messages to the Public" a project of the Public Art Fund, Times Square Spectacolor Sign, 1989.

would embrace all those who have no private living space, in other words no sphere of privacy, such that they are in a constant state of jeopardy. Pierre Bourdieu describes a person's existential relation to their position in terms of the social status conferred by the appropriation/possession of a particular extent of physical space:

> Each agent may be characterized by the place where he or she is situated more or less permanently, that is, by her place of residence (those who are "without hearth or home," without "permanent residence" ... have almost no social existence—see the political status of the homeless) ... It is also characterized by the place it legally occupies in space through properties (houses and apartments or offices, land for cultivation or residential development, etc.) which are more or less congesting ... . It follows that the locus and the place occupied by an agent in appropriated social space are excellent indicators of his or her position in social space.[5]

In this way, human existence can be considered spatially. "Space" here is an indicator of the power accessible to a privileged social group, to be obtained and defended on the principle that it is simultaneously withheld from other groups. Less privileged, marginal social groups take up the spaces and enclaves assigned to them, or, like the homeless, have vagabond status. 6 Hence the "homeless and other benefit-dependent groups ... have no part at all in the struggles for territory. The absence of their own defined and hence defense-worthy space of collective consumption mirrors their lack of social cohesion."[6] Rosler's strategy in *If You Lived Here...* becomes operative at precisely this point.

Because action and not representation is central, and because participation is an essential part of *If You Lived Here...,* Rosler succeeds in granting the homeless

concerned, and their overall situation, a power to act that has its roots in the correlation of space and power.

This spatial aspect of Rosler's works is almost always developed in immediate relation to her life in the city and her observation of media and urban processes.[7] The following factors played a role vis-à-vis the original location of the *If You Lived Here...* exhibition at Dia Center for the Arts, then in New York's SoHo district: the sociopolitical mechanisms regulating the housing market and the distribution of subsidies among classes of the population at the national level and at the communal level in New York; the impact of the flourishing art market in the 1980s on the art "scene" in SoHo; the Dia Art Foundation's own profile and activities; the state and appearance of its spaces as well as their location in the city of New York and/or in the district of SoHo, and the history of how they were originally used and why they were reorganized and put to new use.

The Institution: Dia Center for the Arts

Deriving from the Greek prefix meaning "through" or "across," the name "Dia" points to the founders' aim to establish an organization that would transgress boundaries, or, in the words of Charles Wright, its director at the time, "to suggest our role as the conduit or means for realizing ... extraordinary projects."[8] But was Dia genuinely transgressive? Until then it had mainly supported large-scale projects by exclusively white male artists involving high financial and material outlays, thus echoing the prevailing politics of mainline "operating system" U.S. art. Yet Dia cannot just be reduced to an "esoteric patron of big and extravagant projects."[9] The transgressiveness of Dia's activities lies less in its exhibitions of visual art than in the events, facilities, and publications surrounding them: a young dance and literature program, symposia and panel talks on contemporary art and social issues with artists and specialists from various disciplines, as well as their own series of publications (in which Rosler's book was the seventh volume), hosting the bookshop Printed Matter, and so on. Around this time, the dancer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer, who was a member of Dia's advisory board, pointed to the need to present artists whose social strategies could be expected to go beyond the customary limits of exhibiting institutions. Shortly after, Rosler and the artist collective Group Material were each invited to mount a six-month exhibition project in Dia's space on Wooster Street.[10]

Rosler's *If You Lived Here...* and Group Material's project *Democracy* consisted of several thematically related exhibition sequences and discussion rounds. Rosler's exhibitions were provisional in their appearance—unpretentious and almost disorderly, containing relevant informational material from art and non-art sources in a wide range of media. It is important to view the exhibitions and exhibition formats, as well as their programming, as a whole. Rosler developed an exhibition style in which types of work, materials, and media that otherwise had nothing to do with art played a clear role in relation to her subject matter. And the exhibition projects were at their most transgressive when she and Group Material worked both within and against the limits of traditional institutions. Furthermore, by provoking situations that put the institution's original liberal intentions to the test, Rosler's project also formulated an inherent critique of the hosting institution.

If You Lived Here...(1989)

The title "If You Lived Here..." is borrowed from an advertising slogan. It was part of a real estate agent's poster text attempting to pitch downtown residences to middle-class suburban commuters with the message: "If you lived here, you'd be home now."[11] In the context of the exhibitions, the slogan reads, on the one hand, as an appeal for the strategic conversion of the art institution into a living space; but it also points to the role of the Dia Art Foundation—and of galleries and art spaces in general—as driving forces in the gentrification of city districts that leads to the rising rents that force longtime residents to move away, or, in the worst cases leave them homeless.

In the context of the project, the slogan "Come on in we're home" that adorned the entrance in red letters equated the art institution with home. The project had three parts involving over two hundred artists and activists invited by Rosler: "Home Front" focused on different forms of self-organized activism such as rent strikes or self-governing housing projects; "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" addressed the visible and invisible homelessness of streets and metro stations, but also that of public housing and casual accommodation with friends and relatives; and, finally, "City: Visions and Revisions" aimed at developing, with the aid of architects and planning groups behind initiatives for the homeless, alternative urban planning strategies.[12] Each exhibition had its motto on the wall opposite the entrance. The motto in "Home Front" was a dictum uttered by mayor Ed Koch: "If you can't afford to live here, mo-o-ove!!"—the principle of gentrification in a nutshell. The topic of gentrification was present in many contributions to the exhibition, both in the form of documentation and activist presentations. The words of a Long Beach City Council member (planning to restructure Long Beach for the construction of a gigantic shopping mall in 1979) used by Allan Sekula for the title of a work came surprisingly close to the exhibition motto: "People who can't afford to live here should move someplace else." The main part of the exhibition consisted of a documentary exploration of housing politics that, for the most part, affected the artists and self-organized groups involved. Rosler's apt definition of the options and restrictions of documentary art practice lay at the heart of the project: "Documentary practices are social practices, producing meanings within specific

contexts.... An underlying strategy of the project *If You Lived Here...* has therefore been to use and extend documentary strategies."[13]

Exhibition view of "Home Front," interior of reading room showing Willie Birch's Every Saturday the Men Play Dominoes, 1987.

In this sense, the "Clinton Coalition of Concern"—an action group founded as a means of intervening directly in the Manhattan district known as "Clinton" or "Hell's Kitchen"—took the case study of a building to document the process of "warehousing," using documents, letters, and photos to expose the clandestine measures used by landlords to circumvent the law.[14] Willie Birch's gouache *Every Saturday the Men Play Dominoes* (1987), on the other hand, depicts a street scene outside a grocery store. By not appealing to any pre-established standards in the art scene (in which she herself asserts a position) in her selection of these works, it is clear that the overall conceptual context of the project is less focused on setting a new standard than on subverting the aesthetic conventions of the art market as a whole.

A quotation from Peter Marcuse, an active urban planner and professor at Columbia University at the time, provided the motto for the second part of the project ("Homeless: The Street and Other Venues"): "Homelessness exists not because the housing system is not working, but because this is the way it works." Thus Marcuse places the political convenience of homelessness into question.

While, with occasional exceptions, the theoretical causes of homelessness were addressed by discursive events in this part of the project, the artists themselves tended to explore homeless life as such, concerned with means of both help and self-help. Krzysztof Wodiczko, in his "Homeless Vehicle Project" (1988), and the architect group Mad Housers from Atlanta, each developed models of provisional accommodation geared to minimal space requirements for sleeping and storage. Wodiczko emphasized the aspect of vagabondage and nomadic existence, while the Mad Housers' provisional models

Exhibition view of "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues."

projected a temporary stability for homeless life on the streets of the metropolis. After being dismantled in May of 1989, one of the huts that was part of the Mad Housers' contribution to the show was re-erected in a vacant construction lot. Two further huts were put up in Brooklyn and Manhattan while the exhibition was running, and were used by homeless people.

The Homeward Bound Community Service, a self-organized homeless group whose most effective project involved registering 5,000 homeless people to vote, itself operates from no fixed address. The group used the exhibition as a temporary abode, fitting out an office in the rooms of the Dia Foundation. The activists even produced a "professional" letterhead for their temporary location—apart from the organizational benefits of having an address, it also symbolized a certain social status.

The need to present the complexity of homelessness and dismantle the cliché of a homogeneous social group came out clearly in the exhibition and surrounding discussions: the common denominator that united a wide range of people with varying needs was a simple matter of the absence of a place to live. This is why different self-help organizations such as Teens on the Move, Parents on the Move, and Caucus to House People With AIDS sprang up to address a particular problem area by offering essential help to homeless teenagers, families, AIDS victims, alcoholics, drug addicts, and so on; or by simply registering homeless people to exercise their right as citizens to vote, as the Homeward Bound Community Service did.

The last part of the project, "City: Visions and Revisions," analyzed, discussed, and criticized existing urban structures, architecture, and urban planning, and focused on improving living conditions in the city. Ideas for buildings suitable to certain social groups threatened with homelessness, or for those with special housing needs were considered alongside ways through which these

Krzysztof Wodiczko, Homeless Vehicle Project, 1988.

housing projects could be integrated into the broader urban context. Consequently, the participants were in large part artists, architects, and activists who explored specific architectural or urban planning scenarios through a documentary approach or presented architectural plans for improving the social conditions of a particular district. The exhibition motto, "Under the Cobblestones, the Beach," adopted a phrase coined during the Paris student revolts of 1968. Many of the exhibition contributions concerned SoHo, Manhattan, and other regions of New York City. There were also projects from other cities detailing similar urban processes were also involved, such as Docklands Community Poster Projects from London, referring to the London docklands development that was frequently compared to Battery Park City during its planning phase.

Dan Graham and Robin Hurst's exhibition contribution viewed the design and function of downtown plazas or "corporate atriums" ironically as "urban arcadias." In their photo and text work "'Private' Public Space: The Corporate Atrium Garden" (1987) they compare several plazas in New York City with the roofing constructed over the entrance of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in San Antonio, Texas' River Walk. While a zoning law established at the end of the 1960s prompted a rapid increase in available plots of rentable land as well as plaza construction favoring this particular type of construction plan, the centralization that began in the late 1970s also stimulated the need for green and quiet in city centers, as the upper middle class began moving in from the suburbs. Graham and Hurst see the plazas as "accommodating" this trend. The need for nature is satisfied with a surrogate version of it under protective glass roofing to render the commute between suburban domicile and downtown workplace superfluous.

Other projects in the exhibition endeavored to take certain communities with joint interests into account. For instance, a group of architects presented "Homes for People with AIDS" (1988), a housing plan developed according to the specific requirements of AIDS patients.[15] The photographic exhibition "Ruins and Revival" (1983) by Kenneth Jackson and Camilo Vergara documented the decay and reconstruction of buildings in the South Bronx and other areas of New York City.[16]

Exhibition view of "City Visions and Revisions."

Structure and Course of the Project

The interconnectedness of the three exhibitions came out in the structuring of their events through parallel courses. The extremely well-attended "Open Forums" discussions on the various subjects tackled in the project were a major component of each exhibition. Talks and their ensuing discussions shed light not only on the work of activist organizations and the role they envision for themselves, but also on the political backdrop to homelessness. For instance, parallel to the first exhibition, the open forum "Home Front" addressed the subject of "Housing: Gentrification, Dislocation, and Fighting Back."[17] The second discussion round addressed "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes and Cures."[18] Finally, the open forum accompanying "City: Visions and Revisions" examined politics and industry in relation to the housing market in light of research and case studies.[19]

A further forum titled "Artists' Life/Work: Housing and Community for Artists" addressed artists and their particular housing situation, discussing the instrumentalization of artists in the process of gentrification. As Yvonne Rainer expressed: "We are the avant-garde of gentrification, or on the other hand, we are scavengers."[20]

Each of the exhibitions included a substantial video presentation and a reading room structured differently for each show. The reading room on the subject of "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes and Cures," for

instance, was designed after an asylum-seekers' home, with six simple beds placed in a row covered with woolen blankets serving as seats. Arranged this way, the view into the exhibition space gave the impression of a substandard living room.

Compared to conventional exhibitions, a striking variety of media were on display: installations, photographic works, pictures on canvas, posters, documentations, manifestos, photocopies, and prints. The formal heterogeneity was matched by the choice to exhibit established artists such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Dan Graham, Max Becher, and Allan Sekula alongside less familiar and in part homeless artists promoting squatter initiatives and activist groups. This compelled visitors whose expectations had been shaped by the conventional image of an institutional exhibition to reconsider traditional definitions and categories of the "work of art" and its presentation. Rosler herself stressed three communicative layers in particular: "First there were works of art and installations by individual artists or groups, some of which included texts. Then, along the upper parts of the walls, lost space in modern art rooms, there were enlargements of real estate advertisements together with graphs and statistics on housing policies in the USA and New York City. Finally, there was printed reading matter in different forms."[21]

Institutional Space and Urban Space

"We must confront the social space in which homelessness occurs—the city."[22] Thus, Rosler describes her standpoint regarding the problem of homelessness. However, one does not experience the city, considered as a social space, as homogenous—rather, it exhibits boundaries that are socially and politically sanctioned. Rosler's project provokes the crossing of such boundaries by bringing together socially distinct areas: artist / exhibition maker, art-world artist / counterculture artist, interior / exterior, exhibiting institution / urban space, documentation / activism.

Rosler's selection of the participating artists, activists, and theorists was carefully calculated to give them access to an established art institution and forum outside their respective fields. *If You Lived Here...* was a non-hierarchical collaboration of unknown homeless artists, well-known artists, and others supporting homeless initiatives invited to perform activist work within—and aided by—the art institution. Local networks come into contact with larger ones and introduce their activities to a new, broader, heterogeneous public. As a privileged individual, Rosler uses and diverts the art institution's power in the name of an invited artist, while at the same time divesting herself of autonomous authorship. She works with and on the exhibition space and its position—in the city, in the art scene, and with the attendant public. Hence Rosler aligns the mainstream art system with a sociopolitical activism related to no institution—one which is in fact constitutionally anti-institutional.

The "artist as social worker," however, is a dubious concept for art criticism. The mainstream art system always plays a role, and is even actively reflected by Rosler's work. Likewise, the results and effects of her work—not to mention its objectives and strategy—differ greatly from those sought by a social worker. While the project involves political intervention, it cannot be considered apart from its intervention in the art system, and this yoking of activism and institutional critique is a constitutive and seminal feature of Rosler's work.

The public at the openings and discussion events was a blend of activists and the usual art public. While this was Rosler's intention, it cannot be said to have always been successful. The art public did not take an active role in the discussions, and though numerous art critics were present, hardly a single American art journal reviewed the project, which was highly unusual for a Dia event of this scope. European publications, on the other hand, retrospectively cited Rosler's project as a consistent and minutely planned implementation of integrative strategies.[23] The irony that a locally concerned project should be ignored locally and attract attention on the international art scene points directly to the art world's inability to integrate political projects involving "community" participation. It is precisely this inflexibility that was largely responsible for the disappearance of such art practices in the 1990s.

While the SoHo art public may not have been keen to make their voices heard, the active and passive participation of the homeless involved in the project was prefaced by their temporarily leaving their usual districts and positions in social space. An assumption that this social space likewise constitutes a place within a hierarchical social order is concisely expressed by Bourdieu's definition of "habitus" as a synthesis of a person's social position and lifestyle.[24] Within the institutionalized terrain of art, Rosler staged a temporary experimental format that called on people to step outside of such a "habitus," raising the broader question of whether a person whose position is defined by homelessness actually has the ability to step outside of their place in the social order. With *If You Lived Here...,* Rosler used institutional space to delineate a porous sphere within the system of social spaces, diverting the white cube's auratic, aesthetic, elitist, and exclusive properties into a social space for communication and information.

Between "Alternative Space" and "New Institutionalism"

In *If You Lived Here...,* Rosler, who avoided the title of curator, tied the locally oriented, deliberately "deprofessionalized" practice of self-organized alternative spaces of the late 1960s and 1970s together with curatorial approaches that were to be later considered

Reading room for "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes and Uses" featuring works by NYC schoolchildren and Bullet Space on opposite wall.

Renée Green, Import/Export Funk Office, Installation at Galerie Christian Nagel, Cologne, 1992. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.

within the scope of "new institutionalism."[25] Her tension-packed project in an established institution and her choice of formats anticipated curatorial approaches that would only later become broader curatorial practices. While those who ran alternative spaces deliberately shunned exhibiting in institutions and galleries, positioning themselves as an alternative on the periphery of the art world, new institutionalism builds on an internalized critique within the institutions themselves. This critique is no longer seen as an—albeit ultimately "desirable"—activity conducted solely by artists against an institution (and limited to the exhibition format), but is instead deployed at the level of institutional administration and programming by curators themselves, who initiate a drive for critique and structural change together with artists.[26]

In considering the processual structure of *If You Lived Here...* alongside its open forums, reading rooms, publication conceived as both component and further platform for the project (and not just as a catalogue or documentation), its multipart, thematically focused exhibitions, its local participation going beyond the art public, the collaboration of architects and theorists from other disciplines, as well as the artist's dissolution of her authorship and the inclusion of the public in communicative processes—one discovers the very elements and intentions with which curators strove to restructure institutions around 2000. Here, one might cite the Rooseum in Malmö under Charles Esche, or the Kunstverein in Munich under Maria Lind's directorship. While in order to realize this multi-layered project, Rosler had to hijack an institution as an artist playing the role of a freelance curator, the approaches twenty years later are now institutionally legitimized through collaborations between an institutional agent, the curator, and artists.

But Rosler's spatial strategies also call to mind art strategies that produce social space—whether for direct social interaction, as with Rirkrit Tiravanija—or abstract social spaces (such as cultural space), as with Fred Wilson or the early work of Renée Green. While Rosler uses the urban as her guide for deliberately integrating specific groups of people, with Rirkrit Tiravanija the fundamental space-building event is considered to be a matter of recipients' participation in the artistic process, and not in terms of their politicized living conditions. Instead, people come together from various sectors of the regular art public, communicating and consuming within the dispositive strategies staged by Tiravanija. The cultural space contextualized by Green in her early works, on the other hand, emerges in relation to trans-cultural constellations present at the exhibition venue. Works such as "Import/Export Funk Office" (1992–1994) were recontextualized with respect to the specific institutions and cities that hosted the work. The model of the white cube as "work station" with successive chains of local activities (as Green established) posits a transnational nomadism to be considered against the backdrop of postcolonial, diasporic identities.

Taking these developments into account, Rosler's *If You Lived Here...* not only draws the direct politicization of the 1970s together with the more hermetic politics of new institutionalism, but also stands at the dawn of artistic exploration concerned with the production of concrete and abstract social spaces that emerged in the 1990s.


if
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Translated from the German by Christopher Jenkin-Jones

Nina Möntmann is a curator and writer. She is Professor and Head of Department of Art Theory and the History of Ideas at the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm. From 2003 to 2006 she was Curator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) in Helsinki. She curated the Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia at the 52nd Biennial of Venice 2007, the group show "If we can't get it together. Artists rethinking the (mal)function of Communities" at the Power Plant in Toronto (2008-2009) and served as curatorial advisor for Manifesta 7, 2008. Currently she is co-curating, together with Jack Persekian, the Jerusalem Show 2009 with the title "Jerusalem Syndrome."

1
Hartmut Häußermann and Walter Siebel, “Lernen von New York?,” in *NewYork: Strukturen einer Metropole* , ed. Häußermann and Siebel(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 21; Adrienne Windhoff-Héritier, “Das Dilemma der Städte: Sozialpolitik in New York City,” in Häußermann and Siebel, *New York:Strukturen einer Metropole* , 239.

2
Peter Marcuse, “Wohnen in New York: Segregationund fortgeschrittene Obdachlosigkeit in einer viergeteilten Stadt,” in Häußermann and Siebel, *New Yo rk:Strukturen einer Metropole* , 226. See also: “Homelessness today [is] somethingnew, something that one could call ‘advanced homelessness’ and which occurs asthe logical concomitant of a whole range of economic and political changes ... : homelessness in a technologically developed society,homelessness amid wealth and affluence,” 205.

3
Statistics of the “InterfaithAssembly on Homelessness and Housing'” (1990), cited in *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism: AProject by Martha Rosler* , ed. Brian Wallis(Seattle: The New Press, 1991), 207.

4
If You Lived Here... , press release.

5
Pierre Bourdieu,“Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus,” *Rapport* (Department of Sociology andHuman Geography, University of Oslo) 10 (1996): 11.

6
Michael Dear and Jennifer Wolch, “Wiedas Territorium gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge strukturiert,” in *Stadt-Räume* , ed. MartinWentz (Frankfurt am Main: Campus 1991), 246. Since 1960 Kevin Lynch has beenusing cognitive mapping as a research method to show the variable access ofdifferent groups to the city in which they live. Maps drawn from memory reflecthow different people perceive distances differently, or even the very existenceof city districts, depending on whether or not certain areas are frequented bya given social, ethnic, etc., group. Intentional omissions can occur (in thecase of socially higher-placed groups), and prohibited access can be subtlyindicated (with regard to underprivileged groups).

7
Rosler refused to makeuse of objects from the New York exhibition for an exhibition in St. Louis in1992: “And I told them this doesn’t interest me, because this has nothing to dowith the local community. So I stayed in St. Louis for a couple of weeks. Iwent to a lot of different sites and asked people if they would be interestedin working with me. There are no organized groups of homeless people, St. Louisis in the south of the United States and things are really different there.” Rosler inconversation with the author, Berlin, September 15, 1996.

8
Charles Wright, *Director’s Report* 1993–94, 2.

9
Jochen Becker, “L’art pourl’institution,” *Kunstforum international* 125 (January/February 1994): 227.

10
The DiaArt Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York StateCouncil of the Arts were sponsors for both of the projects.

11
“I called my project ‘If You LivedHere...,’ from the memory of a gigantic sign Iused to see in childhood ... . In 1989 I chose this slogan for the showsbecause it is a real-estate line, one I had subsequently seen repeatedelsewhere ...” Martha Rosler, in *Place, Position, Presentation, Public* ,ed. Ine Gevers (Amsterdam:Jan van Eyck Akademie/Maastricht, 1993), 82.

12
February 11–March 18, April1–19, and May 13–June 17, 1989, respectively.

13
Martha Rosler,in Wallis, *If You Lived Here...,* 33.

14
The areaextending west of Times Square is referred to primarily by real-estate agents as “Clinton”after a corporation that invested there. Otherwise the name “Hell’s Kitchen” iswidespread.

15
Linda Baldwin, Gustavo Bonevardi, Morgan Hare, and Lee Ledbetter.

16
Previously shown at the BronxInstitute, Herbert H. Lehmann College, and at the City University of New York.

17
The speakers were Irma Rodriguez,Chairwoman of the “Task Force on Housing Court,” a legal counseling andplacement organization for tenants; Neil Smith, Professor of Geography atRutgers University; Jim Haughton, representing several activist tenantorganizations; Oda Friedheimof the “Housing Justice Campaign”; the filmmaker BienvenidaMatias, who participated in the exhibition; andLori-Jean Saigh, the performance artist in the“Clinton Coalition of Concern.” The panel criticized mayor Edward Koch at thecommunal level as well as Reagan’s political decisions and their consequencesfor the United States. Smith introduced the image of the “frontier” into thediscussion connected with gentrification in Manhattan. During the unrestbetween police and demonstrating gentrification victims in the Tompkins Squarearea of the Lower East Side on August 6, 1988, Koch spoke of “frontierviolence”—a formulation testifying to what he saw as border struggles andterritorial claims. Smith quotes Koch in Wallis, *If You Lived Here...,* 108.

18
The participants in this second legof the project were mainly members of activist aid and self-aid groups,self-organized accommodation, workshop, and political action groups.

19
The panel consisted of theorists andplanners: Robert Friedman of New York Newsday; the artist JamelieHassan; Peter Marcuse, urban planner at Columbia University; Mary Ellen Phifer, Chairwoman of the “Association of CommunityOrganizations for Reform Now” (Acorn), which organizes the reconstruction ofderelict and uninhabited buildings by and for the homeless; the politicalscientist Frances Fox Piven; and Peter Wood, Directorof the “Mutual Housing Association of New York” (MHANY).

20
Yvonne Rainer, in Wallis, *If You Lived Here...,* 169.

21
Martha Rosler,“If You Lived Here...,” in *Copyshop, Kunstpraxis & PolitischeÖffentlichkeit* , ed. Bür oBert (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993), 73.

22
Martha Rosler,“Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint,” in Wallis, *If You Lived Here...,*15.

23
See for example BüroBert, *Copyshop , Kunstpraxis& Politische Öffentlichkeit* ,73–76.

24
“The habituscould be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalizedstructures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all membersof the same group or class.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* , trans.Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 86.

25
See for example ed. Jonas Ekeberg, *NewInstitutionalism,* Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003.

26
See also my text “The Rise and Fallof New Institutionalism,” *Transform* , August 2007, https://transversal.at/transversal/0407/montmann/en .

Simon Sheikh

Positively Trojan Horses Revisited

Lucy Lippard's famous essay on activist art should need no introduction or art historical contextualization; what's more, "Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power," published in the seminal 1984 anthology *Art After Modernism*, represents but one entry point into a truly impressive body of work dedicated to the politics of art and representation from the 1960s up to today.[1] As such, the essay can be situated both in an ongoing debate—making it ripe for revisitation—and in the trajectory of Lippard's oeuvre as a whole. Indeed, the author of "Trojan Horses" has long grappled with the relationship between art and activism, both in terms of activist art and with regard to how the two categories inform each other as general forms of power and empowerment. Such efforts clearly animate the collection *Get the Message?: A Decade of Art for Social Change*, as well as her later, retrospective essay "Too Political? Forget It."[2]

"Trojan Horses" appeared at the height of the Reagan years in the U.S., a highly charged political period that saw a heavy backlash against progressive and feminist ideas in the so-called culture wars waged by the Right. Lippard reported from the trenches, not only providing context and arguments, but also offering contemporary examples of activist art and cultural resistance. My interest here lies less in retelling those stories—for that one doesn't need to look any further than the essay itself—than in focusing on Lippard's central argument. Yet it should be mentioned that one aspect of the examples is particularly striking now: the sheer number of engaged practices fusing art and activism in a decade most commonly understood in art historical terms as a postmodern, object-based, commodity-oriented and even apolitical decade—and often either derided or commended for those very features. However, as Lippard's survey and other sources point out, there is also another history, a counter-history. Moreover, the 1980s now appear to have witnessed a much larger movement of artistic activism than, say, the 1990s and its often heralded return to the social and political in art, not to mention our present decade . . .

Lippard's argument is not merely historical, though, but also offers something resembling ontology, or even "hauntology," and it does so from the outset, from its very title and its invocation of an example that is not so much historical as it is mythological: the Trojan Horse. Like the Trojan Horse, activist art enters hallowed halls where it does not properly belong by way of a disguise—by being an alluring aesthetic object, it pushes into the institution of art, both concretely and metaphorically. But unlike the Trojan Horse, activist art is not instrumental in the violent overthrow of a regime, but works rather by subverting the very idea of an aesthetic object. Obviously, in (art) activist circles and beyond, the debate continues as to whether this subversion is merely a masquerade—a purely strategic universalism that pretends to be "art" in order to gain access—or whether we are dealing with a Janus-faced identity: at once activist *and* aesthetic. And then there is the possibility of activist art masquerading as a Janus!

Crucial to the idea of the Trojan Horse is the possibility of movement from the outside of a stronghold to the inside by means of artistic production. Indeed, for Lippard, the foremost characteristic of activist art is that it moves between art institutions and local, political communities and contexts—sometimes engaging so significantly in the latter that visibility in the former becomes secondary, irrelevant, even obsolete. Activist art, then, is not a genre, not an ism, but is rather an engagement in social issues and social change through a great variety of methods and mediums. It is pragmatic rather than idiomatic. Therefore, the question of whether or not it is art, and whether artistic production is a useful platform for political change, does not come up. Politics is seen in terms of how one acts in the situation one is in—a question of *how* one engages. Rather than maintaining a dichotomy between art and activism or between aesthetics and politics, another strategic, albeit tentative distinction is established between *political* art and *activist* art, between social concerns and commentary on the one hand, and community involvement and organizing on the other.

These two approaches are united by the concept of power: the power of art and the power of the people. As Lippard duly notes, no one can achieve change alone—not even famous artists. Change can only be realized as part of a movement, hence the focus on community building and consciousness-raising found in much art activism. But artists also have access to power through their framing and reframing of the visible and seemingly invisible, through subversion of rather than subservience to dominant discourses of visibility and representation. Furthermore, according to Lippard, artists have among producers a uniquely high degree of control over their production, if not their post-production and distribution. While there certainly are *employers* in the art world, in its wider context of cultural production, and in the knowledge economy, an initial control over the means of artistic production is taken for granted; and to whatever degree, and, crucially, to whom, this control is then relinquished—be it to institutions, collectors, collaborators, or communities—this comprises a political decision paralleling those that govern the initial production of images themselves. In other words, the struggle today is not only over the production of images and ideas, but also over their dissemination and distribution, a struggle that cannot be endured alone, but always with, as well as against others: embedded *and* expanded.

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Simon Sheikh is a curator and critic. He is currently assistant professor of art theory and coordinator of the Critical Studies program at the Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. He was the director of the Overgaden Institute for Contemporary Art in Copenhagen from 1999 to 2002 and a curator at NIFCA, Helsinki, from 2003 to 2004. He was editor of the magazine *Øjeblikket* from 1996 to 2000 and a member of the project group GLOBE from 1993 to 2000.

1
Lucy R. Lippard, “Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power,” in *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation* , ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984).

2
Lucy R. Lippard, *Get the Message?: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984); “Too Political? Forget It,” in *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America* , ed. Brian Wallis, Marianne Weems, and Philip Yenawine (New York: New York University Press, 1999).