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Editors

Editorial

Surprisingly few people have flinched at the way Osama bin Laden was disposed of. Even for the most wanted man in the world, one imagines that it would have been both ethically and politically more expedient to stage a trial before his execution, similar to the way it was done in the case of Saddam Hussein. But such an expectation would risk overlooking the degree to which, for states and individuals alike, much political activity now takes place outside of official channels and beyond the jurisdiction of formal legal bodies.

This does not only concern CIA "black sites," but an array of secretive and extraterritorial practices that have become the accepted, yet exceptional, channels for bypassing the accountability of democratic, public, or transparent decision-making processes. For better or worse, the privilege to secure one's private interests in the gray area between state jurisdictions now becomes available not only to offshore banks and tax havens, but to private armies, pirates, terrorists, mercenaries, journalists, and politicians alike. And it is interesting to note how these extrajudicial practices threaten to bring things full circle back to tribalism—the nightmare of postwar internationalist hopes for universal ethics embodied by organizations such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, which were founded primarily to stand as a collective conscience against large-scale street justice.

But it now seems increasingly impossible to resort to universal ethics when these objective bodies have themselves become highly suspect political commodities. (Who gives a Nobel Peace Prize to an American President conducting a war on foreign soil?) Yet, at the same time, fascinating new forms of checks and balances have emerged to counterbalance the impunity of state-level opportunism. Beyond the anti-regime demonstrations in the Middle East, the most notable transnational phenomenon by far has been WikiLeaks, and in this issue we are honored to have the first part of Hans Ulrich Obrist's extensive interview with Julian Assange, in which Assange articulates the fascinating theory of political movement that underpins WikiLeaks' philosophy of forging accountability.

Taken from the geopolitical level down to street-level, the same mandate to informal negotiation translates to another figure familiar to many millennial cities: the creative worker. With some structural similarities to the mercenary, the pirate, or the private militia, the cultured flexible workers of the creative class comprise a target demographic with which the neoliberal metropolis advertises its cosmopolitan character. But, in Martha Rosler's conclusion to her ambitious three-part series, a class-conscious reading of the figure of the creative worker reveals a clear and somewhat inflexible manual for marketing postindustrial economic gloom (also known as poverty) through a logic of cultural renovation and do-it-yourself innovation—tailored for artists and other

socioeconomic groups that can afford to be up to the task.

Key to the sanitized, creative city is a notorious evacuation of class-conscious political awareness, replaced by the narcissism of self-promotion. In this issue, Diedrich Diederichsen considers the resulting fetish for radicalism in the form of Oedipal patricide, for the grand gesture of defaming one's master as the marker of freedom. But if one is self-employed, or chooses one's own masters, as many do, the "hollow intensifier" of radicality becomes increasingly problematic as a criterion for art, and we find that even the narcissistic production of one's own self may contain far more progressive potential than performed ruptures against projected or fictitious forefathers.

Finally, Suely Rolnik articulates how an "anthropophagic subjectivity" can function simultaneously within and against the fluid, flexible, and hybrid nature of cognitive capitalism. More commonly understood as cannibalism, the practice of anthropophagy can be related to the Tupinambá, one of the indigenous groups who inhabited today's Brazil, who were known to devour their enemies in a long and rigorous ritual in which the executor would carve the name of the devoured enemy into his skin, as well as change his own name. Having been invoked more recently as a micropolitical model of cultural absorption in which otherness is consumed, but also allowed to recreate the consumer, the fluidity of the concept that once promised movement has now been itself absorbed into the logic of neoliberalism. How do we then go "through the elaboration of the wound in the potency of creation" to reactivate a poetic-political vitality?

—Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

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

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Diedrich Diederichsen

Radicalism as Ego Ideal: Oedipus and Narcissus

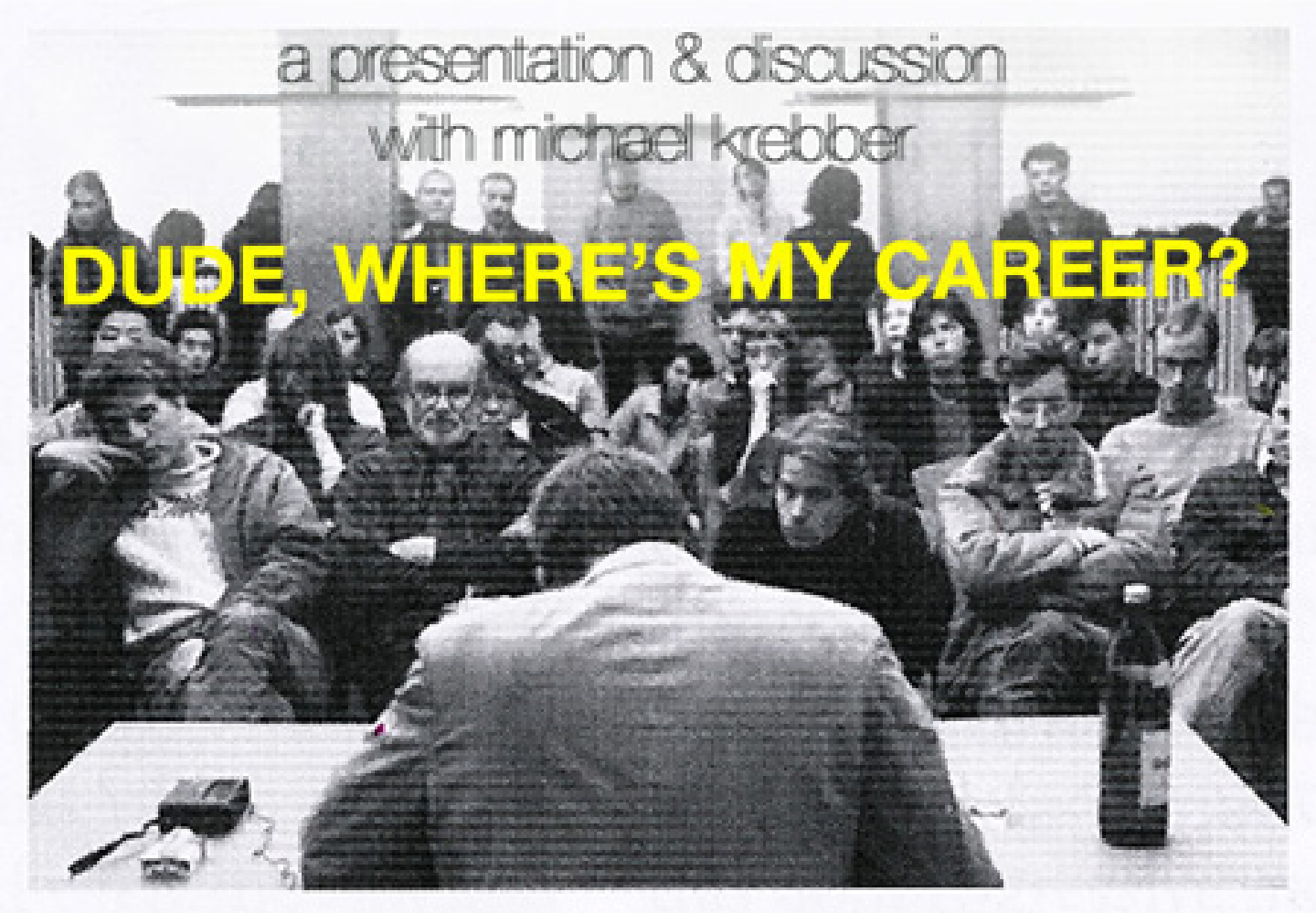
When the 2008 Berlin Biennale was being discussed, a mood of friendly disappointment prevailed among critics, which had less to do with individual works and the eternal problems of the Biennale than it did with a perceived absence of struggle and aggression throughout the Biennale in general. Critics found the young artists' positions too well behaved. In the *Tageszeitung,* Brigitte Werneburg wrote:

> You draw your own conclusions as you leave the exhibition, in this case that it was the work of overachievers. Those model students who always do everything right, who are out to please the teacher or professor and eagerly note down whatever is on the agenda in terms of topics, methods, materials, and theory.[1]

This wasn't the first time the older generation—that is, my generation, more or less: the fifty-year-olds, give or take ten years—had accused a younger generation of not being revolutionary, critical, or aggressive enough.[2] But those who make accusations like these rarely consider the fact that a truly radical, fundamental critique—if it is to be in step with a new era and do more than simply reiterate the critique formulated by the previous generation—cannot possibly be understood by the older generation. And in addition to that, the older generation is already well acquainted with the repertoire of the previous generation failing to understand a certain new youthful vehemence. According to our own notion of radicalism, the radicalism of the young should fly beneath our cognitive threshold.

Of course, in another sense, this is ridiculous. How could anything that does not concern everyone possibly be radical? And where does the fetish for radicalism in art come from? How is it that an impulse that was originally called radical—a justified impulse to carry the autonomy of art to extremes, to see it as an opportunity for a fundamental critique of, or even attack on, society—degenerate into a mere fetish?

Perhaps we can consider these questions in terms of two different yet related complexes. The first has to do with the changed conditions of what it means to be radical—with the kind of radicalism or critique that is actually attuned to what art is today, institutionally, and with the extent to which that is actually desirable. The second involves the shift in the nature of repression. While repression was previously structured patriarchally, along the lines of the Oedipal complex, it is organized today around the complex of narcissism. In both of these cases, the people affected did not have any choice. But how is one to interact with the social parameters of one's own psychology—identify with, ignore, or thematize them? Is radicalism actually nothing but a nostalgic and anachronistic gesture from Oedipal times?



Poster for an event with Michael Krebber at Columbia School of Visual Arts.

Of course, it is problematic to explain artistic practice exclusively, and hence deterministically, by referencing its social and psychological conditions. But the commonplace complaint that young people no longer want to kill their fathers coincides in an interesting way with another phenomenon: the rediscovery and appropriation of forgotten radical artists of the last fifty or sixty years. There is hardly a single contemporary position that does not define itself through the discovery of some earlier position. The assertion and self-assertion demanded of young artists is very often connected with the discovery and reclamation of an earlier artistic position.

This kind of active and often scholarly appropriation of forgotten fathers, often described as "artist's artists," began in the early to mid-1990s—with artists such as Mike Kelley, Michael Krebber, and Cosima von Bonin—when there was still a lot to correct and rewrite in art history. Kelley, who had always dealt extensively with the psychological origins of the artist's vocation, proceeded from the premise that the radical positions he unearthed had been systematically excluded by American art history. In his view, the New York-based journal *October* and its Europhilic yet centralistic clique of art historians and theorists standing in the tradition of high modernist orientations, consistently ignored American radicalisms that emerged from concrete local conditions outside of New York City. It is a telling fact that *October* editors and writers were interested in, and organized historical exhibitions with and about the situationists, yet it never occurred to any of them to mount an exhibition on the Black Panthers or John Sinclair and his movement, which came close to being a US-based radical political equivalent of situationism.[3] Thus, Kelley often appeared as an author presenting forgotten radical artists of the 1960s, most of whom receive much acclaim today: Americans like Peter Saul, Robert Williams, and Paul Thek, but also Europeans like Oyvind Fahlström. In his early exhibitions in the mid-1980s, Michael Krebber almost exclusively showed material—posters and other printed matter, such as books lying open and book covers in display cases—connected with other artists, filmmakers, and writers: Marcel Broodthaers, Robert Bresson, and Oswald Wiener, and so forth.[4] Cosima von Bonin devoted her works and exhibitions to other artists from the very

beginning: well-known artists like Yoko Ono as well as newly discovered or rediscovered artists like Mary Bauermeister, Andre Cadere, and Poul Gernes. It was Von Bonin, for example, who sparked the broad international rediscovery of Gernes.[5]

3D sketch of Andy Wahol statue recently placed in Union Square, a public art project commissioned to artist Robert Pruitt.

For a number of years now, artists have not been the only ones presenting such discoveries. Curators, and especially curators of large-scale exhibitions, also make it a point of honor to rehabilitate forgotten positions, as the last documenta did, for example, with Charlotte Posenenske and others, or the 2006 Berlin Biennale with Francesca Woodman. Today—and this is the indirect impetus for this essay—curators routinely proceed this way not only with forgotten positions, but also with classical radical positions. At the 2009 Venice Biennale, for example, Daniel Birnbaum showed the work of Tony Conrad—who was rediscovered more than a decade ago by Kelley and others, and remains very present these days, for good reason—as well as early Japanese performance art or works by Blinky Palermo and other fallen greats so that the sun of a past artistic radicalism might shine on what was otherwise a less radical program of contemporary art.

I could cite countless other instances, but two points here interest me most. The first has to do with the psychology of contemporary artists and the possible implications for a critical production of an aesthetics of the present. The second involves the appearance of radicalism in relation to radical practice and the notion of radicalism in contemporary discourses in general.

No description of artistic practice in bourgeois society has thus far been able to avoid the aspect of the exceptional status of artistic subjectivity, whether it is described in legal terms as a special freedom, in pragmatic terms as a suspension of the rules by which speech acts are normally governed, or in political terms as autonomy. This privileged position is a double-edged sword from the point of view of artistic production. It permits and gives license, and in doing so cuts off prior determinations, guidelines, and forms of assistance, but also reference points, communicative addresses, and automatic responses that are forthcoming in the case of other, unexceptional communicative processes. And indeed, this exceptional freedom of art and its role in maintaining the social order has often been criticized, always in connection with the allegation that it is constantly bringing forth politically utopian productions that constantly prevent art from having any direct effect. In this sense, the price that art has to pay for its freedom is the other side of the same relationship: a decoupling of art from consequences, social reality, and the suspension of its character as a speech act.

But if one plays the game of art under these conditions, one is faced with another fundamental problem: the unrestricted nature of this freedom has a tendency to impede rather than produce. Causally, this problem is related to a lack of impact, at least within the logic just described, in which the lifting of social taboos is punished or paid for with a loss of social relevance or effect. This logic would suggest that a little bit of adhesion should result in a little bit of impact; and whether it is also true that maximum adhesion would result in the greatest possible impact must remain an open question. (This can be further supported by the fact that artists often join sects and even broad political movements; an alliance with the state also guarantees a certain impact.)

Traditionally, however, this adhesion takes the form of a relationship to an ancestral lineage, a relationship organized patriarchally as identification or dis-identification with a series of masters. The young male artist learns from master X, imitates master X, and breaks with master X, and then at some point finds his way back to master X, since young artist is now master Y. At least in most parts of Europe today, this chain of paternal identifications and patricides is mirrored in the structure of art academies; those who sought to end the practice of master classes in the 1990s generally failed to achieve their goal. This also clearly constitutes the backbone of art history, which is organized in terms of successions, substitutions, and reinstatements. If the clear identifying marks of this game are missing, the field of art history emits cries for help, like the one published not long ago by Florian Illies in *Die Zeit*, where he suggests artists no longer want to kill their fathers and have been taking their cues from Andy Warhol for far too long.[6] The latter point is an interesting one: Why isn't Andy Warhol a suitable object for patricide? We will return to this later.

The fact that a more narcissistic generation of artists initially seems to have no interest in generational conflict

may be seen as a result of social progress, but it may also be viewed as the institutionalization and reification of that progress as a production standard in post-Fordist and neoliberal societies. For narcissistic artists, the foundation of their work is a point of stability produced by a self-relation, and that position is already in place before they begin to tackle the outside world. This is why they are able to avoid the stultifying effect of classic repression, which has always colored the rebellion against that repression. In the long run, there is nothing quite as dull as a young man who wants to kill his father.

The question is whether what young people who no longer want to eliminate their parents *do* want to do is really that much better, such as when Narcissus is no longer transfixed by his own reflection but instead puts pressure on a perfect image of himself. For this is the normal condition of contemporary competitive socialization within the affective labor of capitalism, in which—as an American television series recently put it so well—one has a choice between "a party disguised as work" or "work disguised as a party." The widespread narcissism that is so frequently diagnosed, particularly in the creative and bourgeois milieus (but not only there, as the popularity of fitness centers and body art across class boundaries attests), did not arise spontaneously. It is also not a solution to the Oedipal problem that old school repression, discipline, and the threat of punishment have not only been discredited as "poisonous pedagogy" (*schwarze Pädagogik*) in the educational realm, but have also disappeared from all forward-looking production sectors. Narcissism usually stands for nothing but the relocation of the command center to one's own upper room. Oedipus received his instructions from the patriarchal order, from fathers, superiors, and authority figures, and the only way to get rid of them was to eliminate them and become a father oneself. Narcissus, however, is his own commanding officer—the much-vaunted ideal of all the new self-employed small business owners who want to be their own masters. And as a psychological structure, this ideal, which mini-entrepreneurs are saddled with today, isn't easy to escape. In reality or even in one's imagination, there are no scenarios in which one can simply get rid of oneself as one's master. It isn't easy to negotiate with oneself. The old utopia that Louis Althusser recommended to industrial society's underlings as a form of resistance and liberation—to become a "bad subject," unfinished, not fully processed, opaque—doesn't work if you are your own worst enemy and evaluator. Self-evaluation—a familiar ritual in today's universities and workplaces—is nothing other than a visible, public form of organized narcissism as higher-order repression.

A good way of explaining this paradigm shift may be to compare it with the current debate about sexual abuse. After all, the relationship between the generations is always defined by power and eroticism, both of which come together in the discussion of abuse. Here, I can point to *Educational Complex* (1995), Mike Kelley's sweeping project on training and education in the art world, in which the artist filled out the official form used to file charges of sexual abuse in California by describing himself as the abused student of Hans Hofmann. As both painter and teacher, Hofmann had an enormous influence on the Abstract Expressionists and the following generation—the two generations that produced Mike Kelley's teachers.

Mike Kelly, The Thirteen Seasons (Heavy on the Winter), 1994. Acrylic on wood.

Kelley speaks of abuse in this context mainly because he sees the upsurge in people describing themselves as victims to be directly related to contemporary shifts in the politics of the generational. Only now, in the age of normative narcissism, has it become possible to recognize that a certain abuse took place; at the same time, telling one's story as a victim of abuse has become the prevailing alternative to the patricide narrative. Both narratives deal with the same conflict, but they have different ways of

incorporating it into the teller's subjectivity. The subject, however, bears no responsibility for the intergenerational drama and is therefore not implicated in it as a perpetrator, as Oedipus was. Instead, the subject is implicated as a victim, but also as his or her own victim, as the victim of his or her own weakness—like the eternally overtaxed Narcissus, who can never fully resemble his mirror image. The first point concerns the reality of the previously overlooked abuse, while the second has to do with the fact that, as cultural material, this narrative is also popular among those who have never been abused; they too belong to the same cultural and historical type.

There are two types of child abuse that have recently been uncovered and widely discussed in Germany, and both had previously been disguised as pedagogical measures.[7] The first involves cases of classic repression. Such cases have always been recognized as scandalous; priests and teachers who beat their students and the humiliating rituals designed to demean rebellious underlings are well known as the basis of poisonous pedagogy. They are covered up, of course, so they are difficult to expose, but they are covered up precisely because they are easily recognizable as offenses. However, the cases of sexual abuse are a different matter. The actual facts of these cases were often well known. In reaction to the cases revealed at the Odenwaldschule, people who were there or at similar institutions commonly commented that "Oh, everybody knew that was happening." And it's clear that there were quite a few people who really did know about many cases of sexual abuse, yet they didn't express any outrage because they literally couldn't categorize these incidents. They couldn't understand them because the abuse was embedded in seemingly liberating rituals of closeness between teachers and pupils. Clearly, the cultural structure of this kind of abuse was not yet familiar, while today it is widely known. This cultural structure is premised on narcissism and the neoliberal world of participatory consumption and constant stimulation in the same way that poisonous pedagogy and the old practitioners of corporal punishment are related to Oedipus and classic, old school repression. At its core, this kind of sexual abuse does not involve preventing one from doing or being something, as repression does, but stimulating and animating against one's will. Rather than suppress activity, it refuses to allow passivity.

How, then, are we to interpret artists attempting to let themselves be defined by historical role models? Isn't the choosing or rediscovering of obscure role models a dialectical synthesis of two unsatisfying antitheses—a way out of having to choose between poor alternatives? If I belong neither to my parents (the master who actually shaped and/or trained me) nor exclusively to myself (which would mean falling into the terrorizing loop of narcissism), then it seems like a clever trick to enter a tradition that functions—like parents and like authority—as an external source of instructions and judgments, but one that I have personally selected. I

Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Installation View, Secession, Vienna, 2009 - 2010; Foreground: Dual (final version), 2006-2007; Background: An Elliptical Retort...(Panels), 2009.

myself choose to be defined in this way, I invent my own tradition, and I use my own criteria to fashion my own brand of nobility—one to which I ultimately wish to be heir.

But now the criterion of radicalism enters the picture. In order to avoid merely replicating my narcissism by looking for someone who suits me, without criteria, I adopt a criterion that is held in high esteem: radicalism. That includes political radicalism, an aesthetic refusal to compromise, biographical undauntedness, and of course the impression of aesthetic and artistic novelty and uniqueness that arises from retrospective history writing. There are three problems with this approach: (1) Radicalism is an empty notion—what's important is what one does, which in turn determines whether or not it makes sense to do it radically. Otherwise, radicalism is merely an advertising slogan, a hollow intensifier. (2) Radicalism—etymologically speaking, solving a problem by tackling it at its root—is a simplistic concept. Most

problems worth solving cannot be split into components as simple as root and cause. The whole thing also smacks uncomfortably of the theoretical model of being and seeming, authentic essence and inauthentic outward appearance. (3) Finally, if the notion of radicalism is to have any meaning at all for artistic quality—as a sudden, unexpected rupture that slices through a dreary routine or as a fearless and rugged aspect that can be mobilized politically against power relations and false consciousness—then it can only be so in connection with a specific historical (and more broadly defined) constellation. But not in connection with past radicalisms, from an Oedipal complex that took place before my time. I fetch an old Oedipal complex, one from an earlier day, into my narcissistic house as a parent-like mascot.

What is the alternative, and do we need one? As I suggested at the beginning of this essay, one might say that the various attempts to react to the psychological systems in which we live and work cannot do much more than merely acknowledge them. We cannot shake them off entirely, at least not if my diagnoses are correct and psychological conditions have something determinative about them—otherwise there would be no need to consider them seriously. Moreover, under the previous condition of Oedipality, despite the fact that artists were at the mercy of such a system, they were actually able to make art that went beyond the conditions they were confronted with.

But one must ask whether it is still necessary to grapple with these conditions today in a way that does not simply reconcile oneself with the unavoidability of one's own conditioning? The old Oedipal protest, which from today's perspective is either boring or can only be perceived as aestheticized artistic radicalism, was by no means a matter of course. Before it could harden into an artistic cliché, it had to be developed against repression, forced pretense, and role-play in the old disciplinary society. From today's perspective, for example, the Oedipal structure of major currents in the history of painting arrives as the mere reproduction of preexisting structures. The only thing that preexisted was the patriarchal system and a capitalist production process based on exploitation through the disciplining of bodies. The Oedipal reaction may have been limited in its action, but it was no automatism. A type of painting that celebrates one's own action, however phallocentric that action may turn out to be, interrupts—at least initially—the castrating machine of disciplinary society.

Can we therefore conclude, analogously, that the narcissistic reaction or the completion of narcissism—be it the invention of parents or self-indulgence—is also a kind of resistance? No. The production process based on stimulation or mobilization, on voluntary assent and identification, which is becoming more and more important and normative today, is narcissistic in every one of its phases. It may be the case that protesting or opting

Ed Ruscha, Self, 1967.

out are possible as a result of asocial intensifications of narcissism, but something else would have to be possible as well. For although capitalist production has developed into a form that siphons off vitality itself—resulting in an identification with the workplace "me, inc.," and generating the narcissistic system everywhere—this was not only the result of increasing capitalist exploitation. While it did reach into the intimate and private spheres, into subjective feelings and other hitherto inaccessible realms of value creation, it was, beyond this, *also* the result of historical processes.

Before a situation could arise in which one has to be stimulated before one is even able to move, the previous disciplinary methods first had to be rendered ineffective. And that has obviously been done. The fact that the act of defending oneself against discipline and repression also opened up a vast terrain for marketing and turned the forced stimulation of sexual abuse into the new paradigm of consumer culture does not refute or invalidate this first insight. It seems to me that what is decisive in this connection is something else: precisely because of its binarism and bipolarity, the binary relationship that I have invoked under various names, including Oedipus/Narcissus, repression / forced stimulation, command/abuse, and Fordism/post-Fordism (others would be disciplinary society / control society, subjugation/governmentality, and social critique / artistic critique) is currently being described, developed, and applied everywhere to interpret a fundamental historical upheaval, while simultaneously being incapable of capturing the specifically historical dimension of that very upheaval. History does not unfold in leaps, from point A to point B; rather, what is historical is precisely the modalities of the transition. Above all, this means that the relevant question is: How are experiences contained in the transition from condition 1 to condition 2, and how do they become effective precisely in that transition? But also, how are experiences silenced and repressed? How can changes be perceived when the terms of the comparison are not evident?

In conclusion, then, I would like to offer two theses. First, there is much that is facile and empty about the gesture of embracing a risk-free, superseded, and ahistorical radicalism, just as it is risky to allow oneself to be defined, but to also fill oneself with the avatar that is thought to be the author of that definition. Nevertheless, there is an equally important but very differently structured element of these gestures that points in a different direction. It raises the question of the historical component—as I have just defined it—in the transition between the above-mentioned points or binary extremes, particularly with regard to how one might experience these transitions. It is a question that should be *demanded* of this gesture as a criterion for whether or not it deserves to be taken seriously. To what extent are active, primarily younger artists today interested in raising the question of the conditions of this transition and in making historical undercurrents perceptible?

My second concluding thesis is a question. We have seen that, from today's perspective, the Oedipal model is a historically closed phenomenon, which we even call a myth and hence an ahistorical construct. We see that this model first had to pass through the crucible of protest or patricide, and that in doing so there was an act—one that seemed at the time to be an act of freedom and only appears from the vantage point of false posteriority to have always been in vain. But what is it that Narcissus can or cannot do?

Posing or posturing has a bad reputation; from the vantage point of action, it seems cowardly and inauthentic. But neither does it qualify as pure passivity. In truth, the pose stands for a way of participating in the world that includes both action and passivity, or stands precisely halfway between the two. Craig Owens has compared posing with the *middle* voice that occurs in ancient Greek: ancient Greek verbs not only have active and passive forms; they also have a third voice that is translated reflexively, between "make" and "be made"—"make oneself."[8] The pose stands for potentiality, active and passive, but it also stands for making oneself available, for an openness to experience. And it stands for a situation in which one takes it as one's own internal affair to decide how one appears on the outside. In other words, Narcissus socializes himself in the pose; in it, he intervenes in his own way, just as Oedipus does with protest and patricide; in the pose he completes himself; in the pose he may even become radical. Or to put it in yet another way: if we wish to imagine Narcissus taking a step into reality, a political step, the equivalent of an act, that step will have to involve the pose—which, by the way, we have already met as an artistic method in the work of Andy Warhol. And this is why he is not a suitable object for patricide.

Of course, one day we will be able to perceive this entire figure within its limits, as we can with Oedipus today. But that time has not yet arrived; the figure of Narcissus remains incomplete.

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Translated from the German by James Gussen.

An earlier version of these themes has been discussed in a lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden, at the invitation of Su-Ran Sichling and Peter Bömmels.

Diedrich Diederichsen was editor of two music magazines in the 1980s (*Sounds*, Hamburg; *Spex*, Cologne) and taught at several academies in the 1990s in Germany, Austria, and the U.S. in the fields of art history, musicology, theater studies, and cultural studies. He was Professor for Cultural Theory at Merz Academy, Stuttgart from 1998 to 2006, and is currently Professor of Theory, Practice, and Communication of Contemporary Art at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna. Recent Publications include *Utopia of Sound*, Vienna 2010 (co-edited with Constanze Ruhm); *Rock, Paper, Scissor—Pop-Music/Fine Arts*, Graz 2009 (co-edited with Peter Pakesch); *On Surplus Value (of Art*, Rotterdam/New York 2008; *Eigenblutdoping*, Cologne 2008; *Kritik des Auges*, Hamburg 2008; *Argument Son*, Dijon 2007; *Personas en loop*, Buenos Aires 2006; *Musikzimmer*, Cologne 2005.

1
Brigitte Werneburg, “Lieber artig als großartig” *Tageszeitung,* April 5, 2008. See http://www.taz.de/1/leben/kuenste/artikel/1/lieber-artig-als-grossartig/ .

2
See Juliane Rebentisch, "Im Glashaus," *Texte zur Kunst*, no.70 (June 2008), p. 230–33; and "From One Island to Another — Conversation between Juliane Rebentisch and Renée Green," in Renée Green, *Ongoing Becomings — Retrospective 1989-2009* (Lausanne and Zürich: Musée cantonal des Beaux Arts Lausanne / JRP Ringier, 2009, 72–85.

3
“Radicalism and art are a contradiction of terms to American museum culture (academic Puritan agitprop of the Hans Haacke variety notwithstanding). It will be a cold day in hell when you see a major American museum mount a show of the cultural production of the Weather Underground or Black Panthers. The Situationists are OK; they're French.” Mike Kelley, “Death and Transfiguration,” in John C. Welchman, ed., *Foul Perfection* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 145.

4
See *Michael Krebber—Apothekermann* , ed. Karola Grässlin and Susanne Pfleger (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2000); and Michael Krebber, *Außerirdische Zwitterwesen / Alien Hybrid Creatures* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008).

5
See Yilmaz Dziewior, *Cosima von Bonin—Bruder Poul sticht in See* (Cologne: Du Mont, 2002).

6
Florian Illies, “Aufruf zum Vatermord,” *Die Zeit,* January 31, 2010. See http://www.zeit.de/2010/05/Vatermord. .

7
In Germany in 2010 and 2011, a series of cases of systematic and epidemic child abuse were discussed with a great deal of publicity. They were alleged to have occurred since World War II in two very different places: repressive educational institutions, especially those of the Catholic Church but of other churches as well, and elite liberal boarding schools like the Odenwaldschule, which subscribed to liberal, progressive educational ideals.

8
Craig Owens, “Posing,” in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 201–217.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

In Conversation with Julian Assange, Part I

When I first met Julian Assange—thanks to lawyer and Chair of the Contemporary Art Society Mark Stephens and curator/lawyer Daniel McClean, both of the law firm Finers Stephens Innocent—we discussed ideas for various interview formats. Anton Vidokle and I had discussed the idea to conduct an interview with Assange in which questions would be posed not only by me, but also by a number of artists. This seemed only natural considering the extent to which so many artists have been interested in WikiLeaks, and we then invited seven artists and collectives to ask questions over video for the second part of the interview.

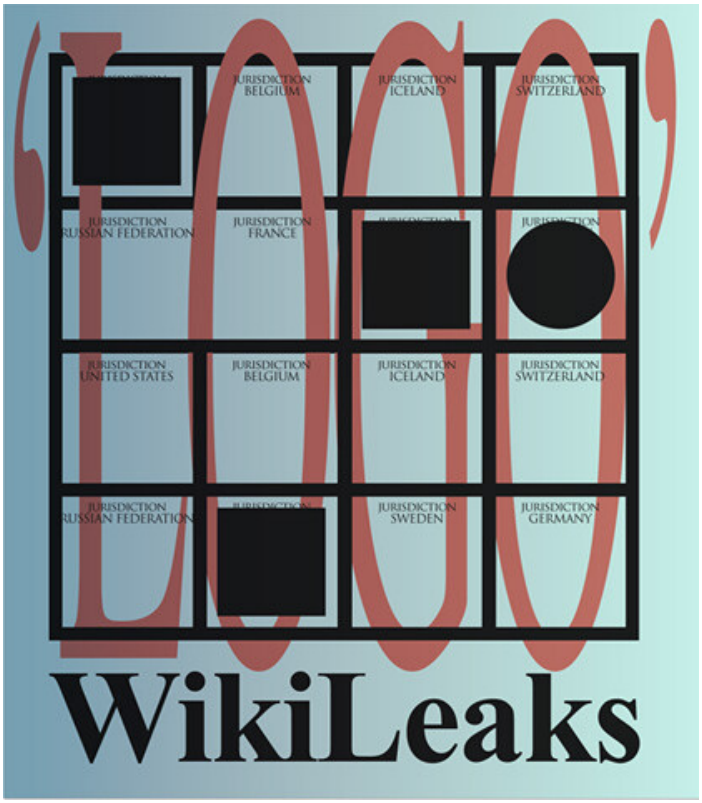
My archive now contains over 2000 hours of interviews recorded in many different places, and I am constantly attempting to discover new rules of the game, new approaches to how an interview can work. For an interview with Hans-Peter Feldmann published initially in AnOther Magazine *and then in book form, I emailed him one question per day, and each of Feldmann's responses would take the form of an image. For my interview with Louise Bourgeois, I would send a question and she would email back a drawing. When Julian came to my office with Mark and Daniel for our first meeting, we discussed the idea of a different format with questions from artists, and Julian liked this a lot, suggesting that the artists send the questions as short videos so that he could see them. We set the interview for two weeks later at 10 or 11 p.m., as we discovered that we both work late at night. Traveling more than three hours from London on Sunday, February 27, I arrived at Ellingham Hall, the Georgian mansion near the Eastern coast of England that Vaughan Smith offered Julian to use as his address for bail during his UK extradition hearings. In the living room of the picturesque home he described to me as a "golden cage" we drank many cups of coffee and spoke until 3 a.m. about his life, his nomadism, his early beginnings and the invention of WikiLeaks, his time in Egypt, Kenya, Iceland, and other places, his scientific background, and the theoretical underpinnings of WikiLeaks.*

The interview is divided into two parts—in the first, I was interested in tracing his work back to its beginnings. I was not interested in his court case or private life, but in his public work as the voice of WikiLeaks, and the experiences and philosophical background that informs such a monumentally polemical project. In the second part, which will be published in the following issue of e-flux journal*, , Assange responds to questions posed to him by artists Goldin+Senneby, Paul Chan, Metahaven (Daniel van der Velden and Vinca Kruk), Martha Rosler, Luis Camnitzer, Superflex, Philippe Parreno, and Ai Weiwei.*

Many people have contributed to making this interview

possible, and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Julian Assange, to all the artists for their questions, to Joseph Farrell, Laura Barlow, Orit Gat, Joseph Redwood-Martinez, Mariana Silva, Anton Vidokle, Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Daniel McClean, Julia Peyton-Jones, Mark Stephens, Lorraine Two, and all the artists. This first part of the interview is accompanied by graphics from a pro-active series of works designed by Metahaven, an Amsterdam-based studio for design and research, who have been studying an alternative visual identity for WikiLeaks since June 2010.

—Hans Ulrich Obrist



Proposal for a Multi-Jurisdictional Logo: Can a visual presence be created, and dismantled, based on domains based in different jurisdictions, switching on and off? Courtesy of Metahaven.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: How did it all begin?

Julian Assange: I grew up in Australia in the 1970s. My parents were in the theatre, so I lived everywhere—in over fifty different towns, attending thirty-seven different schools. Many of these towns were in rural environments, so I lived like Tom Sawyer—riding horses, exploring caves, fishing, diving, and riding my motorcycle. I lived a classical boyhood in this regard. But there were other events, such as in Adelaide, where my mother was involved in helping to smuggle information out of Maralinga, the British atomic bomb test site in the outback. She and I and a courier were detained one night by the Australian Federal Police, who told her that it could be said that she was an unfit mother to be keeping such company at 2:00 a.m., and that she had better stay out of politics if she didn't want to hear such things.

I was very curious as a child, always asking why, and always wanting to overcome barriers to knowing, which meant that by the time I was around fifteen I was breaking encryption systems that were used to stop people sharing software, and then, later on, breaking systems that were used to hide information in government computers. Australia was a very provincial place before the internet, and it was a great delight to be able to get out, intellectually, into the wider world, to tunnel through it and understand it. For someone who was young and relatively removed from the rest of the world, to be able to enter the depths of the Pentagon's Eighth Command at the age of seventeen was a liberating experience. But our group, which centered on the underground magazine I founded, was raided by the Federal Police. It was a big operation. But I thought that I needed to share this wealth that I had discovered about the world with people, to give knowledge to people, and so following that I set up the first part of the internet industry in Australia. I spent a number of years bringing the internet to the people through my free speech ISP and then began to look for something with a new intellectual challenge.

HUO: So something was missing.

JA: Something was missing. This led me to using cryptography to protect human rights, in novel ways, and eventually as a result of what I was doing in mathematics and in physics and political activism, things seemed to come together and show that there was a limit to what I was doing—and what the rest of the world was doing. There was not enough information available in our common intellectual record to explain how the world really works. These were more the feelings and process, but they suggested a bigger question, with a stronger philosophical answer for explaining what is missing. We are missing one of the pillars of history. There are three types of history. Type one is knowledge. Its creation is subsidized, and its maintenance is subsidized by an industry or lobby: things like how to build a pump that pumps water, how to create steel and build other forms of alloys, how to cook, how to remove poisons from food, etc. But because this knowledge is part of everyday industrial processes, there is an economy that keeps such information around and makes use of it. So the work of preserving it is already done.

HUO: It's kind of implicit.

JA: There is a system that maintains it. And there's another type of information in our intellectual record.

The “tableware of transparency” is so far limited to that handy office assistant, the mug. Mugs could have a soft focus Assange “effigy” (press photo) on them, or they could be overprinted with documents. The mug as public space. Courtesy of Metahaven.

(This is a term I interchange freely with “historical record.” When I say “historical record,” I don’t mean what happened a hundred years ago, but all that we know, including what happened last week.) This second type of information no longer has an economy behind it. It has already found its way into the historical record through a state of affairs which no longer exists. So it’s just sitting there. It can be slowly rotting away, slowly vanishing. Books go out of print, and the number of copies available decreases. But it is a slow process, because no one is actively trying to destroy this type of information.

And then there is the type-three information that is the focus of my attention now. This is the information that people are actively working to prevent from entering into the record. Type-three information is suppressed before publication or after publication. If type-three information is spread around, there are active attempts to take it out of circulation. Because these first two pillars of our intellectual record either have an economy behind them, or there are no active attempts to destroy them, they do not call to me as loudly. But, this third pillar of information has been denied to all of us throughout the history of the world. So, if you understand that civilized life is built around understanding the world, understanding each other, understanding human institutions and so forth, then our understanding has a great hole in it, which is type-three history. And we want a just and civilized world—and by civilized I don’t mean industrialized, but one where people don’t do dumb things, where they engage in more intelligent behavior.

HUO: Do you mean a more complex behavior?

JA: Right, more complex and layered behavior. There are many analogies for what I mean by that, but I’ll just give a simple one, which is the water ritual. If you sit down with a friend, and there’s a pitcher of water on the table, and there are two glasses, then you pour the other person’s water before your own. This is a very simple ritual. But, this is better than the obvious step, which is to pour your own water before the other person’s. If we can see a few steps ahead, the water ritual is a more intelligent way to distribute water at a table. That’s what I mean by civilization—we gradually build up all these processes and understandings so we don’t need to make bad moves with each other or the natural world. So with regard to all this suppressed information, we’ve never had a proper understanding of it because it has never entered our intellectual record, and if we can find out about how complex human institutions actually behave, then we have a chance to build civilized behavior on top of it. This is why I say that all existing political theories are bankrupt, because you cannot build a meaningful theory without knowledge of the world that you’re building the theory about. Until we have an understanding of how the world actually works, no political theory can actually be complete enough to demand a course of action.

HUO: So that clearly maps out how you came to where you are today. Since many people now refer to you as one of their heroes, I was wondering who inspired you at the beginning.

JA: There have been heroic acts that I have appreciated, or some systems of thought, but I think it’s better to say that there are some people I had an intellectual rapport with, such as Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr. That comes when you’re doing mathematics. The mathematics of Heisenberg and Bohr is a branch of natural philosophy. They developed a system or epistemology for understanding quantum mechanics, but encoded within this intellectual tradition are methods to think clearly about cause and effect. When reading mathematics you must take your mind through each intellectual step. In this case, the steps of Heisenberg or Bohr. Because good

Petri Dishes (Image Economies): The uncontrolled lab experiment with geopolitics that is WikiLeaks, is signified by an expanding image economy, visualized here through a series of petri dishes. These proposals feature faces that, in the media, have become mentioned in a WikiLeaks context. Courtesy of Metahaven.

proofs are very creative, it takes the full energies of your mind to reach through one step to another. Your whole mind must be engaged in a particular state of thought, and you realize that this mental arrangement is the same as the author's at the moment of writing, so the feeling of mental similarity and rapport becomes strong. Quantum mechanics and its modern evolution left me with a theory of change and how to properly understand how one thing causes another. My interest was then in reversing this thought process and adapting it to another realm. We have an end state that we want, and I looked at all the changes that are needed to get to this end state from where we are now. I developed this analogy to explain how information flows around the world to cause particular actions. If the desired end state is a world that is more just, then the question is: What type of actions produce a world that is more just? And what sort of information flows lead to those actions? And then, where do these information flows originate? Once you understand this, you can see it is not just starting somewhere and ending elsewhere, but rather that cause and effect is a loop; here we are today, and we want to create an end state as a result of action. We act and by doing so bring the world into a new state of affairs, which we can consider our new starting point, and so this process of observe, think, act continues.

HUO: Science, mathematics, quantum theory—all of these come together in your work. If one reads about your beginnings before WikiLeaks, one finds that you were not only instrumental in bringing the internet to Australia, but that you were also one of the pioneering, early hackers. You co-authored this book called *Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness and Obsession on the Electronic Frontier.* I'm curious about your hacker background, and this book as well, since it seems to be a sort of fundament on which a lot of things were based afterwards.

JA: In my late teenage years, up until the age of twenty, I was a computer hacker and a student in Melbourne. And I had an underground magazine called *International Subversive*. We were part of an international community of underground computer hackers. This was before the internet connected continents, but we had other ways of making international connections. So each country had its own internet, of a sort, but the world as a whole was

Petri Dishes (Image Economies): Other motifs are the globe, and camouflage patterns made transparent. Courtesy of Metahaven.

intellectually balkanized into distinct systems and networks.

HUO: Like The WELL in the States.

JA: Right, that kind of thing, or ARPANET, which connected universities in the States. And something called x.25, run by the telecommunications companies, that banks and major companies used to link systems together. We, the underground community, sometimes bumped into each other deep inside these computer networks. Or we would meet at underground watering holes like QSD in France or ALTOS in Germany. But it was a very small community, with perhaps only twenty people at the elite level that could move across the globe freely and with regularity. The community was small and involved and active just before the internet, but then crossed into the embryonic internet, which was still not available to people outside of university research departments, US military contractors, and the pentagon. It was a delightful international playground of scientists, hackers, and power. For someone who wanted to learn about the world, for someone who was developing their own philosophy of power, it was a very interesting time. Eventually our phones were tapped and there were multiple, simultaneous raids that resulted in close to six years of legal proceedings. The book covers my case, but I deliberately minimized my role so we could pull in the whole community, in the United States, in Europe, in England, and in Australia.

HUO: it also created a kind of connection between all these different local scenes? At that time, you were also known as an ethical hacker.

JA: Right, though I actually think most computer hackers back then were ethical, since that was the standard of the best people involved. Remember, this was an intellectual frontier, and it had very young people in it. It needed young people for the degree of mental adaptation necessary. Because it was an intellectual frontier, we had a range of people who were very bright, though not necessarily formally educated.

HUO: Was there a connection to America, to the beginnings of The WELL, to people like Stewart Brand, Bruce Sterling, or Kevin Kelly?

JA: There was almost no connection. The WELL had influenced some parts of the computer hacking community in the United States, but we were deep underground, so most of our connections didn't rise above the light and we were proud of that discipline. Those who

Proposal for an N(G)O Logo: The “WL” acronym built of a constellation of circles demarcating distinct locations, “hosts” and “leaks” as basic shapes inspired from Google Maps pins; a proposal to reduce all iconography to its most basic level. Courtesy of Metahaven.

Proposal for an N(G)O Logo: Proposal to self-censor one of WikiLeaks' key slogans, “We Open Governments.” And, “Leaks,” rather than “Wiki-,” is a more appropriate proposed brand name for the future. In this proposal “Wiki-” would be censored away from the name by means of a black bar, so the result is "Leaks." Courtesy of Metahaven.

knew did not speak. Those who spoke did not know. The result was a distorted US-centric perception of the underground. In the United States, in particular, you had quite marginal computer hackers engaging in conferences but the people engaged in the really serious business, because of the risks involved, were almost completely invisible until they were arrested. The entry points into it were the bulletin boards—these were the central places, places like P-80 in the United States, and Pacific Island in Australia, which had public cover for a private side. But then, once reaching a certain level, people only used completely underground bulletin boards. There were on x.25 networks places like ALTOS in Hamburg where we would go to talk. ALTOS was one of the first, if not the first, multi-party chat system, but in order to get into it, you had to have x.25 credentials. While some bank workers and telecommunications workers would have access to these, teenagers would only have them if they were decent computer hackers, or if their fathers worked for the telecommunications company.

HUO: In a previous issue of *e-flux journal* I discussed a lot of the history of anarchists and piracy with Hakim Bey, who mentioned that as an anarchist he has never fetishized democracy, saying that “democracy, to be interesting for an anarchist, has to be direct democracy.”[1] When you worked as a hacker, were you inspired by anarchistic ideas?

JA: I wasn’t personally. The anarchists’ tradition revolving around figures like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Peter Kropotkin was not something on my horizon. My personal political inspirations were people like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, anti-Stalinists in *The God That Failed*, and US radical traditions all the way up to the Black Panthers.

HUO: Liberation movements.

JA: Yes, the various liberation movements—in their emotional tone and force of will, not in intellectual content. That tradition really spread into some other things I did later, like the Cypherpunks, in 1993 and ‘94. 1994 was probably the peak of the Cypherpunk micro movement. Cypherpunk is a wordplay on Cyberpunk, the latter was always viewed as nonsense by real computer hackers—we were the living Cyberpunks while others were just talking about it, making artistic pastiche on our reality. We viewed the better books as a nice showing of the flag to the general public, but like most causes that are elitist and small, we had contempt for bowdlerized popularizations. The Cypherpunks were a combination of people from California, Europe, and Australia. We saw that we could change the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state using cryptography. I wouldn’t say that we came from a libertarian political tradition as much as from a libertarian temperament, with particular individuals who were capable of thinking in abstractions, but wanting to make them real. We had many who were comfortable with higher mathematics, cryptography, engineering or physics who were interested in politics and felt that the relationship between the individual and the state should be changed and that the abuse of power by states needed to be checked, in some manner, by individuals.

HUO: Is this the fundament of WikiLeaks?

JA: Yes and no. There are many different intellectual strands that ended up in WikiLeaks that are unrelated to ideas swirling around the Cypherpunk community. But the use of mathematics and programming to create a check on the power of government, this was really the common value in the Cypherpunk movement.

The "fashion of transparency" could take on a decidedly sci-fi direction. These proposals work with three letters acronyms around Freedom of Information, and NGOs, and enlarged faces overprinted over shirts. These "Leaks" shirts engage in a sense of psychedelica. Courtesy of Metahaven.

HUO: And you were one of the protagonists?

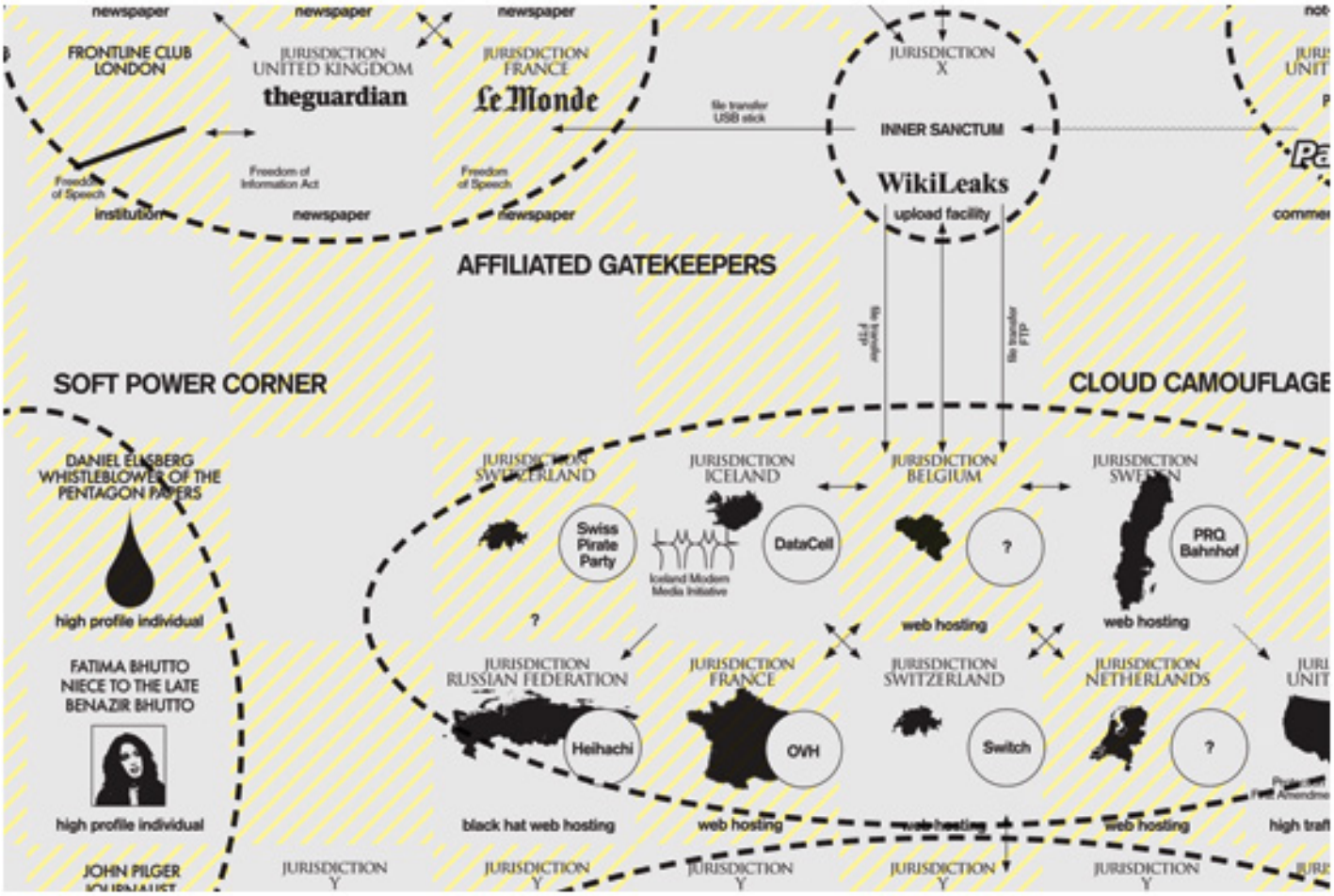
JA: I was. There wasn't really a founding member or a founding philosophy but there were some initial principles, people like John Young, Eric Huges, and Timothy C. May from California. We were a discussion group like the Vienna school of logical positivism. From our interactions certain ideas and values took form. The fascination for us was simple. It was not just the intellectual challenge of making and breaking these cryptographic codes and connecting people together in novel ways. Rather, our will came from a quite extraordinary notion of power, which was that with some clever mathematics you can, very simply—and this seems complex in abstraction but simple in terms of what computers are capable of—enable any individual to say no to the most powerful state. So if you and I agree on a particular encryption code, and it is mathematically strong, then the forces of every superpower brought to bear on that code still cannot crack it. So a state can desire to do something to an individual, yet it is simply not possible for the state to do it—and in this sense, mathematics and individuals are stronger than superpowers.

HUO: Could this have been an epiphany that then led to WikiLeaks?

JA: Well, there is no singular epiphany. WikiLeaks is many different ideas pulled together, and certain economies permit it to be cheap enough to realize. There are some epiphanies, such as my theory of change, an understanding of what is important to do in life, an understanding of what information is important and what is not, ideas having to do with how to protect such an endeavor, and many small technical breakthroughs that go along the way. They're building blocks for my final view about what form things should take. It is a complex construction, like a truck, which has wheels, cranks, and gears, all contributing to the efficiency of the whole truck, and all of which need to be assembled in order for the truck to get to the destination that I want it to get to by a certain time. So to some degree the epiphany is not in the construction of this vehicle, because there are many little epiphanies in each part, but rather it is that there is a destination that this truck should go to and a way to get out of there.

HUO: There's a path?

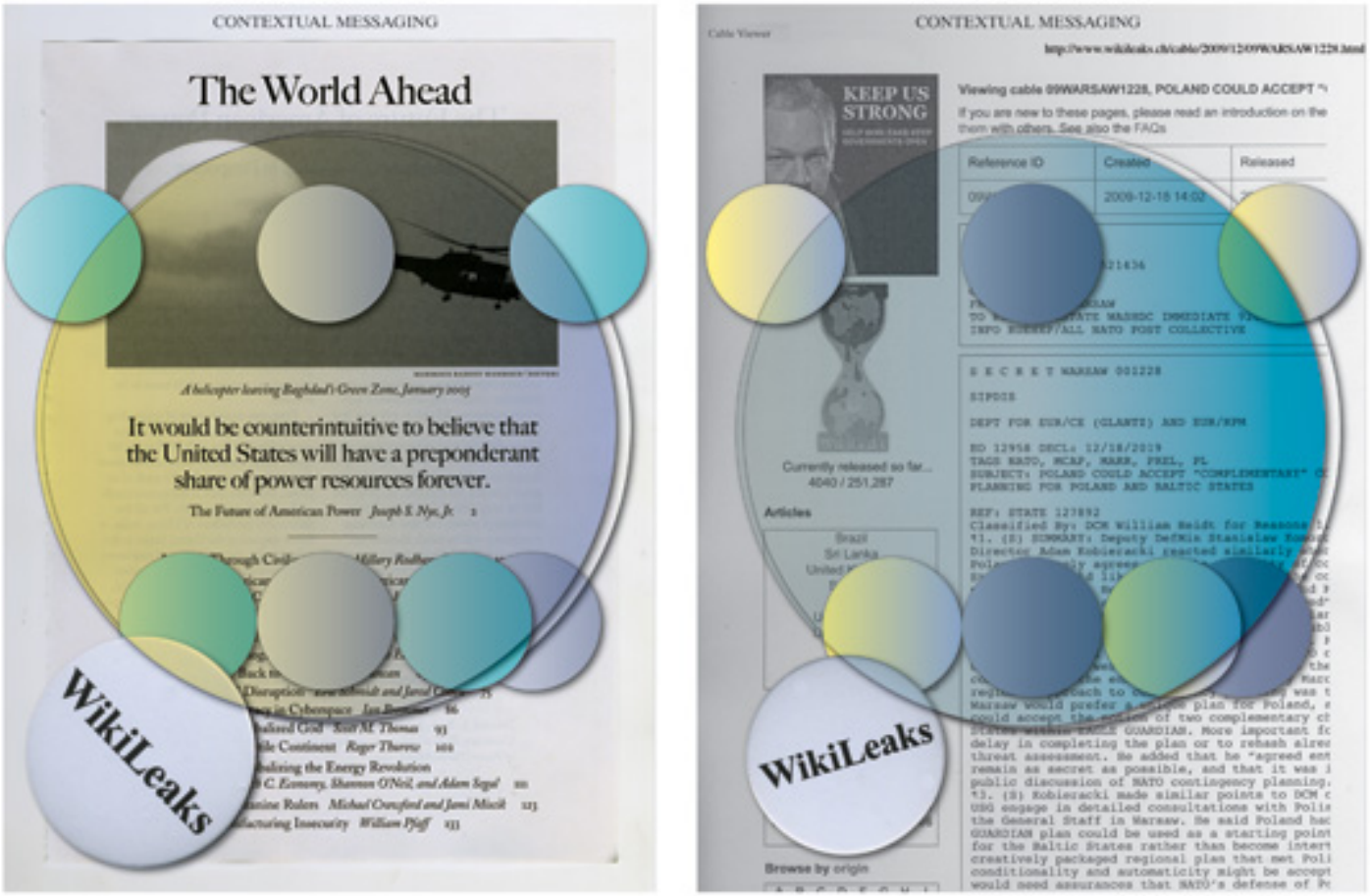
JA: Yes, there's a path, and therefore there needs to be a truck that will go down this path. Then, it becomes a matter of assembling all the pieces necessary for this truck, which is a complex machine, technically and logistically, in terms of political presentation and cause and effect, and as an organization, and how I interact, personally, with all this. It's not a simple thing. I actually think that anyone who has built an institution around an idea will tell you this—that there are some ideas about where you want to go, but in order to get there you need to build an institution. In my case, I built—and got other people to help me build—both the machine and the institution.



Proposal for a map of WikiLeaks' hosting and links, based on public sources and news articles (as of December, 2010). The relevance of the hosting model is the simultaneous usage of multiple jurisdictions. Courtesy of Metahaven.

HUO: So obviously then, because it's such a complex thing, I suppose it's not possible for you to just sketch it on a piece of paper.

JA: No, this would be like sketching democracy—something that's not possible to draw. There are all these different parts, and each has their own drawing. It's the ensemble of all these parts that makes WikiLeaks work like it does. But perhaps there are some economic epiphanies. There's a universe of information, and we can imagine a sort of Platonic ideal in which we have an infinite horizon of information. It's similar to the concept of the Tower of Babel. Imagine a field before us composed of all the information that exists in the world—inside government computers, people's letters, things that have already been published, the stream of information coming out of televisions, this total knowledge of all the world, both accessible and inaccessible to the public. We can as a thought experiment observe this field and ask: If we want to use information to produce actions that affect the world to make it more just, which information will do that? So what we ask for is a way to color the field of information before us, to take a yellow highlighter and mark the interesting bits—all the information that is most likely to have that effect on the world, which leads it toward the state we desire. But what is the signal that permits us to do that? What can we recognize when we look at the world from a distance? Can we somehow recognize those things that we should mark as worthy candidates to achieve change? Some of the information in this tremendous field, if you look at it carefully, is faintly glowing. And what it's glowing with is the amount of work that's being put into suppressing it. So, when someone wants to take information and literally stick it in a vault and surround it with guards, I say that they are doing economic work to suppress information from the world. And why is so much economic work being done to suppress that information? Probably—not definitely, but probably—because the organization predicts that it's going to reduce the power of the institution that contains it. It's going to produce a change in the world, and the organization doesn't like that vision. Therefore, the containing institution engages in constant economic work to prevent that change. So, if you search



Messages. In these sketches the laboratory petri dish, overwritten with circles forming the "WL" acronym, becomes a more neutral lens through which to observe the world, such as, a cable from Warsaw, or a page from Foreign Affairs magazine. Courtesy of Metahaven.

for that signal of suppression, then you can find all this information that you should mark as information that should be released. So, it was an epiphany to see the signal of censorship to always be an opportunity, to see that when organizations or governments of various kinds attempt to contain knowledge and suppress it, they are giving you the most important information you need to know: that there is something worth looking at to see if it should be exposed and that censorship expresses weakness, not strength.

HUO: So within that complex field of information this signal is actually a very clear sign.

JA: Yes, within that complexity. Censorship is not only a helpful economic signal; it is always an opportunity, because it reveals a fear of reform. And if an organization is expressing a fear of reform, it is also expressing the fact that it can be reformed. So, when you see the Chinese government engaging in all sorts of economic work to suppress information passing in and out of China on the internet, the Chinese government is also expressing a belief that it can be reformed by information flows, which is hopeful but easily understandable because China is still a political society. It is not yet a fiscalized society in the way that the United States is for example. The basic power relationships of the United States and other Western countries are described by formal fiscal relationships, for example one organization has a contract with another organization, or it has a bank account, or is engaged in a hedge. Those relationships cannot be changed by moderate political shifts. The shift needs to be large enough to turn contracts into paper, or change money flows.

HUO: And that's why you mentioned when we last spoke that you're optimistic about China?

JA: Correct, and optimistic about any organization, or any country, that engages in censorship. We see now that the US State Department is trying to censor us. We can also look at it in the following way. The birds and the bees, and other things that can't actually change human power relationships, are free. They're left unmolested by human beings because they don't matter. In places where speech is free, and where censorship does not exist or is not

obvious, the society is so sewn up—so depoliticized, so fiscalized in its basic power relationships—that it doesn't matter what you say. And it doesn't matter what information is published. It's not going to change who owns what or who controls what. And the power structure of a society is by definition its control structure. So in the United States, because of the extraordinary fiscalization of relationships in that country, it matters little who wins office. You're not going to suddenly empty a powerful individual's bank account. Their money will stay there. Their stockholdings are going to stay there, bar a revolution strong enough to void contracts.

HUO: It was around 2007 that WikiLeaks began developing contacts with newspapers. When was the first major coup?

JA: We had published a number of significant reports in July 2007. One was a detailed 2,000-page list of all the military equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan, including unit assignments and the entire force structure. That was actually important but, interestingly, too complex to be picked up by the press, and so it had no direct impact. The first to be "recognized by the international press" was a private intelligence report by Kroll, an international private intelligence agency. This was produced by their London office, at great expense to the new Kenyan government, who were trying to find out where Daniel arap Moi and his cronies had smuggled the Kenyan Treasury to. They managed to trace some three billion dollars worth of money, looted from Kenya, to London Banks, Swiss Banks, a 10,000 hectare ranch in Australia, properties in the US, companies in London, and so on.

HUO: And that changed the Kenyan elections.

JA: It swung the electoral vote by 10 percent, changing the predicted result of the election and leading to a rather extraordinary series of events, which ended with an overhaul of the structure of the government and the Kenyan constitution.

HUO: So one could say that, for the first time, WikiLeaks produced reality?

JA: Yes. Remember that in the theory of change I outlined, we have a starting point. We have some observations about reality, like Kroll observing where Daniel arap Moi stashed all his money. Then that information came to us, and then we spread it around in a way designed to maximize impact. And it entered the minds of many people, and caused them to act. The result was a change in the Kenyan election, which then went on to produce many other changes.

HUO: And what would you say was the next big production of reality after that?

JA: Some of them are harder to track. An election is fairly easy, because either the government or the opposition is elected. In Kenya, we saw a situation somewhere in the middle, where the opposition was elected, but the government wouldn't give up power, resulting in a power struggle. The next big disclosure was the two sets of the main manuals for Guantanamo Bay. We got one from 2003, which is the year after Guantanamo Bay started taking detainees, it revealed a new banality of evil. The Pentagon tried to say, "Oh, well, that was 2003. That was under General Miller." And the next year there was a different commander, so supposedly everything changed for the better. But courage is contagious, so someone stepped up to smuggle us the 2004 manual. I wrote a computer program to compare every single letter change between the 2003 Guantanamo Bay manual and the 2004 manual. We pulled out every goddamn difference and showed that the manual had gotten significantly worse; more despotic as time had advanced.

HUO: There is a question Julia Peyton-Jones wanted to ask you: To what extent do you think WikiLeaks prompted the current wave of protests in the Middle East?

Messages. These proposals feature nation branding for Iceland, and a cover from Time magazine. Courtesy of Metahaven.

JA: Well, we tried. We don't know precisely what the cause and effect was, but we added a lot of oil to the fire. It's interesting to consider what the possible interactions are, and it's a story that hasn't really been told before. There's a great Lebanese newspaper called *Al Akhbar* who in early December of last year started publishing analyses of our cables from a number of countries in Northern Africa, including Tunisia, and also our cables about Saudi Arabia. As a result, *Al Akhbar*'s domain name was immediately attacked—redirected to a Saudi sex site. I didn't think there was such a thing, but apparently there is. Then, after *Al Akhbar* recovered they received a massive denial of service attack, and then much more sophisticated computer hackers came in and wiped them

Posters, screen print 120x180 cm, courtesy Triennale Design Museum / Graphic Design Worlds, Milan, Italy. Courtesy of Metahaven.

out entirely—their entire cable publishing operation, news stories, analyses, completely wiped out. The Tunisian government concurrently banned *Al Akhbar*, and WikiLeaks. Then, computer hackers who were sympathetic to us came and redirected the Tunisian government's own websites to us. There's one particular cable about Ben Ali's regime that covers his sort of internal, personal opulence and abuse, the abuse of proceeds. The *New Yorker* had an article describing that this was actually reported by an American Ambassador.

HUO: Right, that he had seen a cage with a tiger and abuses of power.

JA: Right, so some people have reported that the people in Tunisia were very upset to hear about these abuses in this cable, and that inspired them to revolt. Some parts of that may be true, though two weeks later there was also a man who set himself on fire, the 26-year-old computer technician, reportedly because of a dispute over a license in the market. And this took the rage to the streets. But my suspicion is that one of the real differences in the cables about Tunisia came in showing that the United States, if push came to shove, would support the army over Ben Ali. That was a signal, not just to the army, but to the other actors inside Tunisia, as well as to the surrounding states who might have been considering intervening with their intelligence services or military on behalf of Ben Ali. Similarly, some of the revelations about the Saudis caused Saudi Arabia to turn inward to deal with the fallout of those relations. And it is clear that Tunisia, as an example, then set off all the protests in the rest of the Middle East. So when we saw what was happening in Tunisia, we knew that Egypt was on the borderline, and we saw these initial protests in Egypt as a result of Tunisia.

We really tried very hard to get out lots and lots of cables, hundreds of cables, to show the abuses of Mubarak and so on, to give the protestors some additional fuel, but also to remove Western support for Mubarak. Now we also have Libya bordering Egypt. Working with the *Telegraph* in the UK, we pushed out 480 cables about Libya,

revealing many abuses, but also intelligence about how the Libyan regime operated—we removed some of that Western support for the Libyan regime, and perhaps some of the support from the neighboring countries. The approach we took, and continue to take, with the demonstrations in the Middle East, has been to look at them as a pan-Arab phenomenon with different neighboring countries supporting each other in different ways. The elites—in most cases the dictatorial elite—of these countries prop each other up, and this becomes more difficult if we can get them to focus on their own domestic issues. Information produced by the revolutionaries in Egypt on how to conduct a revolution is now spreading into Bahrain. So this is being pushed out. We have pan-Arab activists spreading, and there exists Western support for these opposition groups, or for the traditional dictatorial leadership. And that support can be affected by exposing not just the internal abuses of power on the part of the regime, but also by exposing the nature of the relationship between the United States and these dictatorships. When the nature of this is exposed, we have a situation much like what actually happened with Joseph Biden, the Vice President of the United States, who last year called me a "hi-tech terrorist." This year, he said that Mubarak was not a dictator, but presumably a democrat, and that he should not stand down. Look at how the behavior of Washington changed with regard to Mubarak just before he fell. After we released these cables about the relationship between the United States and Mubarak in foreign military subsidies and the FBI's training of torturers in Egypt, it was no longer possible for Biden to make these kinds of statements. It became completely impossible, because their own ambassadors were saying, just the year before, that Suleiman and Mubarak had been extremely abusive to the Egyptian people in so many ways—and that the United States had been involved in that abuse, in some way. So, if you're able to pull out regional support and Western support, and the underground activists are good, and are sharing and spreading information with each other, then I think we can actually get rid of quite a few of these regimes. Already we're seeing that Yemen and Libya might be the next to go.

HUO: And you've got cables there as well.

JA: Yes, there was a big one we did for Yemen, which revealed that the president had conspired with the United States to have the US bomb Yemen and say that the Yemeni Air Force did it. So that was a big revelation that we released in December of last year. Although the President is still there, he has been handing out tremendous concessions as a result. That's been happening throughout the Arab world now—some of them are literally handing out cash, and land, and offering cabinet posts to some of the more liberal forces in the country. They've been pulling election timetables forward, saying they'll resign at the next election—many interesting

Posters, screen print 120x180 cm, courtesy Triennale Design Museum / Graphic Design Worlds, Milan, Italy. Courtesy of Metahaven.

and important types of concessions. So, although I think we will see a few more go down, in the end it actually doesn't really matter whether the leader is removed or not. What matters is that the power structure of the government changes. If you make the concessions that the people want, you're actually nearly all of the way when you want to be a just and responsible elite.

HUO: Constitutional monarchies?

JA: Right, they can keep their monarch. In practice, you may have a society that is closer to what people want, a society that's much more civilized. But let me first qualify all that I've just said. I've received reports from people who have been on the ground in Egypt, in Bahrain, and have come over and briefed me personally on what's happening. And it seems very good that, for example, when Mubarak was removed he was the head of a patronage network that extended down into every position in Egypt, to the chief of the lawyers' syndicate to the groceries industry, to particular people in the army, and so forth. So every institution and every city council had its own mini-revolution after Mubarak was removed. I think that this change in the power structures underneath will, to a large degree, confine and constrain whoever assumes power later. Still, with these revolutions we have to be careful not to end up with something like the Orange Revolution, where you had liberal forces, but ones that were being literally paid by the United States and Western Europe. They opened up and liberalized the Ukraine in important ways, but the result was that opportunists inside the country rose up and opportunists outside the country came in and really destroyed the social fabric of the country, leading within five years to a backlash that installed a much more Soviet-style president with close ties to Russia. These situations still need monitoring. One of the documents used by the revolutionaries in Cairo is

quite interesting to consider. After Mubarak fell, we witnessed an extraordinary change in rhetoric from Hillary Clinton and the White House, from "Mubarak is a great guy and he should stay," to "Isn't it great what the Egyptian people have done? And isn't it great how the United States did it for them?" Likewise, there is an idea that these great American companies, Facebook and Twitter, gave the Egyptian people this revolution and liberated Egypt. But the most popular guide for the revolutionaries was a document that spread throughout the soccer clubs in Egypt, which themselves were the most significant revolutionary community groups. If you read this document, you see that on the first page it says to be careful not to use Twitter and Facebook as they are being monitored. On the last page: do not use Twitter or Facebook. That is the most popular guide for the Egyptian revolution. And then we see Hillary Clinton trying to say that this was a revolution by Twitter and Facebook.

HUO: What about Iran? Does WikiLeaks have releases connected to Iran?

JA: Yes. There have been more demonstrations there recently, so we've been releasing material on Iran consistently since December. And the reason it has been consistent is quite interesting. Media partners that we've worked with—such as *Der Spiegel*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *El Pais*, and *Le Monde*—have already been inclined to produce stories critical of Iran, so they trawled through the cables to find bad stories about Iran and have been publishing them since December at a tremendous pace. Beyond publishing the underlying cables, we haven't actually done any of our own work on Iran. But this is actually because the Western mainstream press is, as far as I can tell, inspired to produce bad stories about Iran as a result of geopolitical influences. So we didn't need to assist, while with Egypt we had to do all the work. We'd given these Western papers all the material, and they didn't do a goddamn thing about Egypt. However, this changed later on when we partnered with *The Telegraph*, who listened closely to our predictions.

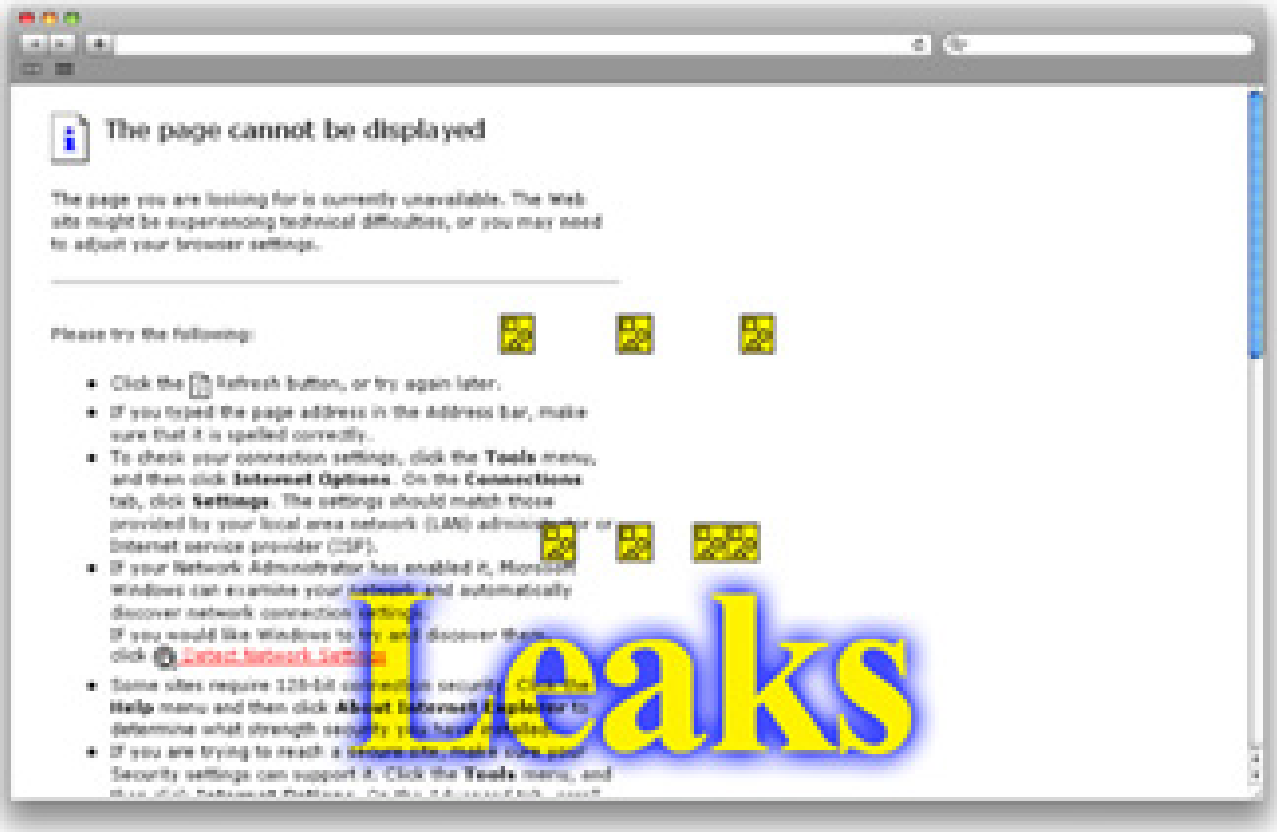
HUO: When you began working with what you call "media partners," was that a new strategy of concerted action of some sort?

JA: It was a concerted action for a number of reasons. We've partnered with twenty or so newspapers across the world, to increase the total impact, including by encouraging each one of these news organizations to be braver. It made them braver, though it did not entirely work in the case of *The New York Times*. For example, one of the stories we found in the Afghan War Diary was from "Task Force 373," a US Special Forces assassination squad. Task Force 373 is working its way down an assassination list of some 2,000 people for Afghanistan, and the Kabul government is rather unhappy about these extrajudicial assassinations—there is no impartial procedure for putting a name on the list or for taking a name off the list. You're not notified if you're on the list, which is called the Joint Priority Effects List, or JPEL. It's supposedly a kill or capture list. But you can see from the material that we released that about 50 percent of cases were just kill—there's no option to "capture" when a drone drops a bomb on someone. And in some cases Task Force 373 killed innocents, including one case where they attacked a school and killed seven children and no bona fide targets, and attempted to cover the whole thing up. This discovery became the cover story for *Der Spiegel*. It became an article in *The Guardian.* A story was written for *The New York Times* by national security correspondent Eric Schmitt, and that story was killed. It did not appear in *The New York Times*.

HUO: I'm very interested in the whole idea of projects that are unrealized for having been censored, for being too big, or for other reasons. What are your unrealized projects or dreams?

JA: There are so many. I'm not sure it's quite right to say they're unrealized because a lot will hopefully be realized, or are in the process of being realized. We're still too young to look back and say, oh, this is something we never managed to do. But there is one thing we tried to do and failed at, and it's very interesting. So, it was my view early on that the whole of the existing Fourth Estate was not big enough for the task of making sense of information that hadn't previously been public. To take our most recent case as an example, all the journalists in the world would not be enough to make complete sense of the 400,000 documents we released about Iraq, and, of course, they have other things to write about as well. I always knew this would be the case. I was very confident about having enough source material. So what we wanted to do was to take all that volunteer labor that is spent on writing about things that are not terribly important, and redirect it to material that we released, material that has a real potential for change if people assess it, analyze it, contextualize it, and push it back into local communities. I tried very hard to make that happen, but it didn't. I had looked at all these people writing Wikipedia articles, and all these people writing blogs about the issue du jour, whatever that was, especially in relation to war and peace. And I thought about the tremendous amount of effort that goes into that. When some of these bloggers are asked why they don't do original stories, and why they don't have opinion pieces and analysis of media output, they say, "Well, we don't have original sources so we can't write original material." So, surely, rather than write a Wikipedia article on something that would have no political influence, the opportunity to write about a secret intelligence report revealed to the world at that very moment would surely be irresistible, or so I thought.

But I'll give you an example to explain what I found instead. I released a secret intelligence report from the US Army Intelligence on what happened in Fallujah in the first battle



Proposal for “Leaks;” presence revealed through absence—a link to a domain of which the license has been revoked. Courtesy of Metahaven.

of Fallujah in 2004, and it looked like a very good document—secret classification labels all over it, nice maps, color, a good, combined military and political description of what had happened, even *Al Jazeera*'s critical involvement. And there was analysis of what the US should have done, which was to conduct a political and psychological shaping operation before they went in. In the case of Fallujah, some US Military contractors had been grabbed and hung in the town, and the US response gradually became an invasion of the town. So, rather than being a carefully pre-planned operation, it had been a continual escalation. They hadn't set up the necessary political and media factors to support the military objective. It was an extremely interesting document, and we sent it to 3,000 people. Nothing appeared for five days. Then, a small report by a friend of mine, Shaun Waterman at UPI, appeared as a newswire, and then another one by a guy, Davis Isenberg, who spends half his time at the Cato Institute, but published this for the *Asia Times.* But before the UPI report, there was nothing by any bloggers, by any Wikipedia-type people, by any leftist intellectuals, by any Arab intellectuals, nothing. What's going on? Why didn't anyone spend time on this extraordinary document? My conclusion is twofold. First, to be generous, these groups don't know how to lead the intellectual debate. They've been pacified into being reactive by the presence of the mainstream press. The front page of *The New York Times* says something and they react to that. Find what is newsworthy and tell the public that it is newsworthy. That's the generous interpretation, but I think the main factor, however, for those who are not professional writers, and perhaps many who are, is simply that they use their writing to advertise their values as conforming to those of their paper. The aim of most non-professional writers is to take the cheapest possible content that permits them to demonstrate their value of conformity to the widest possible selection of the group that they wish to gain the favor of.

So if one were a European leftist, why wouldn't going through that secret Fallujah document, assessing it, and writing about it properly advertise one's own values to their group? Well, actually, it would. But the cost-reward ratio doesn't work. The cost is that they would have to read and understand a thirty-page document, and then write about it in a way that would get this new information into their group and prove that it was important. But *The New York Times* and other mainstream press vehicles already do that, and they've also created the market for a response. One only needs to read a single article in *The New York Times* and issue a riposte or agreement. The frame and the audience have already been primed.

HUO: Do you have dreams for the future?

JA: Yes, many. I'll tell you about one, which is interesting. Orwell's dictum, "He who controls the present controls the past, and he who controls the past controls the future," was never truer than it is now. With digital archives, with these digital repositories of our intellectual record, control over the present allows one to perform an absolutely untraceable removal of the past. More than ever before, the past can be made to completely, utterly, and irrevocably disappear in an undetectable way. Orwell's dictum came about as result of what happened in 1953 to the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. That year, Stalin died and Beria fell out of favor. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* had a page and a half on Beria from before he fell out of favor, and it was decided that the positive description of Beria had to go. So, an addendum page was made and sent to all registered holders of this encyclopedia with instructions specifying that the previous page should be pasted over with the new page, which was an expanded section on the Bering Straight. However, users of the encyclopedia would later see that the page had been pasted over or ripped out—everyone became aware of the replacement or omission, and so we know about it today. That's what Orwell was getting at. In 2008, one of the richest men in the UK, Nadhmi Auchi—an Iraqi who grew rich under one of Saddam Husain's oil ministries and left to settle in the UK in the early 1980s—engaged in a series of libel threats against newspapers and blogs. He had been convicted of corruption in France in 2003 by the then magistrate Eva Joly in relation to the Elf Aquitaine scandal.

HUO: She was the investigating judge. I remember reading about it when living in France at the time. It was in the daily news every day.

JA: Right. So Nadhmi Auchi has interests all over the world. His Luxembourg holding company holds over 200 companies. He has companies under his wife's name in Panama, interests in Lebanon and the Iraqi telecommunications market, and alleged involvement in the Italian arms trade. He also had a $2 billion investment around Chicago. He was also the principle financier of a man called Tony Rezko, who was one of Obama's most important fundraisers, for his various pre-presidential campaigns, such as for the Senate. Rezko was also a fundraiser for Rob Blagojevich, the now disgraced Governor of Illinois. Rezko ended up being convicted of corruption in 2008. But in 2008, Barack Obama was involved in a run against Hillary for the presidential nomination, so the media turned their attention to Barack Obama's fundraisers. And so attention was turned to Tony Rezko, who had been involved in a house purchase for Barack Obama. And attention was then turned to where some of the money for this house purchase might have come from, and attention was then turned to Nadhmi Auchi, who at that time had given Tony Rezko $3.5 million in violation of court conditions. Auchi then instructed Carter-Ruck, a libel firm in the UK, to go after stories mentioning aspects of his 2003 corruption conviction in France. And those stories started to be removed, everywhere.

HUO: So they were literally erased from the digital archive?

JA: Yes. *The Guardian* pulled three of the stories. *The Telegraph* pulled one. And there are a number of others. If you go to the former URLs of those stories you get a "page not found." It does not say that it was removed as the result of a legal threat. As far as we can tell, the story not only ceased to exist, but ceased to have ever have existed. Parts of our intellectual record are disappearing in such a way that we cannot even tell that they have ever existed.

HUO: Which is very different from books, or newspapers, when some copies always survive.

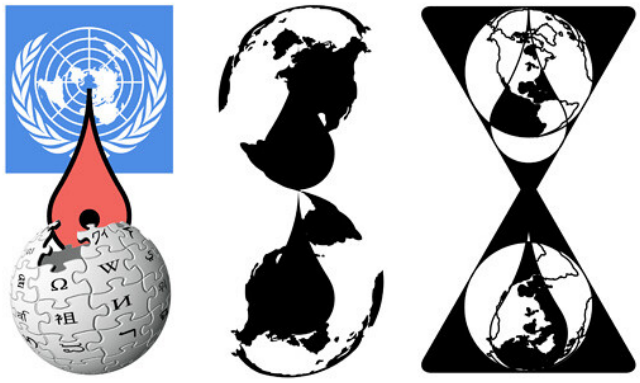
T-shirt as public surface. This proposal has a leaked cable boldly overprinting a shirt together with the "WL" circles. Courtesy of Metahaven.

JA: Right. It's very different from newspapers, and it's very different from the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. The current situation is much, much worse than that. So what is to be done? I want to make sure that WikiLeaks is incorruptible in that manner. We have never unpublished something that we have published. And it's all very well for me to say that, but how can the public be assured? They can't. There are some things that we have traditionally done, such as providing cryptographic hashes of the files that we have released, allowing for a partial check if you have a copy of a specific list of cryptographic hashes. But that's not good enough. And we're an organization whose content is under constant attack. We have had over one hundred serious legal threats, and many intelligence and other actions against us. But this problem, and its solution, is also the solution to another problem, which is: How can we globally, consistently name a part of our intellectual history in such a way that we can accurately converse about it? And by "converse" I don't mean a conversation like we're having now, but rather one that takes place through history and across space. For example, if I start talking about the First Amendment, you know what I mean, within this current context of our conversation. I mean the First Amendment of the United States. But what does that mean? It's simply an abstraction of something. But what if the First Amendment was only in digital form, and someone like Nadhmi Auchi made an attack on that piece of text and made it disappear forever, or replaced it with another one? Well, we know the First Amendment is spread everywhere, so it's easily checkable. If we are confused in our conversation and unsure of what we're talking about, or we really want to get down to the details, it's in so many places that if I find a copy, it's going to be the same as the copy you find. But this is because it's a short and very ancient and very popular document. In the cases of these Nadhmi Auchi stories, there were eight that were removed, but actually this removal of material as a result of political or legal threats, it's happening everywhere. This is just the tip of the iceberg. And there are other forms of removal that are less intentional but more pernicious, which can be a simple matter of companies going under along with the digital archives they possess. So we need a way of consistently and accurately naming every piece of human knowledge, in such a way that their name arises out of the knowledge itself, out of its textual, visual, or aural representation, where the name is inextricably coupled to what it actually is. If we have that name, and if we use that name to refer to some information, and someone tries to change the contents, then it is either impossible or completely detectable by anyone using the name.

And actually, there is a way of creating names in such a way that they emerge from the inherent intellectual content of something, with no extrinsic component. Now, to make this a bit clearer, look at URLs as a name for something. There is the text for the *King James Bible* in Project Gutenberg, as a URL. It is the short, convenient name for this—we pass it around, and it expands to the text of the *King James Bible*. The problem with URLs is that they are authority names. A URL goes to some company or organization, and the name is completely controlled by the company or organization, which means that Project Gutenberg could conceivably copy the Talmud over the *King James Bible* but the "URL name" would remain the same. It is simply up to the whim of whoever controls that domain name.

HUO: It's private.

"New Alphabet." Proposals for new characters (as part of the Arial, Courier and Times typefaces) indicating censorship, hosting, leaking, mirroring, and WikiLeaks. Courtesy of Metahaven.



Proposal for an N(G)O Logo: The WikiLeaks logo, as it consists two worlds "leaking," may be recreated using the UN globe, the Google Maps pin turned upside down (becoming a leak), and the Wikipedia globe. The two worlds may also be joined together to form an S-shaped symbol. Courtesy of Metahaven.

JA: Exactly. We all now suffer from the privatization of words, a privatization of those fundamental abstractions human beings use to communicate. The way we refer to our common intellectual record is becoming privatized, with different parts of it being soaked up into domain names controlled by private companies, institutions or states.

And we could have a sort of deliberate, pernicious change, like someone replacing "King James Bible" with "Talmud." Of course, that is unlikely to happen, but it is more likely that these companies will simply stop caring about that information. It no longer becomes profitable, or the company goes under. Or you have an important archive, and powerful figures are simply removing bits of history. So I've come up with this scheme to name every part of our intellectual history, and every possible future part of our intellectual history. And you can actually see the desire to do this as already being expressed in impoverished forms. When you look at something like TinyURL, or bit.ly, or one of these URL shorteners, you see that they are creating a short name from a longer and less comprehensible name, which is a URL. And those longer names are also short names or abstractions of whole texts, like the *King James Bible.*

We can also see it with dot-coms. Why shouldn't URLs be company, type of company, then, say, Coca-Cola? It could be us.beverages.company.Coca-Cola, right? But instead we just have coca-cola.com. We just go straight there with one word. And so, in our human language, we use words in such a way that we don't need to constantly provide a map with everything we say. Instead of having a big tree, it's a flat name space. Similarly, services like TinyURL are popular because it's just enough to get there. So my scheme is to pull out of every transmissible piece of intellectual content and intrinsic name that is mathematically bonded with that content. There's no registration, no server, no company that controls the coupling between a particular name and a piece of information. For example, for Project Gutenberg, a number of domain name registrars and Project Gutenberg itself couple the URL to *King James Bible*. And when you pass around that URL, you are actually passing around a dependence on the authority of the whole domain name system, and the dependence on the authority and the longevity of Project Gutenberg itself.

HUO: So it becomes a kind of digital robustness.

JA: That's right, and the idea is to create an intellectual robustness. So if you think about citations when using URLs, if we make an intellectual work, we stand on the shoulders of giants, which we all do, and we cite our influences in some way—not necessarily in a formal academic sense, but we simply refer to them by linking to the original thing you were looking at. URLs are an example of how we become intellectually dependent on this citation mechanism. But if that citation mechanism is actually like plasticine, and it is decaying all around us—if oligarchs and billionaires are in there ripping out bits of history, or connections between one part of history and another, because it interferes with their agenda—then the intellectual constructs that we are building up about our civilization are being built on something that is unstable. We are building an intellectual scaffold for civilization out of plasticine.

HUO: So in that sense it's actually regressive compared to the book. One cant remove parts of a published book in the same way once the book is out in the world.

JA: Exactly. So this new idea that I want to introduce to protect the work of WikiLeaks can also be extended to protect all intellectual products. All creative works that can be put into digital form can be linked in a way that depends on nothing but the intellectual content of the material itself—no reliance on remote servers or any organization. It is simply a mathematical function on the

actual intellectual content, and people would need nothing other than this function.

HUO: So that's your dream, that this could be implemented somehow.

JA: I think it's more than a dream, actually. It's been realized. It will be a new standard that, I hope, will apply to every intellectual work, a consistent way of naming every piece of intellectual creation, anything that can be digitized. And so, if we have a blog post, it will have a unique name. And if the post changes, the name will change, but the post and the name are always completely coupled. If we have a sonata and a recording of it, then it has a unique name. If we have a film in digitized form, then it has a unique name. If we have a leaked, classified document that we release, it has a unique name. And it's not possible to change the underlying document without changing the name. I think it's very important—a kind of indexing system for the Tower of Babel, or pure knowledge.

HUO: I also suppose most people don't know about the danger that the archive can just be eliminated, no?

JA: No, they don't, because the newspapers try to keep it all quiet. And everyone else tries to keep it quiet. If they don't, they will look weak, and they'll look like they've betrayed their readership by removing something their readership was interested in. And they'll encourage further attacks, because someone was successful in the first one. It is actually quite extraordinary that in the UK libel law, mentioning that you have removed something can be argued to be libelous. We saw this in a really flagrant case, where I had won the Index on Censorship Award for fighting against censorship.

HUO: I was on the jury for it this year. I read that WikiLeaks won the Freedom of Expression award two years ago.

JA: Oh really? Right, so after I won this, Martin Bright wrote a blog post in the *New Statesman* saying it was nice to meet Julian, and so on and so forth. And the next part of his blog post mentioned that these articles about Nadhmi Auchi's conviction for corruption have been disappearing. And here are the titles—he just put their titles in, as they were in the newspapers. A legal attack was then made on that particular blog post, the particular one that said we had won an award for anti-censorship.

And it was then censored. The list of articles was removed, and then the whole post was removed. That's how I became interested in Nadhmi Auchi, and we managed to find all these articles and get hold of a huge Pentagon report on Auchi's activities. And we managed to have the issue raised in Parliament, where they had a 90-minute discussion on libel. But there's another big story; that Martin Bright lost his job at the *New Statesman.*

X

To be continued in "In Conversation with Julian Assange, Part II."

Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss curator and art critic. In 1993, he founded the Museum Robert Walser and began to run the Migrateurs program at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris where he served as a curator for contemporary art. In 1996 he co-curated Manifesta 1, the first edition of the roving European biennial of contemporary art. He presently serves as the Co-Director, Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery in London.

1
Hans Ulrich Obrist, “In Conversation with Hakim Bey,” *e-flux journal* , no. 21 (December 2010). See https://www.e-flux.com/journal/21/67669/in-conversation-with-hakim-bey/ .

Suely Rolnik

Avoiding False Problems: Politics of the Fluid, Hybrid, and Flexible

Hybrid cultural cartographies of all kinds are being sketched out alongside new and complex existential territories that are made and unmade in an irreversibly globalized world.[1] To present within these dynamics a choice between refusing or celebrating cultural universes marked by cultural hybridization, flexibility, and fluidity would be to put forward a false problem, for these dynamics constitute our present reality, created through the struggle between various politics. The real difference to be found, therefore, lies in the forces at play in the sketching of its cartographies. This is what I intend to explore here, following the trajectory of this question as it has appeared in my own work, for the first time in the 1980s with the formulation of the concept of "anthropophagic subjectivity."[2]

I have reworked this concept from time to time since then—not to "correct" it, but to give voice to the singularity of the process that invokes and reconstitutes it, and also to address contexts for which it might be productive again. Its most recent reappearances were mobilized by contemporary art, which has become, since the mid-1990s, a privileged arena for the struggle of forces that outline the cultural cartographies of the present.

The Other in the Flesh

The notion of "anthropophagy," as proposed by the modernists, harks back to a practice of the indigenous Tupinambás.[3] It was a complex ritual that could continue for months, even years, in which enemies captured in battle would be killed and devoured; cannibalism is only one of the ritual's stages—and the only (or almost only) registered in the European imaginary, probably because of the horror it instilled in European colonizers. Although the cannibalist stage of the ritual is, curiously, the same stage that was privileged by the modernists in the construction of their argument, it seems that another one altogether would offer us an important key to the questions I want to address. The anthropologists Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro described this part of the ritual: "having killed the enemy, the executor would change his name and have scars made in his body during a long and rigorous period of reclusion."[4] And thus, over time, names would accumulate following each confrontation with a new enemy, along with the engraving of each name in the flesh. The more names recorded in a body, the more prestigious their bearer. The existence of the Other—not one, but many and distinct—was thus inscribed in the memory of the body, producing unpredictable becomings of subjectivity.

It follows from the same logic, according to the Jesuits, that the Tupinambás easily absorbed their European Catholic teachings—and they just as easily forgot or abandoned them. What the priests saw as "inconstancy" reveals the inexistence of a substantialized sense of the

Leonhard Kern, Menschenfresserin (Female Cannibal), 1650.

self, or of a cartography inhabited as a supposed individual or collective essence, whatever that might be; hence the detachment and the freedom to rid oneself of elements of one's own culture, to absorb elements from others, and also dismiss them when they seem to lose significance. It is no coincidence that the only aspect of their culture that the Tupinambás ferociously refused to abandon was anthropophagy.[5] They relinquished the cannibalistic stage in this ritual only when the Portuguese imposed this demand on them . What they would not renounce was this "mnemonic technique of the enemy," of the radically Other, which sustained and secured the "opening to the Other, the elsewhere, and the beyond"—this ritual of initiation into the outside and to the heterogenetic principle of the production of the self and the world that it follows from it. Would keeping the ritual at any cost not be a way of exorcizing the risk of contagium by the identitarian principle, and its dissociation of the body, that presided over the culture and subjectivity of the colonizer?

In advancing the idea of anthropophagy, the avant-garde of Brazilian modernism invoked the literality of the indigenous ceremony and shifted the ethical formula of the unavoidable otherness in oneself that presides over this ritual onto the terrain of culture. With this gesture, the active presence of this formula in a mode of cultural creation practiced in Brazil since its foundation became visible and affirmed as a value: the critical and irreverent devouring of an otherness that is always multiple and variable. We therefore define anthropophagic cultural micropolitics as a continuous processs of singularization, resulting from the composition of particles of numberless devoured Others and the diagram of their respective marks on the body's memory: a poetic response—with sarcastic humor—to the need to confront the presence of the colonizing cultures (which rendered pathetic the local intelligentsia's bedazzled mimetization of it); a response also, and perhaps above all, to the need to come to grips with and render positive the process of hybridization brought by succesive waves of immigration, which has always defined the country's experience.[6]

Anthropophagic Know-How

In the 1960s and 1970s, various Western countries reached the high point of a long process of absorbing modernism's inventions: an entire generation was embodied in a broad and daring cultural and existential experiment. In a movement that has been named "counter-culture," they overflowed the restricted territory of artistic and cultural avant-gardes. It was a widespread reaction to the disciplinary society characteristic of industrial capitalism, with its identitarian subjectivity and culture that composed the figure of the so-called "bourgeois" in its post-war Hollywood version.

This was also the case in Brazil, where the local avant-garde's anthropophagic ideas were then reactualized, revived, and transfigured into a crucial feature of other movements in the cultural field. (Tropicalism, the most widely known, was only one expression among many of this.[7]) This revival gave Brazilians a certain know-how when it came to experimentating with other politics of subjectification, of relating to the Other, and of creation pursued collectively on an international scale.

It was undoubtedly my intense involvement with this experience, and the need to actualize it conceptually so as to integrate it into a cartography of the present, that some years later led me to conceive of the notion of "anthropophagic subjectivity." Broadly, this subjectivity is constituted by the absence of an absolute and stable

identification with any repertoire, and the absence of blind obedience to any established rule, giving rise to a plasticity of the contours of subjectivity (instead of identities); a fluidity in the incorporation of new universes, alongside a freedom of hybridization (instead of ascribing a truth-value to any particular universe); and a courageous experimentalism taken to its limits, alongside an agility with improvisation that created new territories and their respective cartographies (instead of fixed territories with their predetermined and supposedly stable languages).

I used this concept for the first time in 1987, in my doctoral thesis, published in 1989[8]—the same year as the end of dictatorship of Brazil and the fall of the Berlin Wall.[9] I highlight this to show that in that specific context it was important to name and reaffirm the politics of subjectification we had invented in the 1960s and early 1970s, in the heart of the counter-cultural movement. This politics had been the target of the dictatorship's truculence throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, which had reactivated and hardened the identitarian principle—as is often the case with regimes such as these.[10] When I wrote "Anthropophagy and Schizoanalysis" in 1994 for a colloquium on Deleuze's thought, it was still necessary to affirm this mode of subjectification.[11] But the goal then was to point out the relationship between what I designated as anthropophagic subjectivity and the conception of subjectivity we find in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, and therefore to understand the wider reception of the two strains of thinking in the clinical field in Brazil.[12]

When I took up this concept one more time, in a 1998 essay commissioned for the catalogue of the twenty-fourth São Paulo Biennale (whose theme was precisely anthropophagy), I felt called upon to tackle another problem: the politics of subjectivity and cultural production invented by the generation of the 1960s and

70s, which started to be instrumentalized by transnational finance capitalism, then establishing itself across the planet.[13] Transformed in this operation, the instrumentalized micropolitics of the counter-culture generation have subsequently become the dominant form of subjectification. (with some authors describing this new regime as "cognitive" or "cultural" capitalism[14]). I will not describe this process here, as I dealt with it in depth in 1989 and more recently in several essays.[15] Although the beginning of such change dates back to the late 1970s in Western Europe and North America, in Latin America and Eastern Europe—with the dissolution of totalitarian regimes from the mid-1980s onward, largely engendered by neoliberalism itself—it had taken at least two decades for its perverse effects to be felt and posed as a problem, as is bound to be the case with any cultural transformation of this scale. Only now is it possible to perceive these effects, which imposed the need to distinguish the politics of plasticity, fluidity, hybridization, and creative, experimental freedom characterizing what I had called anthropophagic subjectivity. I described these differences at the time by advancing the concepts of "low" and "high" anthropophagy, inspired by the Anthropophagic Manifesto itself.[16] I also called them, following Nietzsche, "active" and "reactive" anthropophagy.

Image from a Tropicalia concert.

Politics of Creation

The criterion I adopted in order to distinguish the politics of anthropophagic subjectivity was based on a reaction to the process that sparks the work of creation. I referred then to the paradoxical dynamic between the map of established forms and representations, with its relative stability, and the worldly forces that never cease to affect our bodies, redesigning the diagram of our sensible texture. This dynamic inflicts the given territories and their respective maps, placing the parameters orienting our sense of the present in a state of crisis. It is in this abyss and in the urgency to produce sense that the work of thought is called into being. At the point of this initial impulse of creative will, its different politics are discerned by what is tolerated in the collapse of our senses, the plunge into chaos, and our fragility. In order to briefly describe this shift, I pointed to two opposite poles in this process, which obviously do not exist as such, for reality presents many more hues in between.

To initiate a creative act with a plunge into chaos, so as to give a body of images or words to the sensations that call for them, means to participate in the emergence of a consistent cartography of oneself and the world, which bears the imprint of otherness. This is a complex and subtle process requiring a great deal of work. And is this not similar to what the Tupinambás sought in their prolonged and rigorous reclusion during the course of the anthropophagic ritual?

However, instead of listening, creation can result from a refusal to listen to chaos and the effects of otherness on our body. In this case, the cartography is created through the consumption of ready-made ideas and images. The intention here is to rapidly reconstitute an easily recognizable territory under the illusion of silencing the turbulence provoked by the Other's existence. What is produced, then, is an aerobic subjectivity with an acritical plasticity, adequate to the mobility required by cognitive capitalism. And here it matters little whether the ideas and images consumed originate in mass culture or its erudite, luxury counterpart. On the micropolitical domain, things are distinguished not by their social or economic class belonging, nor by the place they occupy in any hierarchy of knowledges, but by the forces that invest them.

Both politics of creation I have just described bear all the characteristics I included above in what I called the "anthropophagic subjectivity"; however, they are both entirely distinct from one another, and differ essentially in the way they incorporate the disruptive effects of the Other's existence into the invention of the present.

To sum up, it was clear by then that, in order to respond to industrial capitalism (with its disciplinary society and its identitarian logic), it was necessary to oppose a fluid, flexible, and hybrid logic that had been appropriated from the 1960s and 70s. It has now become a mistake to take the latter as a value in itself—since it came to constitute the dominant logic of neoliberalism and its society of control. It is, therefore, within this logic—between different politics of flexibility, fluidity, and hybridization—that the struggles take place around tracing the cartographies of our globalized contemporaneity.[17]

Brazilian new wave film director Glauber Rocha in front of a Raging Bull poster.

Pimp My Anthropophagy

Lygia Pape, O divisor (The divider), 1968. Work as recreated for the 29th São Paulo Biennial, 2010.

In a more recent essay I wrote on this subject,[18] I felt the need to create the new notion of "flexible subjectivity," [19] so as to make explicit the historical context I had in mind—the politics of subjectification of the 1960s and 70s and its capitalistic clone—and to retain the qualification of "anthropophagic" for its Brazilian version. In this essay I described with greater precision the process that led to the instrumentalization of the counter-culture generation's micropolitics; I also pointed out the confusion that many people of the 1960s and 70s generation experienced when confronted with the two politics of flexible subjectivity and the state of pathological alienation caused by this confusion. Finally, I examined the specificity of these effects in countries just coming out of dictatorial regimes—in particular those whose past had been marked by a singular and daring experimentalism, such as many countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe. In these contexts, paralyzed by the micropolitics of dictatorships, such experimentalism was reactivated with the establishment of cultural capitalism only to be directly channeled into the market, but without first passing through the elaboration of the wound in the potency of creation, which would be a condition for the reactivation of poetic-political vitality. This means that the advent of the new regime tended to be constituted in these countries as a veritable salvation. Cultural capitalism seemed to liberate the forces of creation from their repression, and, furthermore, to celebrate and empower them to exercise a prominent role in the construction of the world to come. This aggravated the confusion between the counter-cultural politics of subjectification and creation and its post-capitalistic pimping version alike, hence the negative effects that derived from it.[20]

In Brazil, a third factor compounded this complex situation, which is precisely the presence of the anthropophagic tradition. If this played a role in the radicality of the counter-cultural experience of young Brazilians in the 1960s and 70s, it now tends to contribute to a *soft* adaptation of the neoliberal environment, as the country proved to be a veritable athletic champion of market-friendly flexibility.[21] Elicited chiefly in its more reactive side, this tradition produced what I have called "anthropophagic zombies."

What's Art Got To Do With It?

It is no coincidence that this movement manifests itself most strongly in the territory of artistic production, as it is directly affected by the situation I described above. In the last ten or fifteen years, the visual arts have enjoyed greater power than ever before in drawing the cultural cartography of the present. Besides the prominence generally acquired the by image throughout the twentieth century, international art exhibitions have become a privileged device in the development of transnational narratives. They concentrate and compose, in a single space and time, the largest possible number of cultural universes—be it on the side of the works or that of the public.

I suggested at the beginning of this text that asking the question of whether to refuse or celebrate the cartographies marked by cultural hybridization, flexibility, and fluidity would result in putting forward a false problem. It is just as false to pose the question of the

pertinence of art's role in the invention of such cartographies. The forces at work in each artistic proposal are what matter. What matters are the ways in which creation starts from the turbulences of contemporary sensible experience and the extent to which artistic practice is the consequence of frictions, tensions, and impossibilities that are implicated by the complex and singular construction of a globalized society at each moment and in each context. In the field of visual arts, those forces are embodied not only in the works themselves, but in their exhibitions and the curatorial concepts they articulate, in the critical texts that accompany them, and the directives of the museums that host them—and also, of course, in all of the artistic practices that take place in a drift beyond the institutional territory of art.

Mega-exhibitions have become one of the main sources of empty and shallow prêt-à-porter cartographies, adaptable for consumption in any point of the globe. Nevertheless, against the grain of this tendency, other forces are at work, investing in different ways in the construction of cartographies that emerge from the tensions of contemporary experience rather than from their denial. Through them, the poetic power of art is affirmed, giving body to the sensible mutations of the present. Making them apprehensible results in the opening up of new possibilities for individual and collective existence—lines of flight away from sterile modes of living that provide support for nothing but the production of capital. Is this not precisely the political potency of art?

X

Translated from the Portugese by Rodrigo Nunes.

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1
This essay is a revised version of a paper presented at the colloquium *On Cultural Translation. A Conference on Artistic Practice in a Context of Cultural Translation.* U-TURN Quadrennial for Contemporary Art in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art, and Lettre International (Copenhagen, November 24, 2007).

2
The strong singularity of the Anthropophagic Movement in the international context of modernism is still relatively ignored outside of Brazil. The 1928 *Anthropophagic Manifesto* by Oswald de Andrade—poet, playwright and experimental novelist—is its most well known reference.

3
The generic name of Tupinambá refers, in fact, to a great variety of indigenous groups that inhabited the vast territory taken hold of by the Portuguese colonization, where it "founded" Brazil.

4
Manuela L. Carneiro da Costa and Eduardo B. Viveiros de Castro, "Vingança e temporalidade: os Tupinambás," *Anuário Antropofágico* 85 (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Tempo Brasileiro, 1986). This is how the authors describe the ritual: "A prisoner, after having lived for a few months or even years among his captors, would be killed publicly in front of the community. Adorned with feathers and body painting, he would carry out arrogance-packed dialogues with an equally bedecked executioner. ... Ideally, the killing should be done with a single blow of the Ibirapema [ritual stick], which should crack his skull." Only then was the body devoured, following a rigorous ritual of distribution of its parts, and the killer would go into reclusion.

5
According to the same authors, the Portuguese wanted to employ the practice of capturing enemies in order to acquire slaves, which the indigineous people resisted. When it was not possible to escape the colonizers' orders, they would rather offer family members as slaves than surrender their captured enemies and let go of the anthropophagic ritual, with the public killing and all its other stages.

6
This is how Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro describes it: "Colonisation in Brazil was carried out as a persistent effort to establish an Europeaneity adapted to these tropics and embodied in these miscegenations. But it always ran up against the stubborn resistance of nature and the whims of history, which made us thus, despite those grand designs: so opposed to whitenesses and civilities, so internalisedly un-European as we are un-Indigenous and un-Afro." Darcy Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro. A formação e ou sentido do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995).

7
It is the case of the work of Lygia Clark, often included under Tropicalism, when the artist explicitly declared that she had nothing in common with the aesthetic of the movement. On this topic, see also the interview given by Caetano Veloso to Suely Rolnik for her archive: "Lygia Clark, fom the object to the event: activation of a work's memory and context."

8
Suely Rolnik, *Cartografia Sentimental. Transformações contemporâneas do desejo* (São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 1989, out of print). Second and third revised editions, with a preface (Porto Alegre: Sulinas / UFRG, 2006, 2007).

9
A coup d'état in 1964 put Brazil under the yoke of a military dictatorship that lasted until 1985, when the first civilian president was elected, indirectly. The first direct elections took place in 1989.

10
Both counter-culture and miltancy, the two poles of the 1960s and 70s generation's movement, were the target of the regime's terrorism in Brazil.

11
Suely Rolnik, "Schizoanalyse et Anthropophagie," Alliez, Eric, ed., *, Gilles Deleuze. Une vie philosophique* (Paris: Synthélabo, 1998), 463–476. Brazilian translation: Suely Rolnik, "Esquizoanálise e Antropofagia," *Gilles Deleuze. Uma vida filosófica* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2000), 451–462).

12
In Latin America in general—and more so in Brazil—the works of Guattari, Deleuze, Foucault, and the entire philosophical tradition in which they are included (Nietzsche in particular), had a strong influence on the field of psychiatry, which resulted in a critical attitude, interested in problematizing the politics of subjectification in contemporaneity and confronting the symptoms derived from them. In Brazil, this singularity spread across therapeutic work in public institutions and private practices (even among psychoanalysts), as well as in academic training, where several universities offer PhD programs on these lines of investigation. Just to give an idea of the scope of this movement, the group of thirty professionals in charge of the Ministry of Health during Lula's first term all came from this background.

13
Suely Rolnik, "Subjetividade Antropofágica / Anthropophagic Subjectivity," Paulo Herkenhoff and Adriano Pedrosa (eds.), *Arte Contemporânea Brasileira: Um e/entre Outro/s,* XXIVa Bienal Internacional de São Paulo (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1998), 128–147.

14
The notions of "cognitive" or "cultural capitalism," put forward from the end of the 1990s, primarily by the groups of researchers presently associated with the French journal *Multitude,* are in part a development of the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari on the status of culture and subjectivity in contemporary capitalism.

15
Some of these essays can be found in the bilingual edition of *Brumaria* 8: "*Arte y Revolución. Sobre historia(s) del arte, "* Docu menta 12 Magazine Project, 2007. In German, the majority of them can be read in *Transversal* 11/06 (Machines and Subjectivation) and 05/07 (Extradisciplinaire). See http://tra nsform.eipcp.net/ .

16
The notion of "low anthropophagy" appears in the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* , which qualifies it as the "plague of the so-called cultured and christianized nations." See Oswald de Andrade, "Manifesto Antropófagico," in *A Utopia antropofágica, Obras Completas de Oswald de Andrade* (São Paulo: Globo, 1990). Available in English at https://www.wired.co m/2010/01/anthropophagite-ma nifesto-1928/ .

17
It is obvious that the focus here encompasses only a part of the politics of subjectification and creation, which confront each other in our times. Other forces are involved in this struggle, among which the fundamentalisms that have, precisely, appeared with the installation of neoliberalism and its capitalistic flexibility. In this kind of regime, the identitarian principle is reactualized in its most extreme forms.

18
Suely Rolnik, "Zombie Anthropophagy," in Ivet Curlin and Natasa Ilic, eds., *Collective Creativity Dedicated to Anonymous Worker* (Kassel: Kunsthalle Fridericianum, 2005). Bilingual edition (German/English). In Spanish/English: "Antropofagia zombie," in Brumaria 8: " *Arte y Re volución. Sobre historia(s) del arte* ," Documenta 12 Magazine Project, 2007.

19
The notion of "flexible subjectivity" is partially inspired by that of the "flexible personality," suggested by Brian Holmes, which I develop from the viewpoint of the process of subjectification. See Brian Holmes, "The Flexible Personality," in *Hieroglyphs of the Future* (Zagreb: WHW/Arkzin, 2002).

20
Eastern Europe and Latin America share these situations that allowed the installation of capitalist flexibility to generate similiar effects like those suggested in the text (something that would merit a common investigation). Nevertheless, an entirely different phenomenon comes into play in some countries in Eastern Europe in the same context, which is the rise of fundamentalisms of all kinds, as previously mentioned in note 17.

21
Some of the signs of this phenomenon are: Brazilian agencies are often awarded top prizes in international advertising competitions; Rede Globo's TV soap operas are shown in over 200 countries; Brazilian women, according to statistics, highly

identify and subject themselves to the standard ideals of the feminine body established by the media, which places Brazil at the top of the world ranking in consumption of cosmetics, diet products, and plastic surgery.

Martha Rosler

Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III

Continued from **"Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part II: Creativity and Its Discontents"** *in issue 23 and* **"Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I: Art and Urbanism"** *in issue 21.*

PART THREE: IN THE SERVICE OF EXPERIENCE(S)

1. Jungle into Garden

In the not-so-distant New York past, tenement roofs, and even those of lower-middle-class apartment buildings—ones without doormen, say—were where women went with their washing and their children, in good or just tolerable weather, to hang the damp laundry on the line, thus joining a larger community of women in performing the necessary and normal, good and useful, labor of reproduction and maintenance of family life. (The clothes themselves, and the hanging of the laundry, were signals easily interpretable by other women as to wealth, status, moral character, and even marital harmony.) For men, many an apartment roof held the lofts of racing pigeons, the raising of which is an intergenerational hobby. Before air conditioning, you went to the roof for solitude, and for some prized "fresh air," and if you were lucky you could catch sight of the nearest body of water. The roofs of loft buildings, of course, served no familial functions. Roofs with gardens were pleasant idylls for luxury penthouse spaces, absent of the gloss of use value attached to urban farming or green roofs.

The new, and newly relaxed, attitude to the (apparently) natural world in New York—in contradistinction to a city like Helsinki, where wildness is not appreciated[1]—is reflected in the resurrection of the city's High Line, a disused elevated industrial rail line in lower Manhattan's far-west former industrial zone.[2] Its salvage and conversion into a Chelsea park, with its (re)importation of frank wild(er)ness into the city, began as a quixotic effort by a couple of architects but soon became a patrician project, and then a municipal one.[3] It marks a further step in the long transformation of urban waterfronts, formerly the filthy and perilous haunts of poor, often transient and foreign-born, workers servicing the ports into recreational and residential zones beckoning the mostly young and decidedly upper middle class. The water's edge, which once figured as the dangerous divide between this-world and underworld, between safety and the unknown, now promises pleasurable adventures in travel or beach-going.

In another register, the city has now decided to embrace neighborhood community gardens, especially in places where the working class has been effectively priced out, a

John Sloan, Sun and Wind on the Roof, 1915. Oil on canvas.

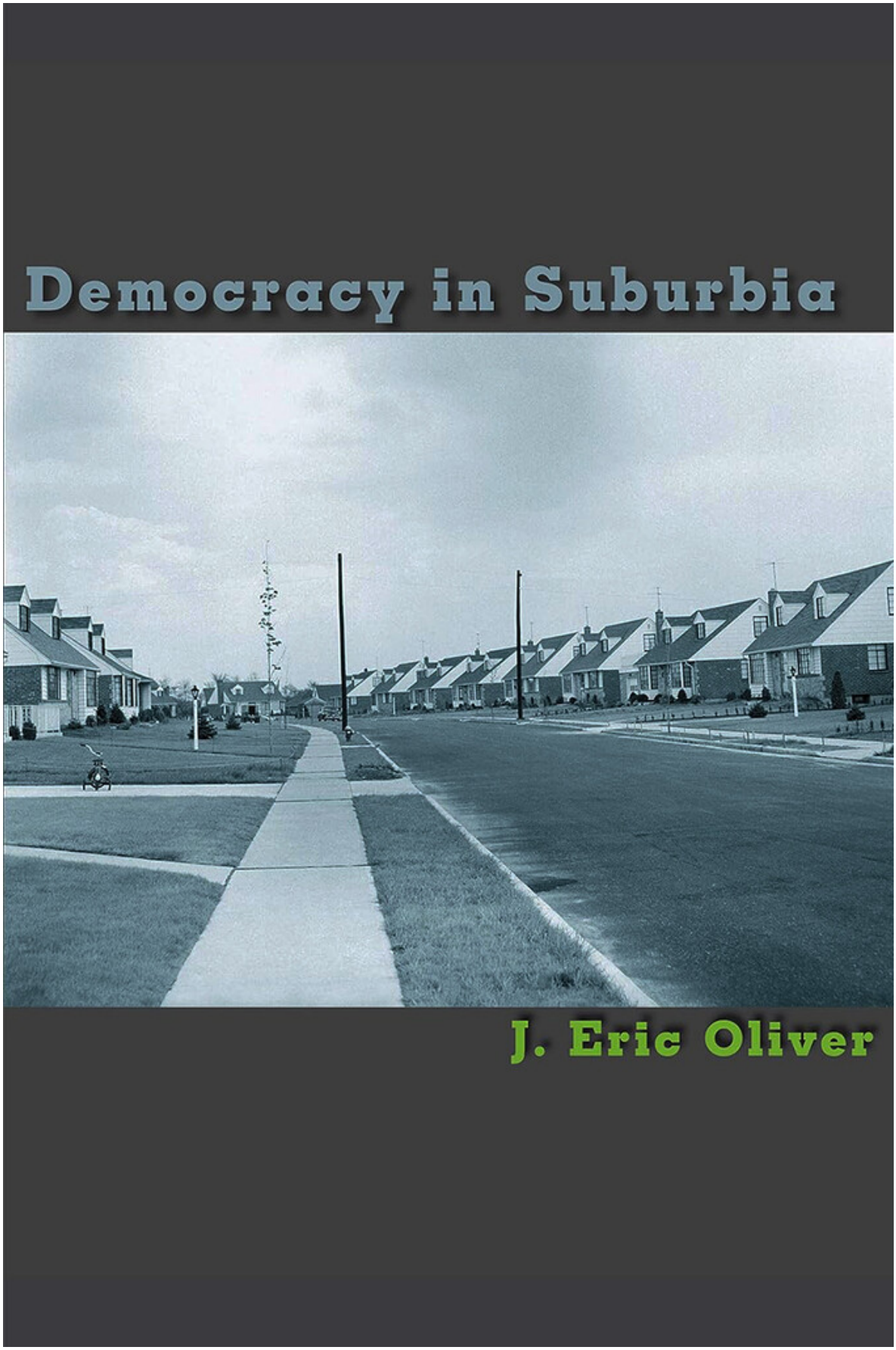
Sketch of the proposed new Whitney Museum at the High Line terminus, in the gallery district of Chelsea, New York City.

contrast to the 1990s when hard-line suburbanite mayor Rudy Giuliani tried to destroy many of these oases (which he considered "socialistic"), often painstakingly reclaimed from trash-strewn wastelands that had fallen off the city's tax rolls and into public receivership, by selling off the plots to developers at bargain rates. The city now also permits the formerly banned keeping of chickens (but never roosters) and bees anywhere in the city.[4] In my neighborhood, the still-slightly-gritty-but-on-the-way-to-becoming-hipsterland Greenpoint, in Brooklyn, some enterprising young women have started a well-publicized commercial rooftop "farm."[5] Other incipient hipster neighborhoods are poised to copy. Please try not to think of Marie Antoinette's Petite Hameau, her little farm on the grounds of Versailles, for creatives are not aristocrats, and poor people too are finally allowed to keep such animals and grow cash mini-crops.

Though they may not be aristocrats, accustomed to hereditary rank and privilege, creatives belong to the first generation to have grown up within an almost entirely suburbanized America.[6] US political scientist J. Eric Oliver, in *Democracy in Suburbia,* spells out the links between the suburban retreat to "private life" and the removal of conflict and competition over resources among urban groups:

> When municipal zoning authority and other advantages of smaller size are used to create pockets of economic homogeneity and affluence, the civic benefits of smaller size are undermined. The racial bifurcation of cities and suburbs also has civic costs, partly through concentrating the problems of urban areas in racially mixed settings. By taking much of the competition for resources and much of the political conflict that naturally exists among members of an interdependent metropolitan community and separating them with municipal boundaries, suburbanization also eliminates many of the incentives that draw citizens into the public realm.[7]

Thus we should read the "becoming creative" of the post-industrial urban core as the formation of a homogenous space drained of the incentives for political engagement. Philosopher and political scientist Seyla Benhabib has characterized, and criticized, Hannah Arendt for the limitations in considering the public in terms of agonistic and associational spheres. The former, Benhabib maintains, is out of step with the "sociological reality of modernity, as well as with modern political struggles for justice," through its preference for theatricality, for politics as action undertaken at least partially for its own sake and distinct from considerations of instrumental reason. Even without taking sides, it is possible to read the decline of both models of politics, of association and agonism, in the new "creative sphere" of the upper-middle-class urban elite. The public stage of civic action is increasingly coterminous with the preferences of a specific class, preventing both association and agonism—at least to the extent that either of those would be worthy of the term "politics." It is in this

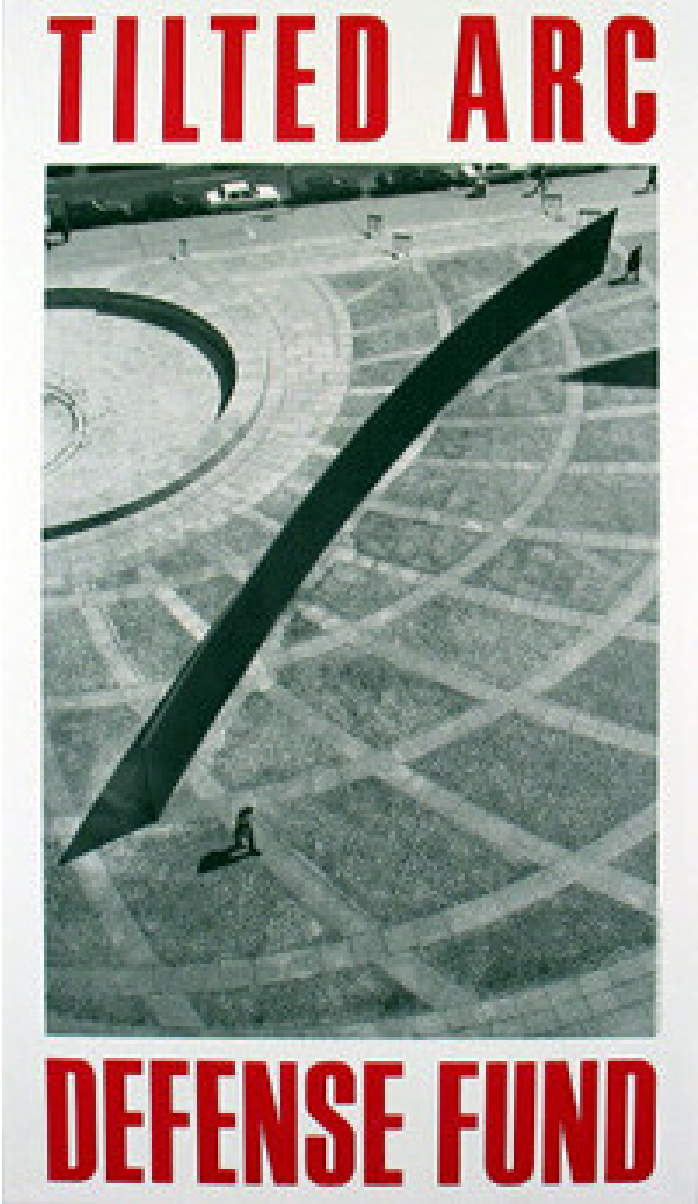

Democracy in Suburbia
J. Eric Oliver

sense that we must consider the newfound municipal enthusiasm for parks and park-like experiences, and the sanctioning of "neo-hippie" chicken-keeping and urban and rooftop farming, along with many of the examples to follow, as bound up with the shift in the class composition of the urban fabric.

The greenmarkets sited around New York City, the bicycle lanes, and the outdoor patios built in the middle of busy streets, express the conviction that the city is no longer a concrete jungle but a cultivated garden enclosing a well-managed zoo or kindergarten, in which everyone and his or her neighbor is placed on display, in the act of self-creation, whether you choose to look or not. The gardens, urban and rooftop farms, water slides, and climbable sculptures that have replaced the modernist model of public art works (which had itself displaced the state-sanctioned monumentalism of previous eras) must be understood as of a piece with the increasingly suburban character of creative-class politics.

If we consider the issue in terms of the role of art sited in public spaces, it would seem indisputable that the "public art" (or "art in public") sector in the US has turned to a service/experience model. The modernist model of public art, which relied heavily on what we might call abstractionist inspirationalism or on architectural or social critique, had elicited increasing incomprehension and annoyance from the wider public; its ship finally foundered with the removal in 1989 of Richard Serra's abstract, minimalist, site-specific *Tilted Arc* (1981), describable perhaps as an artful but rusty wall of COR-TEN steel, from its position in front of a lower Manhattan federal courthouse.[8] In contrast, *The Gates*, Christo and Jean Claude's 2005 project for New York's Central Park, underlined the role of public art as a frame for narcissistic self-appreciation on the part of bourgeois park-goers and city fathers, who may see themselves perambulating through a proud and cohesive body politic. Further, watching others pace through *The Gates* permitted a grandiose self-recognition, in which participants see each other and acknowledge the (rightful) presence of each on the grand stage with the figure of Nature hovering o'er.[9] This role of forming and framing the New York *polis* was already played by public gardens, like Brooklyn's Prospect Park and Manhattan's Central Park, in the nineteenth century; the modern history of the walk through a scenic landscape begins much earlier, in the eighteenth century in Western Europe at least, but the process now relies more prominently on presenting the civic world as remade, however ephemerally, by art, and *as* art—but with that Kodak smile. Creative adulthood means reimagining ourselves as children looking to have fun in our free time; the city no longer embodies the formal relations of the adult *polis* but is viewed by many as a series of overlapping fantasies of safety and adventure, as Sharon Zukin has suggested.[10]

The appeal to Nature, to that which appears as an "outside" to a society organized so that there is no outside,



is part of the simulacral effect that attests to the loss of distinction between public and private spheres, and to the atomization of publics into individuals in Brownian motion, often conveniently invisible to one another, or, more properly, no more consequent than street furniture (which is why Christo and Jean Claude's project was seized upon as municipally appropriate in allowing, temporarily and symbolically, the polity to come into view, pacing in orderly ranks through the crown-jewel park).[11] This is a step beyond the anonymity long remarked on as a simultaneously liberatory and alienating effect of city life, theorized by Georg Simmel in "Metropolis and Mental Life," an article of 1903 whose acceptance came only much later.[12] A further sign of a breakdown in urban codes and of urban/suburban boundary policing is represented by the casualization, even infantilization, of middle-class dress within city limits that has gone hand in hand with the computer-creative nerds' habit, starting in

Comptoir des Cotonniers storefront, Soho district, New York.

the IT shops and cultivated by management, of dressing as though they were at the gym, at summer camp, or on a hike.[13] If the world of "nature" is fetishized, you can be sure a version of the Ubermensch is lurking somewhere in the bushes.

As Giorgio Agamben reminds us,

> Arendt had already analyzed the process that brings *homo laborans*—and with it, biological life as such—gradually to occupy the very center of the political scene of modernity. … Arendt attributes the transformation and decadence of the political realm in modern societies to this very primacy of natural life over political action.[14]

We see this substitution at work in the highly evolved politics of contemporary consumer consciousness. The selection of consumer products increasingly demands to be taken seriously as a political act, asking us to produce a political self-portrait as we feed, clothe, and clean ourselves.

There is also something fundamental about the relation between gardening and this emerging biopolitics, between gardening and metaphors of rootedness and the uncomfortable displacements of modernity, the tearing away of deep, even unconscious connections to community and place. The urban farming movement, a corner of the artisanal fever that periodically grips artists' communities, potently expresses a desire to return to a mythic, prelapsarian Eden of community and stability, of preindustrial, premediatic life, without the grit of urban disconnection but with the authenticity of *Gemeinschaft* restored. This appealing dream is expressed in the immortal refrain of Joni Mitchell's song *Woodstock* of 1969, written about a historic event which career demands had prevented her from attending:

> We are stardust.
> We are golden.
> And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.

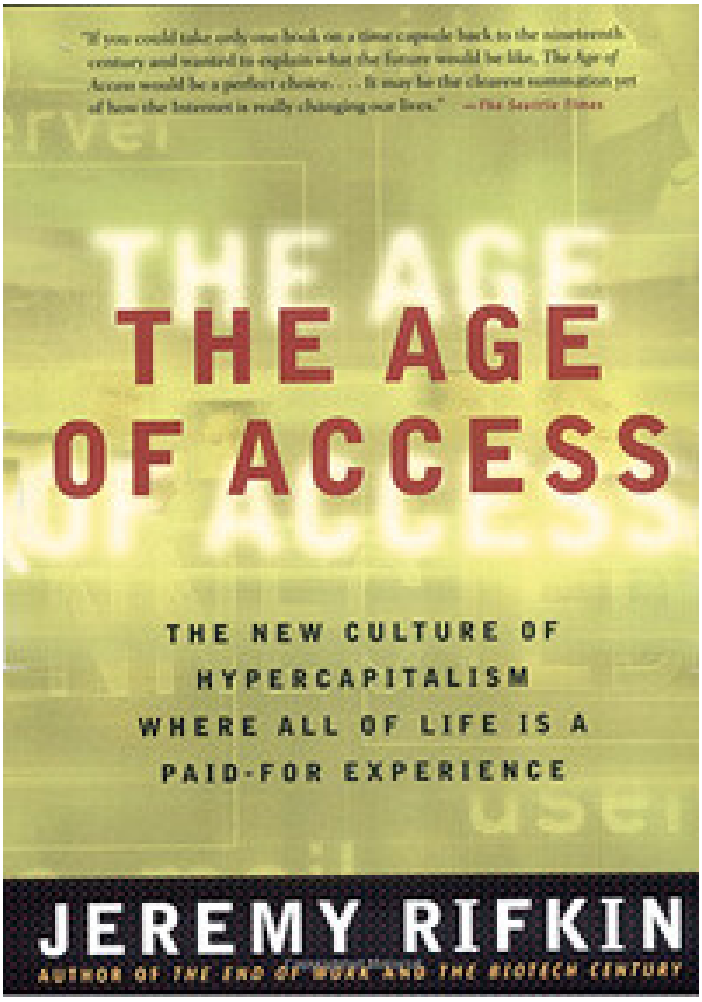
Here the garden is the part of the post-suburban Imaginary that governed the transition of the urban economy from industrial manufacturing to a high-end residential and commercial base. If we can imagine each of the distinctive urban spaces—industrial, residential, commercial—as manifesting a certain politics, we can understand not only the cultural trends that have followed in their wake but also the wider characterization of neoliberal consumer capitalism as an "experience economy."

As the vibrancy of interclass contention has been quelled by the damping off of working-class politics, a sanitized version of an industrial urban experience (or some image of one) can be marketed to the incoming middle class, who have the means and the willingness to pay for what was formerly a set of indigenous strategies of survival, of a *way of life*. The rooftop evacuated by the laundry lines and the pigeon loft becomes an urban farm, trailing clouds of glory.

The new Imaginary of New York City, like so many others', is no longer a concrete jungle but a cultivated garden, a place in which a gardener controls the noxious weeds and plants and directs growth in marvelous and pious ways. Lest I be taken for a romantic crank—or just an old bohemian like Samuel Delany memorializing the days when Times Square was simply The Deuce—I want to remind the reader that, if nothing else, as a female city-dweller I appreciate the newfound feeling of probable safety in the streets, especially after dark; but it is important to discern (as Delany would wish us to) the terms of this exchange.

2. In the Service of Experiences

George Yúdice cites Jeremy Rifkin's article from 2000, "Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience," describing the "selling and buying of human experiences" in "themed cities, common-interest developments, entertainment destination centers, shopping malls, global tourism, fashion, cuisine, professional sports and games, film, television, virtual world and [other] simulated experiences."[15] Rifkin observes:

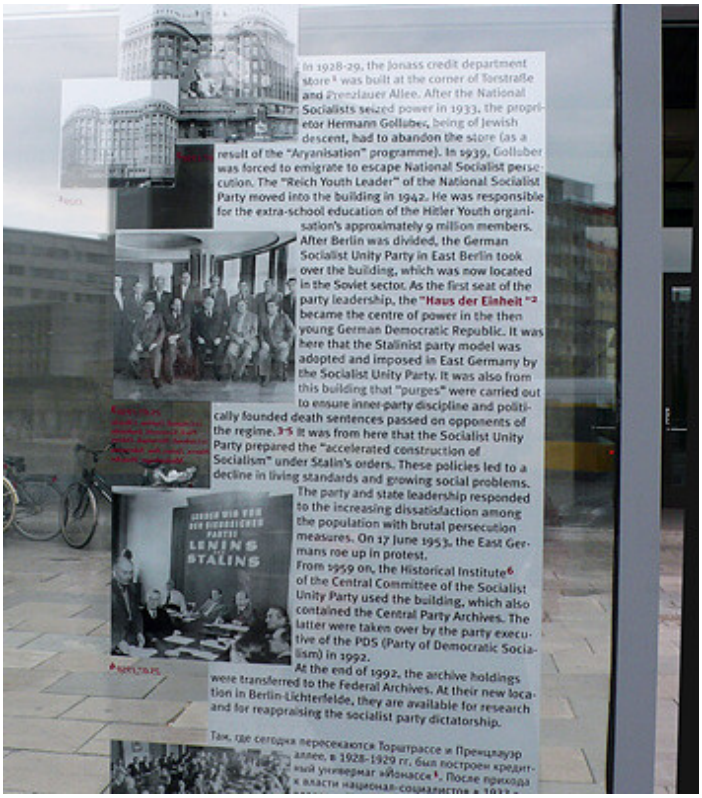


> If the industrial era nourished our physical being, the Age of Access feeds our mental, emotional, and spiritual being. While controlling the exchange of goods characterized the age just passing, controlling the exchange of concepts characterizes the new age coming. In the twenty-first century, institutions increasingly trade in ideas, and people, in turn, increasingly buy access to those ideas and the physical embodiments in which they are contained.[16]

One effect of this search for meaningful—or authentic—experience is the highlighting of authenticity as nothing more nor less than the currency of the experience economy. We should not be surprised to find a business/motivational book entitled *Authenticity*, with the subtitle "What Consumers Really Want." Written by Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, consultants living in the small city of Aurora, Ohio, the book is the successor to their previous book, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage,* of 1999.[17] These and similar books are guides not just to the creation of spectacles but for rethinking all business activity as gerundive, providing those fantastic, perhaps transformative, experiences we all supposedly seek, on the Disneyland model. Urbanism itself becomes fertile ground for precisely these transformations. (Zukin's *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* illustrates this thesis through considering three signal New York neighborhoods.)

The fraying of traditional ties evident in the preferences and behaviors of the creative class also points to the tendency to form identifications based on consumerist, often ephemeral, choices. Taste in lifestyle choices with no political commitment has hollowed out the meaningfulness of taste—in art, music, furniture, clothing, food, schools, neighborhoods, vacation spots, leisure activities, friends—as a clear-cut indicator of the individual's moral worth (of the individual's "cultivation," to use an old-fashioned construct, drawn from gardening). (This is one more reason why it is impossible to base a serious contemporary aesthetics on those of Kant, for whom the faculty of taste could not be more clearly separated from the "possessive individualism" that marks contemporary consumer choices. Kant, you may recall, in *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment,* developed a tripartite system in which taste is clearly demarcated from both reason and the urge to possess, or the "pornographic.") Taste now seems to be a sign of group membership with little resonance as a personal choice beyond a certain compass of selecting which token of the requisite type to acquire; perhaps that is why David Brooks (ever a keen observer of telling details while remaining completely incapable of seeing the big picture), recognized that for the creative class, choices must be understood as *virtuous*. (That individual choices are made on the basis of preferences already exhibited by a group is not completely new, since members of every group and tribe are instantly identifiable from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, but the present context seems different, centering more on consumer acuity than on quality.) But virtue is not to be exhibited as virtuousness but rather as dictated by some external force other than religion, such as ecological awareness or putative health effects. Public institutions, and even royalty, have tried to become one with the people, exhibiting the same sentimentality through the public display of grief, joy, and family pride. Websites follow the example of Facebook, with portrait photos of even distinguished professors and public officials; smaller art institutions show us their staff members (mostly the women) proudly hugging their offspring or (mostly the men) their dogs.

In general, art institutions, particularly those smaller ones that used to form part of the alternative movement, have furthermore married the provision of experiences to the culture of celebration by turning up their noses at seriousness and critique, as reviewers, if not critics, have as well.[18] We can see the rhetoric, often vividly expressed, of service, on the one hand, and fun experiences, on the other, among smaller art institutions and initiatives. I offer a few excerpted examples, mostly from email



Historical information panel from the Soho House Club.

announcements. They span the spectrum of contemporary exhibition venues from small, artist-run spaces, to larger, more established organizations to the self-branding of cities. There are several core concepts that provide the rhetorical touchstones in these self-descriptions. On the fun side, these range from cross-fertilization in disparate "creative" user-friendly fields to an array of anti-puritanical hooks that touch on energetic pleasure in love, dancing, or whatever, and, on the service side, to bringing culture to the lower classes, helping heal the traumas of deindustrialization, and covering over the catastrophes of war.

My first example is an outlier: a public relations and events management company for "cultural projects" in New York and Milan, called Contaminate NYC, announcing a solo cartoon and manga show at a place called ContestaRockHair, described as:

> a brand created in 1996 by a group of hairstylists who shared the passion for fashion characterized by a rock soul that links music and art with the creation of hair styles, fostering innovation and experimentation. Today ContestaRockHair counts 11 salons in Rome, Florence, New York, Miami, and Shanghai.[19]

One venerable New York artist-run institution, now positioning itself as a discursive space as well as an exhibition venue, has "partnered" with a boutique hotel in strange ways and touts the "Peace, Love & Room Service Package," from which it receives a small percentage. Another 1970s New York nonprofit (listing a hotel and six other public and private funders), expresses its "passionate belief in the power of art to create inspiring personal experiences as well as foster social progress." In the economically depressed 1970s, its earliest programs "invigorated vacant storefronts." This strategy, in which property developers rely on artists to render the empty less so, has today become formulaic and ubiquitous in the US and beyond, making the connection between art's appearance on the scene and the revaluing of real estate embarrassingly obvious.

Two further representatives of this trend strike a more sober note. The first is also from New York: this relatively new group's "core mission is to revitalize ... areas ... by bringing thoughtful, high-caliber art installations ... to the public...." A recent show in the formerly industrial zone, now "artists' district," of Dumbo uses construction materials crafted into "visual oxymorons that shift function and meaning in highly poetic ways."

The second, a dockside location in southern Europe, listing a dozen corporate and municipal partners and sponsors, "targets the need to rehabilitate and revitalize urban spaces, without losing their identity or altering their nature...." By "taking into consideration the location of the project" in the docks, the art space

> aims to expand art into non-traditional spaces and promote the use of places that previously lacked museum-like characteristics. ... Without culture, societies cannot have a true civic consciousness.

Berlin is experienced in the framing discourses of creative-industry gentrification, especially after a 2007 report in *Der Spiegel* rated it as Germany's top "creative class city," based on Richard Florida's "3T" indices: Talent, Technology, and Tolerance.[20] So far, Berlin has been slow to embrace becoming "the hippest down-to-earth booming urban spot for the creative industries," as described by the Berlin MEA Brand Building, advertising itself as "dedicated to luxury, fashion, art, cosmetics and *accessoires* [sic]." A Wall Street Journal article of 2010 mocks artists' and bohemians' unhappiness over the arrival of Soho House, one of a string of "ultra-hip private social clubs" because many Berliners, "proud and protective of their anarchic, gritty brand of cool," are "stubbornly wary of gentrification symbols." Berlin's Soho House is in a former Jewish-owned department store turned Hitler Youth headquarters turned East German Communist Party building, a history that fuels people's indignation over the

Lowell Boileau, panorama of part of the ruins of Packard Motors, Detroit, n.d.

arrival in town of a members-only club.[21]

As it once did in the repurposing of German real estate contaminated by recent world history, the transformation of cities newer to the conquest of urban space can raise the eyebrows of those to whom such things may matter. The *New York Times,* writing of the Podgorze district in Krakow, Poland, an infamous Jewish ghetto under the Nazis that was subsequently commercially orphaned in the postwar years, gushes about new restaurants springing up alongside "an ambitious history museum in the renovated [Oskar] Schindler Factory" and other promised museums nearby. "The award for prettiest real estate goes to Galeria Starmach, one of the most celebrated contemporary art galleries in Poland … an airy white space in a red brick former synagogue."[22]

But keep smiling! Mourning is consigned to new art-like spaces, such as complex architect- or artist-designed sculptural memorials and other secular pilgrimage shrines, such as museums of remembrance. In other words, those who wish to engage in mourning are directed there rather than to actual religious structures or to more general-purpose museums. Meanwhile, *those* established museums wish to make themselves seem less like mausoleums and grand palaces and more like parks and gardens, going beyond the typical decor of the past, of vast floral lobby vases and discreet landscaping, toward pavilions and bamboo structures produced by a host of artists or journeyman architects in museum backyards and on their roofs. This happy-face effort is but a short step beyond their efforts to justify their right to funds from skeptical municipalities and donors by attracting, through various programs administered by education departments, visitors from outside their normal ambit, thereby assuming not only the role of service provider but that of a pedagogical institution (often one pitched to lower grade levels).[23] No longer permitted to take the old-fashioned view and to see themselves as a locus of individualized contemplation of worthy aesthetic objects, museums have increasingly taken responsibility for the entirety of visitors' experiences, shepherding them from the shop to the art works, with their enfolding printed and recorded and virtual texts, to the café, while also beckoning to those formerly excluded population groups and informing them about the manifold rewards that museum-going might offer them.

3. Detroit: I Do Mind Dying

Detroit is a city imagined by some as an urban wasteland reverting back to prairie. Over the past twenty-plus years, many projects have tried to engage with Detroit's long slide from an iconic metropolitan vanguard of the eponymous Fordist assembly-line production to a severely distressed relic. As the fastest-shrinking metropolis in the US (it is at its lowest point in 100 years, having dropped from the fourth largest in 1950 to the eleventh in 2009 and losing a quarter of its population in the interim) and long past hoping for salvation from its Renaissance Center, postindustrial Detroit is presently trying to school its residents on how to grow small gracefully.[24] The city has been shrinking for a long time, as suburban, mostly white, flight took hold from the 1950s onward and as the auto industry ceased to be the mighty backbone of the US economy, dispersing its production to low-wage locales in the US and elsewhere and greatly reducing its employee ranks.[25] Detroit's history as the quintessentially Fordist industrial city (Ford is the carmaker that pioneered the moving assembly line) is worth considering. Not only is its history of worker organizing and union struggles long and distinguished, the city government also had a number of socialists for a good amount of time, until their support base disappeared and city government was beset by corrupt politicians. The infamous Detroit riot (some would say uprising) of 1967, while rooted in the inequalities of race, nevertheless included some racial solidarity.[26]

Detroit has a long and distinguished cultural history as well, most prominently in music—jazz, classical music performance, R&B, and more recently, the Motown sound, hip-hop, and Detroit Techno.[27] But the elite, publicly supported mainstream institutions, including the venerable Detroit Institute of the Arts, the Detroit Opera House (home of the Michigan Opera Theatre), and the world-famous Detroit Symphony, are struggling for audiences and support; this year, the Symphony's musicians, after a contentious six-month strike and the cancellation of 75 percent of the season, accepted a 23 percent pay cut, and the Opera House now holds a megachurch service every Sunday.

As the locale of a new television cop show, Detroit is the very image of post-Fordist urban abjection.[28] Written off the register of civilized America, suffering from dreadful

Cadillac Motor & Fleetwood workers' strike, Detroit, 1937.

crime statistics, inadequate policing, and municipal corruption, the city has recently called forth unbidden an extravaganza of projects attempting to establish the authentic street cred of both parachuting artists and local activists. As in the case of New Orleans, some cool people are presently moving in—people who fit under the rubric "creative class." Some of the renewed interest in Detroit stems from an analysis of the city as both the model failure of (urban) capitalism and a fertile ground for the seeds of the future. Some other observers seem to revel in the opportunity to pick over the ruins in a kind of extended rubbernecking, but with the sometimes-unspecified hope that the outcome takes place in the vicinity of the art world.[29] Others still seem interested in pedagogical opportunities, whether for themselves or others. As is the case everywhere, many new arrivals are looking for cheap rent, for places to live and work comfortably, as Richard Florida has noticed; as Florida also tells us, where hipsters go, restaurants are sure to follow. The *New York Times* asks, "How much good can a restaurant do?" and reassures us that

> in this city, a much-heralded emblem of industrial-age decline, and home to a cripplingly bad economy, a troubled school system, racial segregation and sometimes unheeded crime, there is one place where most everyone—black, white, poor, rich, urban, not—will invariably recommend you eat: Slows Bar B Q.[30]

Opened in 2005, the restaurant has, according to its owner, artist and real estate scion Phillip Coller, "validated the idea that people will come into the city." The reporter comments, "Anywhere but Detroit, the notion that people will show up and pay money for barbecue and beer would

not be seen as revolutionary."[31]

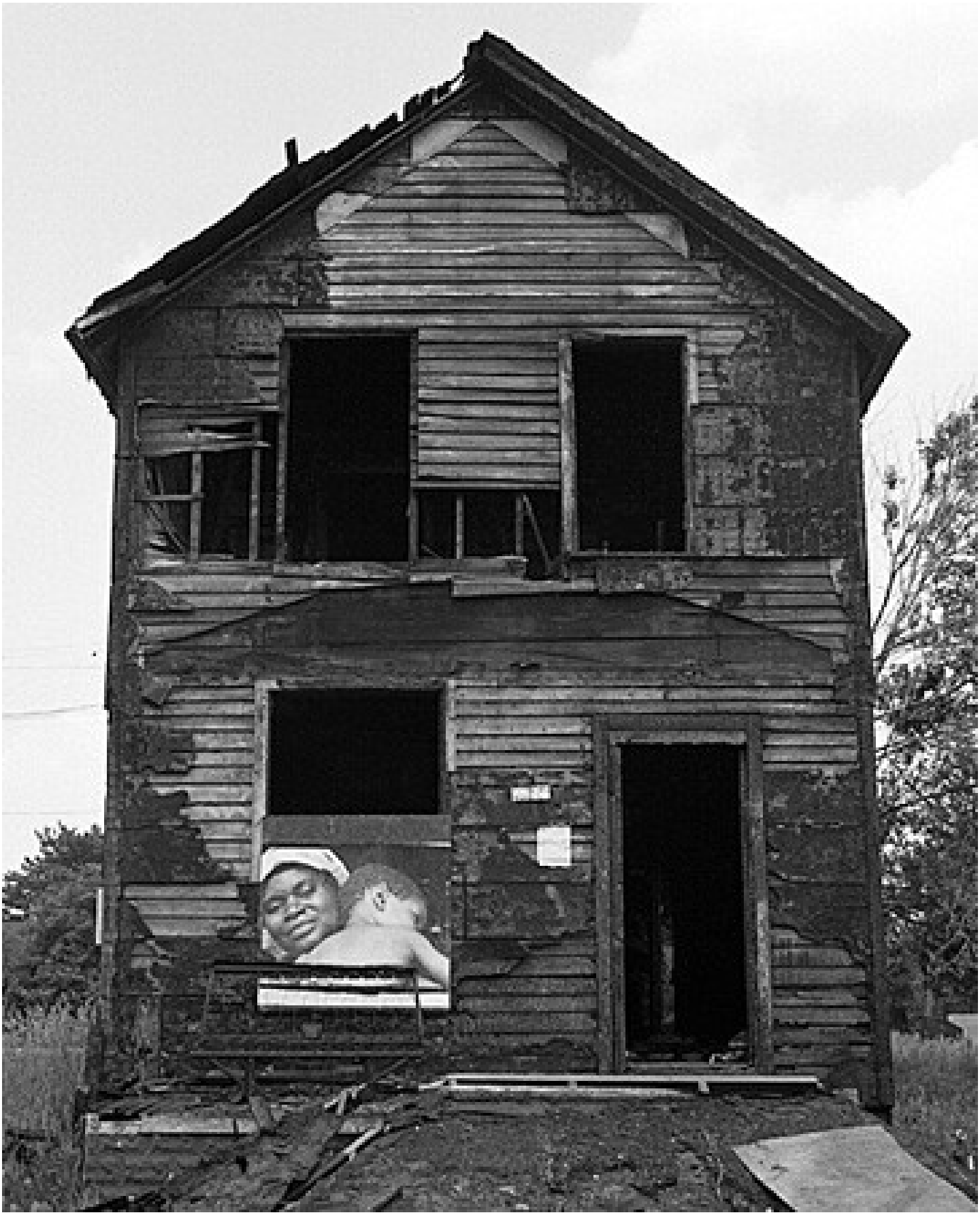
Detroit is home to many worthwhile public and community projects off the art world radar, such as the long-standing urban farming movement partly spearheaded by beloved radical activist Grace Lee Boggs, now ninety-six years old.[32] Boggs works with established communities of various income groups, using the collective growing, planting, and harvesting of crops and flowers as a basis for unity and civic mobilization, and as a way to draw in children; planting and harvesting remain a potent metaphor for self-application, communal effort, and the likelihood of a future. In a city like Detroit, neighborhood groups proliferate.

People have been making art about Detroit's troubles for a long time, especially through the media of photography and film: see for example, Newsreel's *Finally Got the News* (1970) and Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (1989).[33] Camilo José Vergara, sociologist, photographer, and cogent chronicler of the ills of US cities from the 1980s on, photographed and wrote about Detroit.[34] In the 1980s, the local group Urban Center for Photography outraged officials and city boosters by turning a grant they had received into a public project called *Demolished by Neglect*, which included posting enlarged photos of burned-out homes and decrepit theaters and other grand spaces on outdoor sites.[35]

Detroit is the site of artist-NGO do-gooder projects in the sphere of urban relations, some worthy, some hardly so. In the past few months I have met artists from around the world who have made the sad precincts of Detroit and environs their subject. Some of the projects rest comfortably within the tradition of salvage anthropology, such as the Canadian artist Monika Berenyi's project archiving the poetry of the 1960s and 1970s Detroit through the *Detroit City Poetry Project: An Oral History*.[36] Several Detroit projects have taken place in New York or have been instituted by New York–based artists. In 2009 a small nonprofit on New York's Lower East Side held a show called "Art of the Crash: Art Created from the Detritus of Detroit."[37] Another project, *Ice House Detroit*, by an architect and a photographer based in Brooklyn (though the photographer was born in Detroit), consisted of laboriously (and expensively, it turns out) spraying one of Detroit's countless abandoned houses with water in the dead of winter to make it visible and undeniably aesthetic.[38] Back in New York, a young artist having a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art last year showed her symbolic set of photo panels entitled *Detroit*. "The thing you have to understand about Detroit is that ruin is pervasive. It's not like it's relegated to one part of town... It's everywhere." The artist (who has also visited New Orleans) "internalized all that decay, but she also uncovered hopeful signs of reinvention, like a group of artists turning an abandoned auto plant into studio spaces," writes the *New York Times* .

Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman, artists based in Oslo, have been doing projects in Detroit (Bergman's home town) for a decade in collaboration with institutions in Detroit and Oslo. They will be running an "artist/poet/scholar" residency called INCA: Institute for Neo-Connotative Action, out of a center-city apartment they own. Salinas and Bergman have made animated-text films based on audio recordings of local community and political activists (including Grace Lee Boggs) and on the history of DRUM, the Detroit chapter of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, centered on the Newsreel film *Finally Got the News*.[39]

The Netherlands also sends art students to Detroit, but in much larger numbers and through regularized institutional channels, under the auspices of the Dutch Art Institute, in collaboration with the University of Michigan, an elite public university.[40] The university has set up a Detroit center, accessible only to Ann Arbor–based students with swipe cards. Back in Ann Arbor, about an hour's drive from Detroit, artist Danielle Abrams teaches a course called "Why Does Everyone in Ann Arbor Want to Make Work in Detroit?" During the 2010 Open Engagement conference



Keith Piacezny, Demolished by Neglect, Detroit, late 1980s. Image: Center for Urban Photography.

Camilo José Vergara, Detroit Skyline, View South Along Park Avenue, 1989.

sponsored by the Art and Social Practice program at Portland State University in Oregon, Abrams's students explained that they didn't go to Detroit to "fix it" but rather "to get to know the community: its history, its people, and movements": "The city will teach you what you need to know."[41] Abrams's students did not produce art projects but rather "research and community engagement."

A pair of young Australian artists received funding from an Australia Council residency in Chicago to do a month-long project in Gary, Indiana, an industrial satellite of Detroit and similarly in ruins. In conjunction with the neighborhood activist group Central District Organizing Project they planted a community garden and painted an all-but-abandoned house with an absentee owner. They also recorded local interviews for a planned film interspersing the interviews with clips from the 1980s Hollywood movie *The Wiz*.[42]

The imperative toward a manifestation of social concern and respect, if not engagement, pervades most of the projects I have learned about. If some of this sounds like missionary social work in a third world city that is part of a first world nation—much like the Ninth Ward in post-Katrina New Orleans—other projects are, like the MoMA artist's, framed in romantic, and sometimes futuristic terms (and what is futurism if not predicated on loss?). Let me invoke the motif of melancholy. Only through the act of mourning something as having been lost can the melancholic possess that which he or she may never have had; the contours of absence provide a kind of echo or relief of what is imagined lost, allowing it to be held. In this respect, most art-world projects centering on decaying places like Detroit are melancholic monuments to capital, in the sense of depicting both the devastation left in its absence but also the politics it provoked. Detroit was home not only to one of the great triumphs of capitalist manufacturing but also to one of the great compromises between capital and labor. To be upper middle class and melancholic about Detroit is to firmly fix one's political responsibilities to a now absent past; mourning Detroit is a gesture that simultaneously evidences one's social conscience and testifies to its absolute impotence. (Looking at Detroit also helpfully eases the vexed question of one's effect on one's own neighborhood in another city somewhere else.)

Such melancholia has nourished a post-apocalyptic futurism. A recent exhibition at Casco, the public design space in Utrecht, by a London-based graphic designer and a Detroit filmmaker, seeks "to imagine a post-capitalist city," focusing on Detroit's abandoned zoo, "not simply to witness the failure of a civilization in its state of ruin, but to encounter an abundant eco-system of flora and fauna that has since evolved there."[43] An associated lecture by a Scottish-born, Detroit-based professor of urban studies argued that Detroit is a place "where a model of open spaces or, to use a term that comes up a lot here in Detroit, the urban prairie, starts to come into play."[44] (The architect of the *Ice House* project had similarly told *Dwell* magazine that "Detroit is a place with a lot of potential at the moment, and there are a lot of individuals there working on innovative projects, such as the re-prairie-ization of inner city Detroit, urban farming, materials reuse and redistribution, densification of certain areas, and widespread architectural reuse."[45])

The decidedly local Heidelberg Project, Tyree Guyton's 25-year effort of decorating house exteriors in an impoverished neighborhood centering on Detroit's Heidelberg Street, fits into the "outsider art" category. Unlike, say, the initiative of artist-mayor Edi Rama of Tirana to paint the downtown buildings of this destitute city in bright colors, captured by the Albanian-born artist Anri Sala in *Dammi i colori*, Guyton's project has not had a high level of art-world or municipal traction.[46] A group of Detroit-based artists going by the name Object Orange, however, achieved a brief moment of attention in 2006/2007 when they painted abandoned buildings in Disney's "Tiggerific Orange" color, hoping, they finally decided, to have the city tear them down and reduce the blight and danger they posed.[47]

I mention these projects on Detroit not to praise or to criticize them in particular but because they represent a movement within art, and architecture, to institute projects in the larger community, in the built environment or in reference to it, surely as part of the "go social," community-oriented imperative. Is it troublesome that such works stand in contradistinction, implicit or explicit, to "political art," to work directly concerned with access to power? Here it is helpful to invoke New York urban theorist Marshall Berman's phrase, the "collision between abstract capitalist space and concrete human place." Community groups, and community artists, are tied to a concrete locale and thus cannot stand up to those in command of capital, which is defined by its mobility. But even more, community groups are composed of members

Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salinas, Wildflowers, projected video loop, Henie Onstad Art Center, Oslo, 2009.

Image from Paul Elliman & Nicole Macdonald's project on the Detroit Zoo, Future Park I: Teach me to disappear, presented at Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, 2010.

One of the houses included in the Heidelberg Project, Detroit. Photo DetroitDerek Photography.

tied to each other, whereas itinerant artists remain always on the outside, functioning as participant observers, anthropology style. Some, like Harrell Fletcher (or, earlier, filmmakers Nettie Wild and Beni Matias), have found communities where they expected only to do a project and leave, but have instead moved in.[48]

In other cities, such as Barcelona, generally presented as a model of humanistic redevelopment, driven by the relentless push of municipal "renewal," but also notable for its "push back" of local housing initiatives, young activist students work on resistance and reformation campaigns within working-class communities under pressure of gentrification, adding some visibility and perhaps organizational strength to local neighborhood groups. Detroit has no such worries.

4. Public Practice, Social Practice

I do not know whether to be more pleased or apprehensive about art-world artists engaging in, as the sign on the door says, "social practice." Certainly these essays into the world beyond the art world, which can include any of a spate of pedagogical projects in ordinary communities, feed the instincts of a sector of artists, a sector constantly reborn, to do something "real." It is worth noting, following Mierle Ukeles, the replacement of the term public art by social practice.[49] The emphasis on personal qualities and social networks will most likely give rise to projects that center on the affective. I have rehearsed some of the difficulties of these efforts. I have also alluded, throughout this essay, to the relatively easy co-optation of artists as an urban group in cities that simply allow us to live and work in ways we find conducive to our concerns—a pacification made easier by the expansion of the definition of the artist and the advancing professionalization of the field. Baby steps in the formation of community initiatives are treated as deserving of the moral (and professional) equivalent of merit badges, for a generation raised on images and virtual communication and lacking a sufficient grasp of the sustained commitment required for community immersion. These projects can capture the attention of journalists and municipal authorities, all speaking the same language and operating against a backdrop of shared class understandings. (This is precisely the situation Sharon Zukin described in *Loft Living,* which, we should recall, is a case study, using Manhattan's Soho neighborhood, of the transformation of undervalued urban space into highly valuable real estate, a condition revisited in the more recent *Naked City,* in order to address the process at a far more advanced stage along that course.[50]) But it renders invisible the patient organizing and agitating, often decades long, by members of the local communities (a process I witnessed first-hand in Greenpoint, Brooklyn).

My concerns start here but extend a bit further, to the desire of young artists, now quite apparent in the US, to "succeed." Success is measured not especially in terms of the assessments of the communities "served," though that may be integral to the works, but through the effects within the professional art world to which these projects are reported. Success, to those whom I've asked, seems to mean both fame and fortune in the professional ambit. I am not alone in my disquiet over the fact that this particular rabbit seems to be sliding inside the boa, as "public practice" is increasingly smiled upon by the art world, particularly in those demonstration extravaganzas called biennials, which appear to reside in cities but whose globalized projects can in fact be easily disclaimed as one-off experiments.[51]

One problem with my critique of Richard Florida's thesis stems from the insufficiency of simply pointing out the obfuscatory conflation of the category "artist" with the larger economic group he has called "the creative class," for artists increasingly have come to adopt the latter's entrepreneurial strategies. Witness only the increasingly common tactic of raising project money through social media and related sites such as Kickstarter or PitchEngine, in which the appeal to an audience beyond the professional is often couched in the language of promotion. Like resume writing, now strongly infused with a public-relations mentality, the offerings are larded with inflated claims and the heavy use of superlatives.[52] One should refer here to the manifold and repeated discussions of the artist as flexible personality in the post-Fordist world, forced to "sell" oneself in numerous protean discourses; a literature that encompasses such writers as Brian Holmes and Paolo Virno (I have briefly cited this literature in an earlier essay, in relation to the questions of the political and critical art[53]). Paolo Virno writes:

> The pianist and the dancer stand precariously balanced on a watershed that divides two antithetical destinies: on the one hand, they may become examples of "wage-labour that is not at the same time productive labour"; on the other, they have a quality that is suggestive of political action. Their nature is essentially amphibian. So far, however, each of the potential developments inherent in the figure of the performing artist—poiesis or praxis, Work or Action—seems to exclude its opposite.[54]

The alienation this creates is so all-pervasive that although the alienation of labor was a much-studied topic in mid twentieth century, the condition has settled like a miasma over all of us and has disappeared as a topic. At the same time, while some artists are once again occupied with the nature of labor and the role of artists in social transformation, Continental theorists have for most of the past century looked at social transformation through the prism of art and culture. The focus on culture itself as a means of critiquing and perhaps superseding class rule has a long lineage. Perry Anderson has pointed out that Marxism on the whole was inhibited from dealing with economic and political problems from the 1920s on, and when questions concerning the surmounting of capitalism turned to superstructural matters, theorists did not, as might be expected, concentrate on questions of the state or on law, but on culture.[55]

While public practices are entered into the roster of practices legible within the art world, they are entered as well into the creative-class thesis, in which they will, along with the much larger group of knowledge-industry workers, transform cities, not by entering into transformative political struggle but rather to serve as unwitting assistants to upper-class rule.

Union Square, New York City, 2010.

Two near-simultaneous New York City initiatives, occurring as I write, provide insight on the way this plays out, the first from the artists' vantage point, the second from the point of view of the powers-that-be. An ambitious conference, at a not-for-profit Brooklyn gallery describing itself as "committed to organizing shows that are critically, socially, and aesthetically aware," is announced as follows: "In recent years many artists have begun to work in non-art contexts, pushing the limits of their creative practice to help solve social problems." Offerings range from presentations on "artists embedded in the government, industries, and electoral politics" to those operating beyond the cash economy. The announcement further elucidates:

> [W]e hope to further the possibilities for artists to participate in the development of social policy. Artists, art historians, museum professionals, academics, policy experts and government officials will consider how the art making process can contribute to social change as well as encourage elected officials, community leaders and the general public to think of artists as potential partners in a variety of circumstances.

In direct counterpoint is the Festival of Ideas for the New City, in Manhattan, initiated by the New Museum and sponsored by Goldman Sachs, American Express, Audi, The Rockefeller Foundation, and *New York* magazine, among others, and with thanks to local businesses,

Poster for the Festival of New Ideas found on the New York subway.

socialites, and a clutch of New York City commissioners:

> [This festival], a major new collaborative initiative … involving scores of Downtown organizations, from universities to arts institutions and community groups, working together to effect change … will harness the power of the creative community to imagine the future city … . The Festival will serve as a platform for artists, writers, architects, engineers, designers, urban farmers, planners, and thought leaders to exchange ideas, propose solutions, and invite the public to participate.

It comprises a conference, the inevitable street festival, and "over one hundred independent projects and public events."[56] The conference proper is described (in the inflated vocabulary that we have seen some smaller institutions also adopt) as including:

> visionaries and leaders—including exemplary mayors, forecasters, architects, artists, economists, and technology experts—addressing the Festival themes: The Heterogeneous City; The Networked City; The Reconfigured City; and The Sustainable City.

These two events suggest the two registers of public projects, of the creatives remaking the urban world, which only appear to be following the same script. While artists look for the messianic or the merely helpful moment, aiming for "social change," the institutional production is centered on various trendy formulas for the "future city." (Yet the institutional event has secured the participation of most of lower Manhattan and Brooklyn's project and nonprofit spaces—including some of those whose press

releases figured in the present essay—no doubt figuring that they can hardly afford to take a pass.)

For the business and urban planning communities, culture is not a social good but an instrumentalized "strategic cultural asset." Consultant and former UK professor of urban policy Colin Mercer writes of the "strategic significance of intellectual property-based cultural and creative (content) industries in urban business communities" that can "work in partnership and synergy with existing/traditional businesses to enhance footfall, offer, branding and opportunity for consumption and diversity of experience."[57] Mercer notes that the characteristics of urban life that formerly drove people to the suburbs—such as diversity and density, on the one hand, and, on the other, vacant old factories and warehouses considered "negative location factors in the old economy"—are "potentially positive factors in the new economy because they are attractive to those [the "knowledge-based workers of the new economy"] who bring with them the potential for economic growth."[58]

Mercer's paper is, of course, a reading of Florida's thesis; he writes:

> This is not an "arts advocate" making the argument. It is an urban and regional economist from Carnegie Mellon University whose work has become very influential for urban and regional policy and planning in North America, Europe and Asia ... because he has recognised something distinctive about the contemporary make up of successful, innovative and creative cities which ... take account of ... what he calls the "creative class."[59]

Indeed. Florida's paradigm is useful for cities—especially "second tier" cities, if Alan Blum is correct—looking to create a brand and publicity for the purposes of attracting both capital and labor (the right kind of labor, for service workers will come of their own accord). As I suggested in an earlier installment, it is of little importance whether the theory pans out empirically, since it serves as a ticket of entry to renewed discourses of urban transformation. If and when it has outlived its use, another promotional package, complete with facts and figures, will succeed it, much as Florida's urban conversation has largely replaced the more ominous "zero tolerance" and "broken windows" theories of the problematics of urban governance—a replacement that has been necessitated by lower crime statistics and perhaps from the success of evacuating or depoliticizing poor and working class residents. I am more concerned with the point of view of the broadly defined creative classes, especially of artists and other "cultural workers," although I remind myself that immaterial and flexible labor link the creatives and those implicitly deemed uncreatives, which in the US seems to have led to a wholesale standing down from organization and militancy.

But, from a policy point of view, as UK urbanist Max Nathan remarks,

> Everywhere, culture and creativity improve the quality of life; iconic buildings and good public spaces can help places reposition and rebrand. But most cities—large and small—would be better off starting elsewhere: growing the economic base; sharpening skills, connectivity and access to markets; ensuring local people can access new opportunities, and improving key public services... .[60]

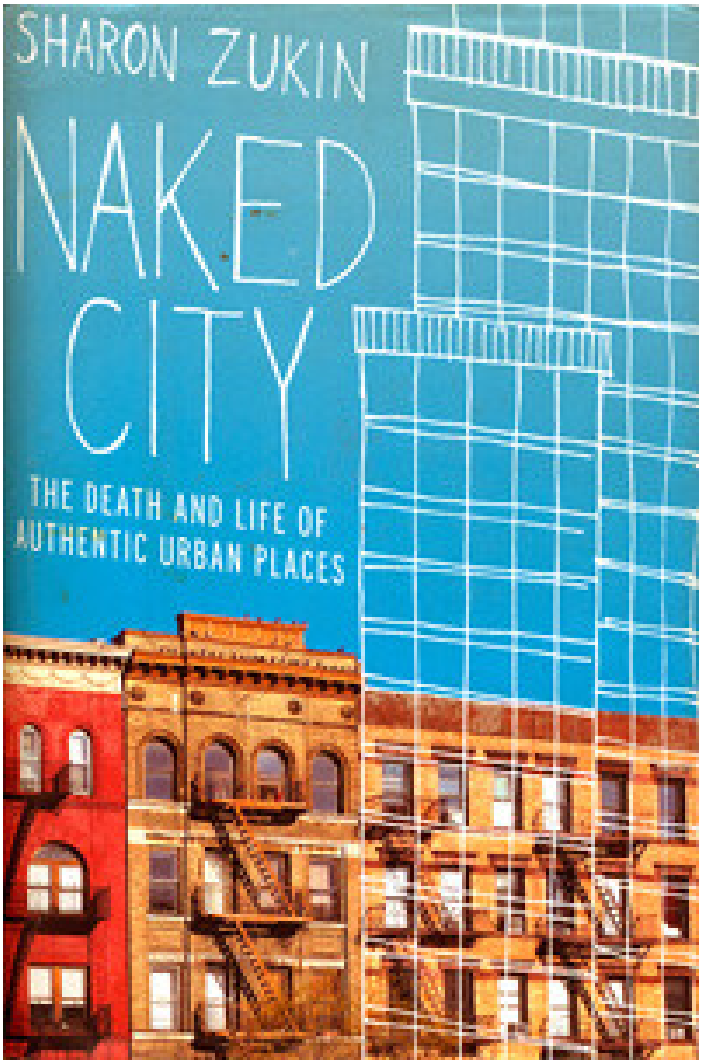
Let me, briefly, take this discussion back to Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre, as I noted at the start of this essay, in Part I, had posited that the urban represented a qualitatively new stage in the evolution of society, from agrarian, to industrial, to urban. Thus, he reasoned, future mobilizations against capitalism would have an urban character. This troubled Manuel Castells, who, writing as a structuralist following Althusser, preferred to focus on the *ideological* function of the city—its role in securing the reproduction of relations of production—rather than approaching the city as an essentially new space, one, moreover, that might be construed as endowed with quasi-metaphysical features for the production of both alienation and emancipation. As urban theorist Andy Merrifield writes:

> While the city, in Lefebvre's dialectic, functioned for capitalism, it actually threatened capitalism more; now, in Castells's dialectic, while the city threatened capitalism, it somehow had become more functional for capitalism. Indeed, the city, Castells writes, had become the "spatial specificity of the processes of reproduction of labor-power and of the processes of reproduction of the means of production."[61]

The relative clarity of European class politics could allow Castells to write that Gaullist attempts at urban renewal were

> aimed at left-wing and in particular Communist sectors of the electorate. ... Changing this population means changing the political tendency of the sector ... . Urban renewal is strong where the electoral tradition of the parliamentary "majority" is weak.[62]

Exhibition at Soho House Berlin.



Zukin's interpretation of urban events is similar but tailored to American conditions. The weak and often antagonistic relation of the US student movement, through the 1960s and 70s, to working class life and culture helped produce a politics of cultural resistance in the newly developing "creative class" that was cut off, culturally, physically, and existentially, from traditional forms of urban working class organization. Although artists, flexible service workers, and "creatives" more generally may not be the source of capital accumulation, it is inarguable that the rising value of the built environment depends on their pacification of the city, while the severing of relations to class history—even of one's own family in many instances—has produced at best a blindness, and at worst an objectively antagonistic relation, to the actual character of urban traditions of life and of struggle. What often remains is a nostalgic and romanticized version of city life in which labor is misperceived as little more than a covert service function, for the production of "artisanal" goods, for example, and the creation of spaces of production and consumption alike (manufacturing lofts, workshops, bars, taverns, greasy spoons, barbershops) obscured by a nostalgic haze.

5. Artists Seeking Inspiration—Or Consolation

Anthropologist David Graeber writes with some bemusement on a conference of several central figures in Italian "post-workerist" theory—Maurizio Lazzarato, Toni Negri, Bifo Berardi, and Judith Revel—held at the Tate Modern in London in January 2008. Graeber professes to be astonished that neither the speakers nor the organizers have any relation to art, or even much to say about it (except for a few historical references), although the event was sponsored by a museum and the hall was packed. He calls his review "The Sadness of Post-Workerism, or Art and Immaterial Labour Conference," because of what he describes as a general feeling of gloom on the part of speakers, traceable primarily to Bifo, who at that moment had decided that "all was lost."[63] Graeber seems to find a certain congruence with the perpetual crisis of the art world and the difficulties of post-Fordist theorizing, especially since he finds Lazzarato's concept of immaterial labor to be risible. He decides that the artists present have invited the speakers to perform as prophets, to tell them where they are in this undoubted historical rupture—which Graeber finds to be the perpetual state of the art world. However, he diagnoses the speakers as having, for that moment at least, decided that they too have lost the future.

I am far from prepared to take this to mean that artists have lost the future. It is not of minor consequence that this sort of conference is a staple of the art world (Graeber probably knows this too). Philosophy fills in for previous sources of inspiration, from theology and patrons' preferences to the varieties of scientific theorization or political revolution. A recent Swedish conference asks, "Is the artist a role-model for the contemporary, 'post-Fordian' worker—flexible, creative, adaptable and cheap—a creative entrepreneur? Or the other way around—a professionalized function within an advanced service economy?"[64] A question perhaps worth asking, and which many, particularly European, critics and theorists, along with some artists, are inclined to ask. Here is something to consider: the cultural sphere, despite relentless co-optation by marketing, is a perpetual site of resistance and critique. Bohemian/romantic rejectionism, withdrawal into exile, utopianism, and ideals of reform are endemic to middle-class students, forming the basis of anti-bourgeois commitments—and not everyone grows out of it, despite the rise of fashion-driven (i.e. taste-driven) hipsterism. Sociologist Ann Markusen, in a kind of balance of Lloyd's critique of the docile utility of bohemians as workers, reminds us that artists are overwhelmingly to the left on the political spectrum and engage at least sporadically in political agitation and participation.[65]

I am also not inclined to follow Debord or Duchamp and give up the terrain of art and culture. Certainly, celebration and lifestyle mania forestall critique; a primary emphasis on enjoyment, fun, or experience precludes the formation of a robust and exigent public discourse. But even

Work for creatives. Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

ruckuses have their place as disruption and intervention; some may see them as being less self-interested than social projects but as full collective projects, while fun remains a term that refers to private experience. There is no reasonable prescription for how, and in what register, to engage with the present conditions of servitude and freedom.

Brian Holmes has likened the dance between institutions and artists to a game of Liar's Poker.[66] If the art world thinks the artist might be holding aces, they let him or her in, but if she turns out actually to have them—that is, to have living political content in the work—the artist is ejected. Although Chantal Mouffe exhorts artists (rightly, I suppose) not to abandon the museum—which I take to mean the art world proper—there is nothing to suggest we should not simultaneously occupy the terrain of the urban.

This essay is an expanded version of a talk given at the third Hermes Lecture at Provinciehuis Den Bosch on November 14, 2010, arising from a suggestion by Camiel van Winkel to consider the work of Richard Florida. I thank Stephen Squibb for his invaluable and edifying assistance during the research and editing process and Brian Kuan Wood for his editing help and infinite patience. Thanks also to Alexander Alberro and Stephen Wright for their helpful responses to earlier drafts.

X

Martha Rosler is an artist who works with multiple media, including photography, sculpture, video, and installation. Her interests are centered on the public sphere and landscapes of everyday life—actual and virtual—especially as they affect women. Related projects focus on housing, on the one hand, and systems of transportation, on the other. She has long produced works on war and the "national security climate," connecting everyday experiences at home with the conduct of war abroad. Other works, from bus tours to sculptural recreations of architectural details, are excavations of history.

1
In the course of designing a city garden in Helsinki, I learned that city planners worried I would fail to distinguish the urban from the rural via the forms and types of planting. Finland has too much countryside for their liking, it appears.

2
Advanced societies in the twentieth century saw the apparent conquest of diseases associated with dirt and soil through improved sanitation and germ-fighting technologies. Fresh air movements against disease were important elements of urban reform, opening the way for renewed efforts to enlarge the playground already provided to the middle class and extended to the working class in the early part of the century.

3
Paris already had such a repurposed industrial rail line, the Promenade Plantée, whose transformation into a park began in the late 1980s.

4
Poultry keeping was banned in New York City in an effort to extirpate the remnants of the farms and farm-like practices that survived in far-flung corners of the city, such as Gravesend, Brooklyn, or Staten Island. New York City, like virtually every municipality, has detailed laws on the keeping of animals, whether classed as pets, companions, or livestock, including those held for slaughter. Pets were a matter of contention, banned from middle- and working-class apartment buildings, until the 1960s. Animals classified as wild are banned—the category "wild animals" defines the uncivilized zošsphere; ergo, people who keep them are not "virtuous" but decadent or "sick." New Yorkers may recall the incident a decade ago in which Mayor Giuliani, a suburbanite longing to join the ranks of the cosmopolitan, hurled personal insults (prominently and repeatedly, mentioning "an excessive concern with little weasels") at a caller to his weekly radio program who wanted ferrets to be legalized as household pets. The call, from David Guthartz of the New York Ferrets' Rights Advocacy, prompted a famous three-minute tirade in which Giuliani opined, "There's something deranged about you. The excessive concern that you have for ferrets is something you should examine with a therapist, not with me." See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqmbbPRDyXY&feature=related .

5
See http://rooftopfarms.org/.

6
Here one is tempted to offer a footnote to Lefebvre's mid-century observations on the urban frame (see Martha Rosler, "Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I: Art and Urbanism, *e-flux journal*, Issue 21, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/21/67676/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-i/), to take account of the blowback onto the urban paradigm of the neoliberal attributes of exurbia that we have classed under the rubric of suburbanization. As neoliberalism takes hold, even long-standing democratic processes of public decision-making, such as town meetings that obtained in small towns, succumb. As to the question of aristocracy, the figure of the aristocrat—especially the one in ratty old furs and drafty mansions—has haunted discussions of the art world, for artists are still disproportionally influential for the culture at large, while some reap handsome financial gain from this excursion and others simply stand around.

7
J. Eric Oliver, *Democracy in Suburbia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Rather than town meetings, one more typically finds the retreat to the backyard and the country club.

8
The work was installed in 1981, having been commissioned by the Art-in-Architecture Percent for Art Program, under the auspices of the federal General Services Administration, which also oversaw its removal. The event is interesting because it called upon a probably manufactured split between "the ordinary public" (the victims of the art) and the pitiless elite sectors of the art world—manufactured because the campaign for the removal of the work was in fact spurred by an aggrieved judge, Edward Re, of the arcane United States Customs Court. The following literature on *Tilted Arc* may be useful: Janet Zweig, Notes and Comments column, *New Yorker* (Mar. 27, 1989); Harriet F. Senie, *Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Gregg M. Horowitz, "Public Art/Public Space: The Spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* Controversy," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, 1 (Winter 1996) ("an early version of the strategy of censorship-as-liberation used by regressive political forces in other antidemocratic projects," 8); and, by Serra's wife, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* , eds. Martha Buskirk and Clara Weyergraf-Serra,(Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990). For an immediate, partisan view, see the film *The Trial of Tilted Arc* (1986), centering on the hearings relating to the removal of the sculpture.

9
"The Gates is the largest artwork since the Sphinx," begins a promo site's appreciative article, see http://wirednewyork.com/parks/central_park/christo_gates/ . Mayor B loomberg, a man known to tout the arts for their economic potential, inaugurated the work by dropping the first curtain. The artists call the fabric color "saffron," a colorful and exotic food spice but not the orange of the work. A lovely article on children's responses to the work—upper-middle class, upper class, and working class—includes the following: "Subsequent visits have somewhat altered her view. 'I don't like the look of them but I like the way everybody is at the park and happy,' she said, making her the ideal experiencer of the work." Julie Salomon, "Young Critics See 'The Gates' and Offer Their Reviews: Mixed," *New York Times,* February 17, 2005. See http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/17/arts/design/17kids.html .

10
See Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)., discussed in part II of this essay.

11
A further consideration of this project and its municipally sanctioned follow-up, Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfalls* (2008), would have to point to the insistence of these projects on the power of the artist, and his grant-getting, fund-raising, and bureaucracy-besting prowess, with urbanized nature as the ground. In other words, the intellectual labor of the artist is disclosed to cognoscenti but the spectacle suffices for the masses. This problem was partly addressed by Eliasson in a radio interview describing the scaffolding of the *Waterfalls* as an homage to (manual) labor, a theme not otherwise much noted in his work.

12
Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* ed. Kurt Wolff (Glencoe, Il: Free Press of Glencoe, 1950). Originally published as *Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben* (Dresden: Petermann, 1903).

13
Here consider the relationship between street fashion, working class attire, and middle-class envy of these. In addition, before youth-culture demands in the 1960s loosened most dress codes (prompting outraged businesses to post notices announcing "No Shoes, No Shirt, No Service"), it was illegal to wear "short shorts" and other forms of skimpy dress on New York City streets.

14
Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3–4.

15
Quoted in Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 196. (See Part II of the present article.) Jeremy Rifkin subsequently published a book with the same title as his article. See Jeremy Rifkin, *Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience* (New York: Tarcher, 2000).

16
Rifkin, *Age of Access*, 54.

17
Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007) and *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999). Aurora is a tiny town of about 13,000 residents, in Northeastern Ohio, near Akron. Do visit Pine and Gilmore's fun-loving website, http://web.archive.org/web/20100725011110/https://www.strategichorizons.com/index.html . Rifkin cites their first book: "Management consultants B. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore advise their

corporate clients that 'in the emerging Experience Economy, companies must realize they make memories, not goods,'" *Age of Access,* 145.

18
Two reviews, by two women reviewers, from one day's *New York Times* Arts section make this point. They sharply contrast the old, "culture is serious business," mode and the new, "culture ought to be fun" mode. A senior, front-page reviewer in "Cuddling with Little Girls, Dogs and Music," writes skeptically about crowd-pleaser Yoshitomo Nara's show, at the formerly staid Asia Society, that it "adds new wrinkles to the continuing attempts by today's museums to attract wider, younger audiences, and the growing emphasis on viewer participation." A few pages on, in "A Raucous Reflection on Identity: Jewish and Feminine," a junior reviewer writes, "Don't be put off by the yawn-inducing title of the Jewish Museum's 'Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism.' The show is a puckish, punchy look at the women's art movement (that draws) inspiration from Marcia Tucker's 'Bad Girls' survey of 1994." There is nothing particularly raucous in the works she describes. See http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/arts/design/10nara.html and http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/arts/design/10shifting.html . The art journalist Jerry Saltz, based at a local publication, earlier demonstrated his lack of recognition of the atmosphere of exclusivity, high seriousness, and sobriety typically projected by high-art institutions (definitively analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu) by wondering in print why people do not visit galleries even though they do not charge admission. The need to abrogate this forbidding atmosphere is not what is at issue here, but the emphasis upon "the museum experience," or experiences, represents a new management imperative.

19
See https://web.archive.org/web/20120428234313/http://www.contaminatenyc.com/?tag=contesta-rockhair .

20
See http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,510609,00.html .

21
Vanessa Fuhrmans, "Berlin Broods over a Glitz Invasion," *Wall Street Journal,* August 20, 2010. See http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703467304575383123945818 50.html .

22
Rachel B. Doyle, "Krakow: Add Art, Stir in Cachet," *New York Times* , August, 29, 2010. See http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05EED81E31F93AA1575BC0A9669D8B63 .

23
See part II of this essay.

24
Or not very gracefully. In February of this year, the state of Michigan ordered the Detroit school superintendent to close half of Detroit's schools, swelling class size to sixty in some cases. See Jennifer Chambers, "Michigan Orders DPS to Make Huge Cuts," *Detroit News* , February 21, 2011. See http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2011/02/michigan_orders.php . The library system may also be forced to close almost all its branches; see Christine MacDonald and RoNeisha Mullen, "Detroit Library Could Close Most of Its Branches," *Detroit News*, April 15, 2011. See http://detnews.com/article/20110415/METRO/104150371/Detroit-library-could-close-most-of-its-branches#ixzz1JcLCtBfD .

25
The auto industry began siting some of its factories in the suburbs and small towns surrounding Detroit, and auto workers followed them there; however, black auto workers complained they were kept in Detroit at the dirtiest, least desirable jobs, while the union bosses were complicit with the industry.

26
See Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (London and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975; Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998).

27
Berry Gordy's Motown Records itself departed long ago; the Belleville Three had moved on by the 1990s, although the Detroit Electronic Music Festival continues.

28
See https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1578258/ .

29
Fascination with ruins is a long standing and deeply romantic facet of mourning and melancholy; current manifestations include well-established tourist pilgrimages to sites like New York's former World Trade Center but also an interest, no longer disavowed, in images of accidents, death, and destruction, and sometimes up-close, well-supervised, and preferably well-funded short-term visits to the safer edges of various sorts.

30
Melena Ryzik, "Detroit's Renewal, Slow-Cooked," *New York Times*, October 19, 2010. The article opens, "How much good can a restaurant do?" and later comments, "To make sure the positive change takes hold, Mr. Cooley has parlayed the good will of his barbecue joint into a restless pursuit of community-building." See http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/dining/20Detroit.html .

31
Ibid.

32
Boggs's most recent book, written with Scott Kurashige, is *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Among her other books are *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century* (1976) and *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (1998). In 1992, she co-founded the Detroit Summer youth program; having moved with her husband James to Detroit, where she expected the working class to "rise up and reconstruct the city," she adapted instead to a city in a very different phase. "I think it's very difficult for someone who doesn't live in Detroit to say you can look at a vacant lot and, instead of seeing devastation, see hope, see the opportunity to grow your own food, see an opportunity to give young people a sense of process ... that the vacant lot represents the possibilities for a cultural revolution.... I think filmmakers and writers are coming to the city and trying to spread the word." Democracy Now! radio program (April 14, 2011), archived at http://www.democracynow.org/2011/4/14/roundtable_assessing_obamas_budget_plan_state .

33
Moore is from Flint, Michigan, the site of the historic sit-down strike of 1936–37 that led to the empowerment of the United Auto Workers as the sole bargaining representative of General Motors workers; the Roger of the title was Roger Smith, the head of GM at the time and the executive responsible for huge worker layoffs that led to the near-total devastation of Flint. Credits for the film *Finally Got the News* are "A Film by Stewart Bird, Rene Lichtman, and Peter Gessner, Produced in Association with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers."

34
See Camilo José Vergara, *The New American Ghetto* (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

35
Parts of this project were included in the exhibition "Home Front," the first exhibition of the cycle "If You Lived Here" that I organized at the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 1989.

36
This project, two years in the making (2008-2010), will continue through the auspices of Wayne State University with some further collaboration with Berenyi and with Eastern Michigan University. See https://elibrary.wayne.edu/search~S47?/aBerenyi%2C+Monika./aberenyi+monika/-3%2C-1%2C0%2CB/exact&FF=aberenyi+monika&1%2C25%2C .

37
See http://www.fusionartsmuseum.org/ex_crash.htm .

38
See Donna Terek (columnist), "Detroit Ice House Is Really All About Art," *Detroit News* (Feb. 7, 2010); and http://detnews.com/article/20100207/OPINION03/2070309/Detroit-Ice-House-is-really-all-about-art , which includes a video of the project. Funding was sought via Kickstarter. The creators describe the project as "An Architectural Installation and Social Change Project" on their blog, http://icehousedetroit.blogspot.com/ (now seemingly inactive), detailing their Detroit activities, a forthcoming film and photo book, and the many media sites that have featured their project.

39
Personal communications. Bergman supplied this link: http://www.ubu.com/film/aa_wildflow

ers.html . See also https://web.archive.org/web/20120429000642fw_/http://www.alejandra-aeron.com/wildflowers.html .

40
According to its website, http://detroitunrealestateagency.blogspot.com/2009/12/speaking-for-detroit.html , "the Detroit Unreal Estate Agency ... is aimed at new types of urban practices (architecturally, artistically, institutionally, everyday life, and so forth) that came into existence, creating a new value system in Detroit. The project is an initiative by architects Andrew Herscher and Mireille Roddier, curator Femke Lutgerink, and Partizan Publik's Christian Ernsten and Joost Janmaat. In collaboration with the Dutch Art Institute and the University of Michigan, generously funded by the Mondriaan Foundation and Fonds BKVB." I note that, by chance, Andrew Herscher is the architect who provided a very workable partnership on plans for the building my students and collaborators and I developed at *Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale of 2003. Another Dutch residency in pilot phase is the Utrecht-based Expodium International Artists Residency Program: European Partnership, with Detroit. "The goal ... is to enter into a long-term collaboration with Detroit by creating an expanding network ... to exchange knowledge about urban models, shrinkage and social, political and artistic developments in urban transition areas. Detroit based cultural initiatives respond creatively to the city's current situation and set to play a vital role in the redevelopment of Detroit. It is this condition that has our special interest. Information gained through this platform provides vital input for the Expodium program here in the Netherlands." See http://www.newstrategiesdmc.blogspot.com/ . Recently, fifteen students from the Netherlands participated in the Detroit City Poetry Project presentation at the Detroit Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAD); see https://web.archive.org/web/20120428121921/http://detroitlife313.com/headlines/radio/detroit-life-radio-w-john-sinclair . Why does the Netherlands send its art, architecture, and students to study cities, towns, and neighborhoods—including Dutch ones—considered to pose intractable problems? One may surmise that the Dutch, who seem fully engaged with the creative-class-rescue hypothesis, are hoping that artists and architects will assist in urban research and melioration and further help them found a new consultative industry: a Dutch urban advisory corps (this last solution—urban consultation—was proposed to me as an answer to my question "Why?" by Salomon Frausto, Head of Architectural Broadcasting at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam).

41
See http://historyofartandsocialpractice.tumblr.com/post/63388427 0/shotgun-review-the-role-of-the-art-institution-in .

42
The Wiz is a version of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), journalist L. Frank Baum's important putatively allegorical children's book about rural farm-dwellers translocating to up-to-date metropolises and of a still-fascinating mid-century musical film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), based on the Oz tales; this later version of 1978 has a largely African American cast and features Detroit-born Michael Jackson.

43
See https://casco.art/activity/future-park-i-teach-me-to-disappear/ .

44
Ibid.

45
See http://www.dwell.com/articles/ice-house-detroit.html . While vacillating between claiming it as an "architectural installation" and as a social change endeavor, the project's authors suggest that the house will be, virtuously, disassembled and the land donated perhaps to a community garden.

46
Guyton has had some degree of success as a local, indigenous, non-elite artist of choice and was included in the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale as well as garnering other attention. For Sala's project, see https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sala-dammi-i-colori-t11813 . Rama's project, as part of his mayoral endeavors, has had a different trajectory. According to the UK's Architecture foundation, Rama's actions constituted "an aesthetic and political act, which prompted social transformation, and much debate, through its visualization of signs of change." During the 2003 edition of the Tirana Biennial, Sala and Hans Ulrich Obrist invited Olafur Eliasson, Liam Gillick, and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, among other artists, to "turn residential blocks into unique works of art"; see http://vimeo.com/8254763 . The project continued, and in the 2009 iteration included façade contributions from Tala Madani, Adrian Paci, Tomma Abts, and others. However, the Tirana Biennial 2009 website notes that the exhibition would critically address the city's moment of development "through 'wild' urbanization, fast capital investments and within the horizon of a neoliberal context, (expanding) into the domain of architecture and processes of urbanization." See http://www.tica-albania.org/TICAB/ .

47
Although the mayor derided the group as vandals, a number of the buildings *were* subsequently torn down. See Celeste Headlee, "Detroit Artists Paint Town Orange to Force Change," *National Public Radio* radio broadcast, December 7, 2006. *Good* magazine uploaded a video of the project to YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQwKkK1bggY . One of the group comments: "This didn't start out as this social crusade; it started as an artistic endeavor." (That's what they all say, if they have any art-world sense; see Part II of the present article.)

48
For Fletcher's testimony, see *Between Artists: Harrell Fletcher and Michael Rakowitz* (New York: A.R.T. Press, 2008).

49
The term "interventionism" streaked like a comet across the art world firmament but seems to have been largely extinguished.

50
Zukin, *Naked City*.

51
I attempted to draw attention to both this trend's promises and its perils with the work entitled *Proposed Helsinki Garden in Singapore* at the latter city's biennale earlier this year. The project attempted simultaneously to articulate a commitment to public practice and a serious, not to say critical, examination of it. Too often, in discussing art, one finds the equation of criticism with refusal, allowing the absence of one to indict the reality of the other.

52
Facebook itself takes the form in which shouting into the wind small self-promotional messages to an appreciative imaginary public is encouraged, and in which the occasional openings for the genuine exchange of ideas seem to snap shut in an instant. At the other pole from the particular language of promotion are the grant-writing discourses, Orwellian in their Byzantine inapplicability to most artists or projects you might know, but whose categorical imperatives have only escalated over the years. In the UK, the categories for art institutions and academic departments are mind-boggling, but everywhere this instrumentalized language framing instrumentalized projects is infecting the terms in which art exhibitions are laid out.

53
See https://www.e-flux.com/journal/12/61338/take-the-money-and-run-can-political-and-socio-critical-art-survive/ .

54
Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," trans. Ed Emory, in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 188–209.

55
Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979), 75.

56
See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVRHAWiJieY and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMjaGVCQS70&NR=1 .

57
Colin Mercer, "Cultural Planning for Urban Development and Creative Cities" (2006), 2–3. See https://www.kulturplan-oresund.dk/pdf/Shanghai_cultural_planning_paper.pdf .

58
Here, Mercer is quoting a 2004 report put out by Partners for Livable Communities, which advises many Business Improvement Districts, or BIDs, with cultural elements. (A BID is a public-private partnership, a step along the path to privatization of urban public amenities and spaces. In New York they saw their genesis during the fiscal

crisis of the 1970s.) Mercer also points out that "knowledge based workers" make up half the work force of the European Union.

59
Ibid., 2. Mercer's enthusiasm presumably factored into his own decision to leave academia for consulting work.

60
Max Nathan, "The Wrong Stuff? Creative Class Theory and Economic Performance in UK Cities." See http://cjrs-rcsr.org/archives/30-3/NATHAN.pdf .

61
Andy Merrifield, *Metromarxism: A Marxist Tale of the City* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 125.

62
Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1979), 317.

63
David Graeber, "The Sadness of Post-Workerism, or 'Art And Immaterial Labour' Conference A Sort of Review (Tate Britain, Saturday 19 January 2008)." Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20111203094651/http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/graeber_sadness.pdf , https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-the-sadness-of-post-workerism , and https://web.archive.org/web/20111228125006/https://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20080713130247120 .

64
See https://web.archive.org/web/20110323131727/https://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/default.aspx?id=13909 .

65
Ann Markusen, "Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class: Evidence from the Study of Artists," *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 10 (2006): 1921–1940; Richard Lloyd. *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See part II of the present article for a further discussion of these authors' works.

66
Brian Holmes, "Liar's Poker," in *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Imagineering* (New York: Autonomedia, 2008). First published as "Liar's Poker: Representation of Politics/Politics of Representation" in *Springerin* (January 2003). See http://web.archive.org/web/20090103013312/https://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1276&lang=en .