e-flux journal

issue #47

09/2013

e-flux Journal is a monthly art publication featuring essays and contributions by some of the most engaged artists and thinkers working today. The journal is available online, in PDF format, and in print through a network of distributors.

Editors
Julieta Aranda
Brian Kuan Wood
Anton Vidokle

Managing & Image Editor
Mariana Silva

Copy Editor/Proofreader
Mike Andrews

Distribution
Laura Barlow

Graphic Design
Jeff Ramsey

Layout Generator
Adam Florin

PDF Design
Mengyi Qian

PDF Generator
Keyian Vafai

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

www.e-flux.com/journal

Editors

Editorial

Where do artifacts go when they are destroyed? They enter a void of historical erasure, of fabricated narratives and convenient amnesia. We used to call that place a museum. But what happens when a museum is itself destroyed, when it is burned or looted, when icons and artifacts turn to dust or fall back into the hands of people? Can we still access them, and do we even want to? As Boris Groys points out in this issue:

> After all, what is the revolution? It is not the process of building a new society—this is the goal of the post-revolutionary period. Rather, revolution is the radical destruction of the existing society. However, to accept this revolutionary destruction is not an easy psychological operation. We tend to resist the radical forces of destruction, we tend to be compassionate and nostalgic toward our past—and maybe even more so toward our endangered present.

After a stream of disappointments following the uprisings of recent years, we start to think about cultural heritage and who secures the narration of history. The notion of history and the nation of history. Thinking back to the 2003 looting of the Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, we can remember how confusing it was to mourn the loss of civilization at the same time as mourning the loss of human life. It was confusing because it was emotionally difficult to understand which one produced the other. When the museum was looted, we did not know whether it was a place containing artifacts from a history we wrote, or from a history that actually wrote us. This was civilization converted into information, then manifested as material history in the museum before finally exploding into the streets—a dematerialization of art taken to another level completely.

Following an outpouring of the social imaginary, we start to think about concrete power and where it really rests. And it makes us ask strange questions: Who stabilizes narratives and provides absolute protection for heritage? It is certainly not the internet. And it is certainly not historians or religious fanatics. It has always been the military—guarding the state as repository, literally holding it together to narrate itself as a community, keeping people from becoming artifacts. Naturally, it's important to remember that the looting of the Museum of Iraq took place in the midst of an insurgency from outside the country, not from inside. These are two very different things. In this issue, Nato Thompson looks at the "cultural turn" in the US military, evidenced by new programs it deployed during the occupation of Iraq. These programs used grassroots organizing tactics to build social bonds between the occupying army and communities within Iraq. Such programs provoke us to face a paradoxical overlap between nonviolent and violent forms of organizing, and the unsettling similarities in how each produces concrete

transformations in society.

We might say that this paradox is itself the location of art. And before making assumptions about art's complicity in being instrumentalized by power, or its autonomy as a free space in some imaginary absolute, it becomes important to identify the particular quality of concreteness assumed by artworks placed at the center of this paradox. We have to find the terms for understanding the fact that we are living inside an epic contradiction, hopped up on speed. Returning to Groys's essay, it was precisely Malevich who created the first artifact of destruction—his *Black Square*, an image of permanent destruction that survives permanent destruction. It is a paradoxical post-revolutionary recovery operation that preceded even the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Where do artifacts go after they die? It may be that contemporary artists are remaking them. Let's then think together with Amanda Boetzkes and Andrew Pendakis about plastics. And let's take a little rest and let a pre-human Petrosaurus Rex tell us something about the the heritage of the elastic future.

—Anton Vidokle, Brian Kuan Wood, Julieta Aranda

X

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

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

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

Boris Groys

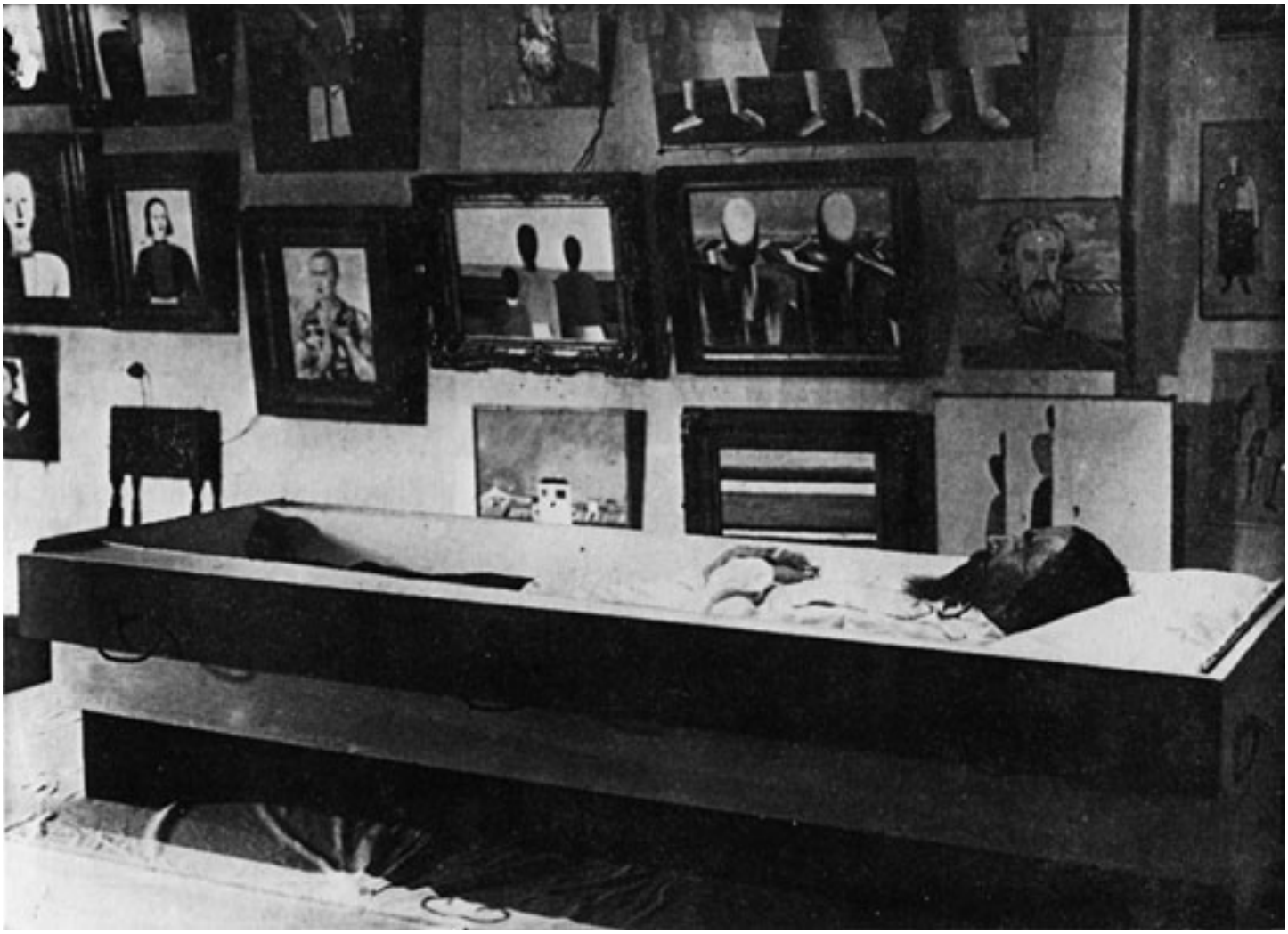
Becoming Revolutionary: On Kazimir Malevich

The central question that unavoidably dominates today's thinking and speaking about the Russian avant-garde is the question regarding the relationship between artistic revolution and political revolution. Was the Russian avant-garde a collaborator, a coproducer of the October Revolution? And if the answer is yes, can the Russian avant-garde function as an inspiration and model for contemporary art practices that try to transgress the borders of the art world, to become political, to change the dominant political and economical conditions of human existence, to put themselves in the service of political or social revolution, or at least of political and social change?

Today, the political role of art is mostly seen as being twofold: (1) critique of the dominant political, economic, and art system, and (2) mobilization of the audience toward changing this system through a Utopian promise. Now, if we look at the first, pre-revolutionary wave of the Russian avant-garde, we do not find any of these aspects in its artistic practice. To criticize something one must somehow reproduce it—to present this criticized something together with the critique of it.

But the Russian avant-garde wanted to be non-mimetic. One can say that Malevich's Suprematist art was revolutionary, but one can hardly say that it was critical. The sound poetry of Alexei Kruchenykh was also non-mimetic and non-critical. Both of these artistic practices—the most radical of the Russian avant-garde—were also non-participatory, since writing sound poetry and painting squares and triangles are obviously not activities that would be especially attractive to a wider audiences. Nor could these activities mobilize the masses for the coming political revolution. In fact, such a mobilization could only be achieved through the use of modern and contemporary mass media, like the press, radio, cinema—or today, through pop music and revolutionary design such as posters, slogans, Twitter messages, and so forth. During the pre-revolutionary period, the artists of the Russian avant-garde obviously had no access to these media—even if the scandals their artistic activities provoked were from time to time covered by the press.

We often use the phrase "the Russian revolutionary avant-garde" to refer to Russian avant-garde artistic practices of the 1920s. But, in fact, this is incorrect. The Russian avant-garde of the 1920s was—artistically and politically—already in its post-revolutionary phase. During this phase, the Russian avant-garde further developed the artistic practices that had already emerged before the October Revolution. It operated in the framework of the post-revolutionary Soviet state—as it was formed after the October Revolution and the end of the civil war—and was supported and controlled by this state. Thus, one cannot speak of the Russian avant-garde of the Soviet period as being revolutionary in the usual sense of the word, since the Russian avant-garde art was not directed against the status quo, against the dominant political and economic



Malevich's body placed into Suetin's coffin, shortly after the artist's death, 1935.

power structures.

The Russian avant-garde of the Soviet period was not critical but affirmative in its attitude towards the post-revolutionary Soviet state. It was basically a conformist art. Thus, only the pre-revolutionary Russian avant-garde can be regarded today as being relevant to our contemporary situation—because the contemporary situation is obviously not the situation that existed after the Socialist revolution. So, in speaking about the revolutionary character of the Russian avant-garde, let us concentrate on the figure of Kazimir Malevich, the most radical representative of the pre-revolutionary phase of the Russian avant-garde.

As I have already mentioned, one does not find in the art of the pre-revolutionary Russian avant-garde, including the art of Malevich, the characteristics that we tend to look for when speaking about critical, politically engaged art that is able to mobilize the masses for the revolution—art that can help change the world. Thus, the suspicion arises that Malevich's famous *Black Square* is unrelated to any political and social revolution—that it is an artistic gesture that ultimately has relevance only inside artistic space. However, I would argue that if Malevich's *Black Square* was not an active revolutionary gesture in the sense that it criticized the political status quo or advertised a coming revolution, it was revolutionary in a much deeper sense. After all, what is revolution? It is not the process of building a new society—this is the goal of the post-revolutionary period. Rather, revolution is the radical destruction of the existing society. However, to accept this revolutionary destruction is not an easy psychological operation. We tend to resist the radical forces of destruction, we tend to be compassionate and nostalgic toward our past—and maybe even more so toward our endangered present. The Russian avant-garde—and the early European avant-garde in general—was the strongest possible medicine against any kind of compassion or nostalgia. It accepted the total destruction of all the traditions of European and Russian culture—traditions that were dear not only to the educated classes but also to

the general population.

Malevich's *Black Square* was the most radical gesture of this acceptance. It announced the death of any cultural nostalgia, of any sentimental attachment to the culture of the past. *Black Square* was like an open window through which the revolutionary spirits of radical destruction could enter the space of culture and reduce it to ashes. Indeed, a good example of Malevich's own anti-nostalgic attitude can be found in his short but important text "On the Museum," from 1919. At that time, the new Soviet government feared that the old Russian museums and art collections would be destroyed by civil war and the general collapse of state institutions and the economy. The Communist Party responded by trying to save these collections. In his text, Malevich protested against this pro-museum policy by calling on the state to not intervene on behalf of the old art collections, since their destruction could open the path to true, living art. He wrote:

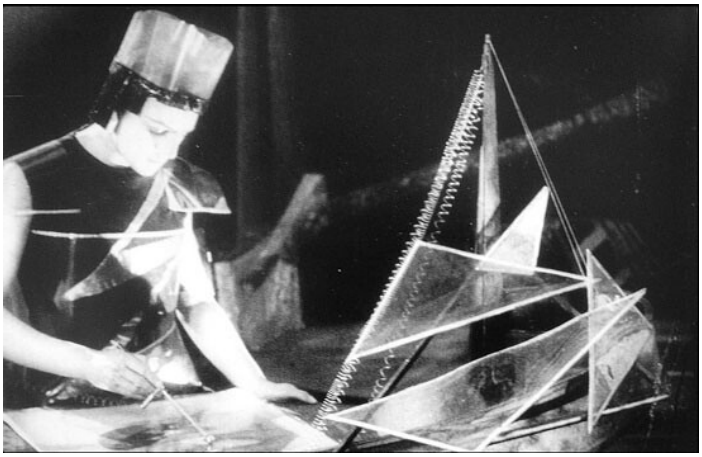
> Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy, one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of life that is born within us. In burning a corpse we obtain one gram of powder: accordingly, thousands of graveyards could be accommodated on a single chemist's shelf. We can make a concession to conservatives by offering that they burn all past epochs, since they are dead, and set up one pharmacy.

Later, Malevich gives a concrete example of what he means:

> The aim [of this pharmacy] will be the same, even if people will examine the powder from Rubens and all his art—a mass of ideas will arise in people, and will be often more alive than actual representation (and take up less room). 1

Thus, Malevich proposes not to keep, not to save things that have to go, but to let them go without sentimentality or remorse. To let the dead bury their dead. At first glance, this radical acceptance of the destructive work of time seems to be nihilistic. Malevich himself described his art as being based on nothingness.

But, in fact, at the core of this unsentimental attitude toward the art of the past lies faith in the indestructible character of art. The avant-garde of the first wave allowed things—including the things of art—to fade away because it believed that something always remained. And it looked for the things that remain beyond any human attempt at conservation.

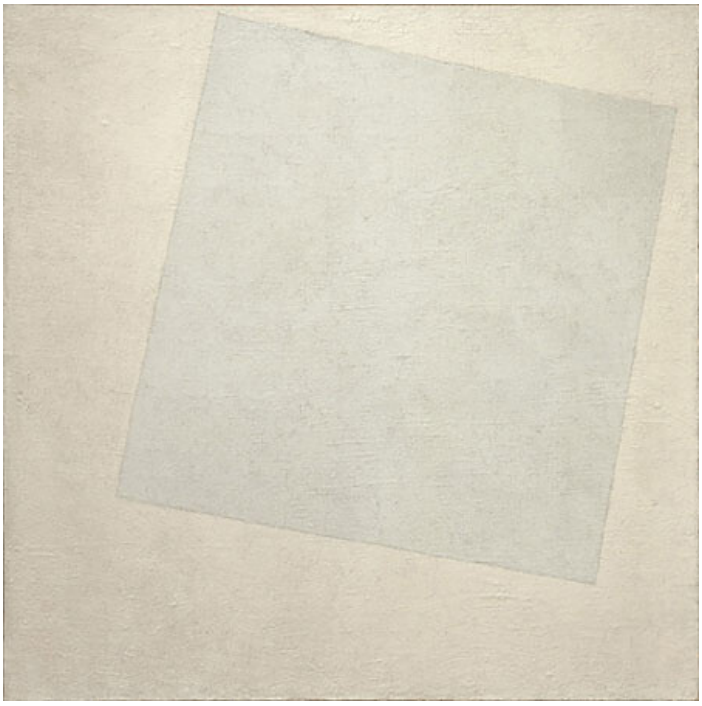


Film still from Yakov Protazanov's Aelita, 1924.

Kasimir Malevich, Female Worker In Red, 1933. Oil on canvas.

The avant-garde is often associated with the notion of progress—especially technological progress. However, the avant-garde posed the following question: How can art continue amidst the permanent destruction of cultural tradition and the known world—conditions that are characteristic of the modern age, with its technological, political, and social revolutions? Or, to put it in different terms: How does one resist the destructiveness of

progress? How does one make art that can escape permanent change—art that is atemporal, transhistorical? The avant-garde did not want to create the art of the future—it wanted to create transtemporal art for all time. Again and again one hears and reads that we need change, that our goal as a society—also our goal in art—should be to change the status quo. But change *is* our status quo. Permanent change *is* our only reality. We live in the prison of permanent change. To change the status quo, we have to change the change—to escape from the prison of change. True faith in the revolution paradoxically presupposes the belief that the revolution does not have the capacity for total destruction, that something always survives even the most radical historical catastrophe. Such a belief makes possible the unreserved acceptance of the revolution that was so characteristic of the Russian avant-garde.



Kazimir Malevich, Suprematist Composition: White on White, 1918. Oil on canvas.

Malevich often speaks in his writings about materialism as the ultimate horizon of his thinking and art. For Malevich, materialism means the impossibility of stabilizing any image against historical change. Time and again Malevich contends that there is no isolated, secure, metaphysical or spiritual space that could serve as a repository of images immunized from the destructive forces of the material world. The fate of art cannot be different from the fate of anything else. Their common reality is disfiguration, dissolution, and disappearance in the flow of material forces and uncontrollable material processes. Malevich frames the history of new art from Cezanne, Cubism, and Futurism up to his own Suprematism as a history of the progressive disfiguration and destruction of the traditional image as it was born in Ancient Greece and developed through religious art and the Renaissance. Thus, the question arises: What can survive this work of permanent destruction?

Malevich's answer to this question is immediately plausible: the image that survives the work of destruction is the image of destruction. Malevich undertakes the most radical reduction of the image (to a black square), thus anticipating the most radical destruction of the traditional image by material forces, by the power of time. For Malevich, any destruction of art—be it past, present, or future—is welcome because this act of destruction necessarily produces an image of destruction. Destruction cannot destroy its own image. Of course, God can destroy the world without leaving a trace because God created the world out of nothingness. But if God is dead, then an act of destruction without a visible trace, without the image of destruction, is impossible. And through the act of radical artistic reduction, this image of impending destruction can be anticipated here and now—an (anti-)messianic image, one that demonstrates that the end of time will never come, that material forces can never be halted by any divine, transcendental, metaphysical power. The death of God means that no image can be infinitely stabilized—but it also means that no image can be totally destroyed.

But what happened to the reductionist images of the early avant-garde after the victory of the October Revolution, under the conditions of the post-revolutionary state? Any post-revolutionary situation is a deeply paradoxical one—because any attempt to continue the revolutionary impulse, to remain committed and faithful to the revolutionary event, leads necessarily to the danger of betraying the revolution. The continuation of the revolution could be understood as its permanent radicalization, as its repetition—as the permanent revolution. But repetition of the revolution under the conditions of the post-revolutionary state could at the same time be easily understood as the counterrevolution—as an act of weakening and destabilizing revolutionary achievements. On the other hand, the stabilization of the post-revolutionary order could be interpreted as a betrayal of the revolution because this post-revolutionary stabilization unavoidably revives the pre-revolutionary norms of stability and order. To live in this paradox becomes, as we know, a true adventure that historically only a few revolutionary politicians have survived.

The project of the continuation of the artistic revolution is no less paradoxical. What does it mean to continue the avant-garde? To repeat the forms of avant-garde art? Such a strategy can be accused of valuing the letter of revolutionary art over its spirit, of turning a revolutionary form into a pure decoration of power, or into a commodity. On the other hand, the rejection of avant-garde artistic

forms in the name of a new artistic revolution immediately leads to an artistic counterrevolution—as we saw in so-called postmodern art. The second wave of the Russian avant-garde tried to avoid this paradox by redefining the operation of reduction.

Constructivist clothing designs by Vera Stepanova, 1923.

For the first wave of the avant-garde, and especially for Malevich, the operation of reduction demonstrated, as I have mentioned, the indestructibility of art. In other words, the demonstration of the indestructibility of the material world: every destruction is a material destruction and leaves traces. There is no fire without ashes—no divine fire of total annihilation. The black square remains non-transparent—because the material is non-transparent. Early avant-garde art—being radically materialistic—never believed in the possibility of a fully transparent, immaterial medium (like soul, or faith, or reason) that would allow us to see the "other world" when everything material that allegedly obscured this other world was removed by an apocalyptic event. According to the avant-garde, the only thing we will be able to see in this situation will be the apocalyptic event itself—which will look like a reductionist avant-garde artwork.

However, the second wave of the Russian avant-garde used the operation of reduction in a completely different way. For these artists, the revolutionary removal of the ancient, pre-revolutionary order was an event that opened a view onto a new, Soviet, post-revolutionary, post-apocalyptic order. It was not an image of reduction itself that was to be seen now—but a new world that could be built after the reduction of the old world was effectuated.

Thus, the operation of reduction began to be used to praise the new Soviet reality. At the beginning of their activities, the Constructivists believed that they could manage the "things themselves" that were now directly accessible after the reduction and removal of the old images that separated them from these things. In his programmatic text "Constructivism," Alexei Gan wrote:

> Not to reflect, not to represent and not to interpret reality, but to really build and express the systematic tasks of the new class, the proletariat ... Especially now, when the proletarian revolution has been victorious, and its destructive, creative movement is progressing along the iron rails into culture, which is organized according to a grand plan of social production, everyone—the master of color and line, the builder of space-volume forms and the organizer of mass productions—must all become constructors in the general work of the arming and moving of the many-millioned human masses. [2]

But later, Nikolai Tarabukin asserted in his famous essay "From the Easel to the Machine" that the Constructivist artist could not play a formative role in the process of actual social production. His role was rather that of a propagandist who defended and praised the beauty of industrial production and opened the public's eyes to this beauty. [3] Socialist industry as a whole—without any additional artistic intervention—already showed itself as good and beautiful because it was an effect of the radical reduction of every kind of "unnecessary," luxury form of consumption, including the consuming classes themselves. As Tarabukin wrote, Communist society was already a non-objective work of art because it did not have any goal beyond itself. In a certain sense, the Constructivists repeated here the gesture of the first Christian icon painters, who believed that after the demise of the old pagan world they could uncover the celestial things and see and depict them as they truly were.

Malevich's grave underneath the black square, 1935.

This comparison was famously made by Malevich in his treatise "God is Not Cast Down." This treatise was written in 1919, the same year in which Malevich wrote his essay "On the Museum," which I discussed above. But in the case of the former text, Malevich's polemic was directed not against the conservative lovers of the past, but against the Constructivist builders of the future. In this treatise, Malevich states that the belief in the continuous perfecting of the human condition through industrial progress is of the same order as the Christian belief in the continuous perfecting of the human soul. Both Christianity and Communism believe in the possibility of reaching ultimate perfection, be it the Kingdom of God or the Communist Utopia. In this text, Malevich begins to develop a line of argumentation that, it seems to me, perfectly describes the situation of modern and contemporary art vis-à-vis the modern revolutionary project and contemporary attempts to politicize art.

What Malevich develops is a dialectics that can be characterized as a dialectics of imperfection. As I have already said, Malevich defines both religion and modern technology ("factory," as he calls it) as striving for perfection: perfection of the individual soul in the case of religion, and perfection of the material world in the case of factory. According to Malevich, neither project can be realized because their realization would require an investment of infinite time, energy, and effort by individual human beings and by mankind as a whole. But humans are mortal. Their time and energy are finite. And this finitude of human existence prevents humanity from achieving any kind of perfection—be it spiritual or technical. As a mortal being, man is doomed to remain forever imperfect. But why is this imperfection a dialectical imperfection? Because it is precisely this lack of time—the lack of time to achieve perfection—that opens for humanity a perspective on infinite time. Here, less than perfect means more than perfect—because if we had enough time to become perfect, then the moment of achieving perfection would be the last moment of our existence; we would no longer have any goal for which to continue to exist. Thus, it is our failure to achieve perfection that opens an infinite horizon of human and transhuman material existence. Priests and engineers,

according to Malevich, are not capable of opening this horizon because they cannot abandon their pursuit of perfection—cannot relax, cannot accept imperfection and failure as their true fate. However, artists can do this. They know that their bodies, their vision, and their art are not and cannot be truly perfect and healthy. Rather, they know themselves as being infected by the bacilli of change, illness, and death, as Malevich describes in his later text on the "additional element" in painting—and it is precisely these bacilli that at the same time are bacilli of art. Artists, according to Malevich, should not immunize themselves against these bacilli. On the contrary, they should accept them, should allow them to destroy the old, traditional patterns of art. In a different form, Malevich repeats here his metaphor of the ashes: the body of the artist dies but the bacilli of art survives the death of his body—and begins infecting the bodies of other artists. That is why Malevich actually believes in the transhistorical character of art. Art is material and materialist. And this means that art can always survive the end of all purely idealist, metaphysical projects—including the Kingdom of God and Communism. The movement of material forces is non-teleological. As such, it cannot reach its telos and come to an end.

In a certain sense, these texts of Malevich remind one of the theory of violence that Walter Benjamin developed in his famous essay "The Critique of Violence" (1921). In this essay, Benjamin distinguishes between mythical violence and divine violence. Mythical violence, according to Benjamin, is the violence of change—it is the violence that destroys one social order only to substitute a new and different social order. Divine violence, by contrast, only destroys, undermines, tears down any order—beyond any possibility of a subsequent return to order. This divine violence is a materialist violence. Benjamin witnessed this himself. In his later "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940)—in which Benjamin tries to develop his own version of Historical Materialism—he famously evokes Klee's image of the Angelus Novus. Carried by the winds of history, the Angelus Novus has turned his back to the future and looks only towards the past. Benjamin describes the Angelus Novus as seized by terror because all the promises of the future have been turned to ruins by the forces of history. But why is the Angelus Novus so surprised and terrorized by this? Perhaps because, before he turned his back to the future, he believed in the possibility of a future realization of all social, technical, and artistic projects.

However, Malevich is not an Angelus Novus—he is not shocked by what he sees in the rearview mirror. He expects from the future only destruction—and so he is not surprised to see only ruins when this future arrives. For Malevich, there is no difference between future and past—there are ruins in every direction. Thus, he remains relaxed and self-assured, never shocked, never seized by terror or surprise. One can say that Malevich's theory of art—as it was formulated in his polemics against the Constructivists—is precisely an answer to the divine violence described by Benjamin. The artist accepts this infinite violence and appropriates it, lets himself be infected by it. And he lets this violence infect, destroy, and sicken his own art. Malevich presents the history of art as a history of illness—of being infected by the bacilli of divine violence that infiltrate and permanently destroy all human orders. In our time, Malevich is often accused of allowing his art to be infected by the bacilli of figuration, and even, during the Soviet phase of his artistic practice, by Socialist Realism. Writings from Malevich's time explain his ambiguous attitude towards the social, political, and artistic developments of his day: he did not invest any hope in them, any expectation of progress. (This is also characteristic of his reaction to film.) But at the same time, he accepted them as a necessary illness of time—and he was ready to become infected, imperfect, transitory. In fact, his Suprematist images are already imperfect, flowing, non-constructive—especially if we compare them to, say, Mondrian's paintings.

Malevich shows us what it means to be a revolutionary artist. It means joining the universal material flow that destroys all temporary political and aesthetic orders. Here, the goal is not change—understood as change from an existing, "bad" order to a new, "good" order. Rather, revolutionary art abandons all goals—and enters the non-teleological, potentially infinite process which the artist cannot and does not want to bring to an end.

X

Boris Groys is a philosopher, essayist, art critic, media theorist, and an internationally renowned expert on Soviet-era art and literature, especially the Russian avant-garde.

Nato Thompson

The Insurgents, Part I: Community-Based Practice as Military Methodology

This is a story about counterinsurgency as well as community organizing. It is a story about getting to know people as an occupying force, and getting to know people as neighbors. It is a story, ultimately, about the military entering the terrain of that thing called culture. This story has fascinating, hardworking protagonists such as General David Petraeus, socially engaged artists like Suzanne Lacy, and anthropologists-turned-military-consultants like Montgomery "Mitzy" McFate. It is laden with historical examples from Baghdad to Oakland to El Salvador. This story compares writers such as David Galula, a French officer who fought in the Algerian War, to the left-wing community activist Saul Alinsky. For all that, it is also a story that doesn't pretend there is any causal connection between the world of the military and the world of nonviolent community organizing. General Petraeus did not read anything by Suzanne Lacy, and it seems unlikely that Lacy has ever read the Counterinsurgency Field Manual that Petraeus coauthored in 2006.

Comparing the military and the arts certainly fails in terms of scale. In the United States, the former has a nationally funded budget of $683 billion, while the latter has a nationally funded budget of $706 million. (This figure represents the entirety of all arts funding in the US. One can easily imagine that the funding for community-based art practices falls far short of this.) The former kills and at times tortures people, while the latter at worst co-opts injustices for aesthetic or careerist gain. The former follows a vast hierarchical chain of command, whereas the latter privileges the autonomous individual. So why compare counterinsurgency to community-based art and activism? Because in both cases, those who get involved do so for the same reason: getting to know people is a critical path towards changing the landscape of life, and thus, power.

My emphasis here is on the military—an admittedly odd focus, given my involvement in the arts. And to make the agenda quite transparent: my goal is to demonstrate that cultural production is hardly the sole territory of the arts (or of community organizing for that matter). It goes without saying that the military is an umbrella for a vast infrastructure. This infrastructure has many departments equipped with many acronyms. They have innumerable RAND-funded policy briefs on every subject under the moon. They are also the cause behind gripping real-world events that appear in newspapers worldwide and shake up the lives of millions of people. The US military is seductive and repulsive in its grandiose violence. But it is also a fruitful place to examine developing techniques for the manipulation of culture. Considering the sheer scale of the US military—with its colossal budget—it's not a bad place to look for new ideas and new methodologies concerning tactics for "getting to know people." Thus, the cultural turn in the US military is where this story begins.

Bronze statues of Saddam Hussein waiting to be scrapped.

Hearts and Minds

In the fall of 2005, the Iraq War was a political and military quagmire. It had been two years since then-president George Bush stepped onto the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier with a fluttering "Mission Accomplished" banner waving behind him. Since then, the war had reached proportions that reminded too many Americans of the ignominious conflict in Vietnam. The Iraq War had been a sham from the beginning, but the thinking at the State Department was that a quick victory would heal all wounds. Donald Rumsfeld, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, and General Tommy Franks went in with their strategy of "shock and awe," unleashing a barrage of cruise missiles that caused heavy casualties. Overwhelming force was the modus operandi, but after two years, no one could exactly say who the enemy was or how to stop them. The military needed a new plan.

That plan was hatched in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where then-Lieutenant General David Petraeus called upon an array of fellow West Point graduates to rewrite a document that would end up changing the war: the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24*. Military historian Fred Kaplan, in his book *The Insurgents*, claims that the writing of the *Field Manual* was itself an internal act of insurgency. It was a coup of sorts, in that the *Field Manual* resisted the gun-toting, shock-and-awe methods that had dominated military doctrine since the Vietnam War. The field manual emphasized two strains of thought: protecting the people as much as possible, and learning and adapting faster than the enemy. Petraeus understood the value of getting to know people; he discerned that their feelings and attitudes towards a conflict greatly determine its outcome. As Mao Tse-tung said, "People are the sea that revolution swims in."

The preface to *FM 3-24*, as it was known, defines counterinsurgency as "military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency."[1] The handbook itself is perhaps the most informative guide to the new techniques employed by a military whose emphasis had shifted from straightforward killing to transforming popular perceptions. The US military replaced knocking *in* doors with knocking *on* doors.

What makes the manual so fascinating is that it not only provides a compendium of some of the great books on war (Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, Mao Tse-tung's *On Protracted War*, David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare*). It also references classic works on the uses of culture by thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci, Saul Alinsky, and Paulo Freire. It is a book on how to make a people, using not only guns but face-to-face encounters. "The primary struggle in an internal war is to mobilize people in a struggle for political control and legitimacy." The production of a legitimate state depends on changing the attitudes of the people. And in combing through these techniques, a key set of skills becomes visible, skills that take the role of culture seriously. In a section entitled "Ideology and Narrative," the manual states,

> The central mechanism through which ideologies are expressed and absorbed is the narrative. A narrative is an organizational scheme expressed in story form. Narratives are central to representing identity, particularly the collective identity of religious sects, ethnic groupings, and tribal elements.

Perhaps this is a veiled reference to art, film, and literature. A narrative that sews a line through a subjective sense of belonging would certainly pose a threat to an invading force. The arts, in fact, produce a sense of self that presents a problem to the power of the gun. In this sense, the manual gives a slight nod to the arts without naming them.

The *Field Manual* spends quite a lot of time on anthropological generalizations. Knowing that narratives are important to a culture is very different from being able to shape those narratives. The lessons of cultural postmodernity seem to have finally been absorbed by military thinking:

> Cultural knowledge is essential to waging a successful counterinsurgency. American ideas of what is "normal" or "rational" are not universal. To the contrary, members of other societies often have different notions of rationality, appropriate behavior, level of religious devotion, and norms concerning gender.

One should not overstate, however, the extent of the cultural turn in the US military. The US military is a vast, unwieldy machine. Having a field manual that covers the basics of contemporary anthropology does not mean that soldiers suddenly become masters of cross-cultural relationships. Quite the opposite. This new emphasis on culture lays bare the vast gap between what "getting to know people" means to the US military, and what it might mean to an occupied citizenry like the people of Iraq.

Nothing could be more emblematic of this divide than the "Iraq Culture Smart Card," created in 2003. A sixteen-page, laminated cultural cheat sheet, this guide was produced to give a quick lesson to soldiers making their way through the war-torn streets of Iraq. The card reads like a manual on how to play poker, or a Lonely Planet guide to backpacking through South America. It has sections on "Islamic Religious Terms" and "Female Dress," and a section on "Gestures" featuring a photograph of a cupped hand pointed upward, meaning "slow down" or "be patient." It summarizes the cultural history of Iraq, starting with a box that reads, "Ancient Mesopotamia, 18th–6-th Century B.C. Babylonian Empire seen as cradle of modern civilization." As Rochelle Davis has written about the Smart Card, "To be sure, this example of cultural knowledge (factually incorrect as it may be) says more about the US military and its conception of culture than it does about Iraqis or Arabs."[2] But the production of the Smart Card should not be discounted. In all, 1.8 million of these were initially manufactured in 2003 and they continue to be distributed today.

Peaches: The Mayor of Mosul

Our next story about counterinsurgency (or "COIN" in military speak) has the same protagonist as the last. General David Petraeus, the architect of the cultural turn in the US military, was born in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, in 1952. He attended West Point and graduated in the top 5 percent of his class in 1974. He went on to lead military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and then headed the Central Intelligence Agency. Petraeus is referred to by his friends as "Peaches," which is a cultural turn of its own. An avid jogger, a survivor of a bullet wound to the chest and an accidental fall from a parachute, Petraeus is reported to be as hardworking as he is ambitious. He is a military man through and through. With his lean, sinuous, muscular build, David Petraeus is a rugged peach.

It is 2003 and Major General Petraeus, commander of the US Army's 101st Airborne Division, is fifty years old. He is in Mosul, Iraq. In the wake of President Bush's declaration of "Mission Accomplished," it is suddenly clear in the US media that something has gone terribly wrong. After Paul Bremer fires members of the ruling Ba'ath Party from their public sector jobs, the insurgency gains new strength. Bush's declaration of victory seems already to be a faint memory.

But Mosul was touted as being different. It was the site of visits by the press and members of the US Congress because word got out that unlike the rest of Iraq, progress was being made in Mosul. It was no coincidence that the man in charge there was David Petraeus. Using slogans like "money is ammunition,"[3]Petraeus had instituted basic counterinsurgency practices with the aim of developing the local economy and building up a local Iraqi security force. He had the seven thousand troops under his command walk through the city instead of drive. Foot traffic, he believed, facilitated an interpersonal connection between soldiers and the residents of the city. "We walk, and walking has a quality of its own," stated Petraeus. "We're like cops on the beat."[4]

Walking has a quality of its own. An insightful comment indeed. Baudelaire walked as well, but not through a war-torn area. Not that COIN-trained soldiers in Mosul are necessarily flaneurs. But they do, in a sense, drift. They drift through the ruins of a city, knocking on doors, getting to know people, and becoming faces with names. At the same time, the Mosul residents become real people to the soldiers. As Walter Benjamin wrote, the flaneur "enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes."[5]

Upon arriving in Mosul, Petraeus held local elections, initiated road reconstruction, and reopened factories. As Joe Klein wrote in *Time* magazine, "He was, in effect, the mayor of Mosul."[6] Patraeus spent as much time fixing the economy as he did fighting the bad guys. He emphasized reconstruction and worked out an agreement between local sheikhs and Iraqi customs officials regarding trade with Syria. According to the *New York Times*, "Three months later, there [was] a steady stream of cross-border traffic, and the modest fees that the division set for entering Iraq—$10 per car, $20 per truck—raised revenue for expanded customs forces and other projects in the region."[7] There are those who claim that rather than actually producing change on the ground in Mosul, Petraeus was simply skilled at promoting his agenda of counterinsurgency.[8] True or false, the stunt in Mosul worked.

Petraeus's efforts in Mosul succeeded in garnering the attention of his higher-ups in the US military, who were completely flabbergasted about what to do in Iraq. Winning "hearts and minds" was something that Petraeus seemed destined to do. Having written a PhD dissertation entitled "The American Military and the Lessons From Vietnam: A Study of American Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era," Petraeus was obsessed not only with the operational lessons of the Vietnam War, but also with the mental scars it left on the military chain of command. *Never again* was the operating logic. But in

General Petraeus buying local food in Mosul, Iraq.

addition to his expertise in counterinsurgency, Petraeus also understood how to manipulate the internal mechanisms of military culture to advance his agenda (and thus himself).

The overarching change in emphasis that makes COIN so different from other military strategies is its emphasis on people. "People are the center of gravity," goes the famous COIN saying. After World War II, when COIN initially gained traction within the US military establishment, wars began to look more like colonial projects than tradition nation-state conflicts. This new approach was first employed by the US military and its proxies in Vietnam, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama, among other places. COIN operations emphasized the restructuring of political and economic conditions. Paradoxically, COIN operations often exhibited the values of the very left-wing movements the US fought against. It should come as no surprise that the military, in its effort to gain hearts and minds, found itself in dialogue with the methodologies of its ideological adversaries. A tool is a tool.

Acting as the mayor of Mosul allowed Petraeus to organize civic life. In so doing, he temporarily provided the civic infrastructure that his very government had so cataclysmically disrupted. Yes, this is ironic. But such irony is more often the rule than the exception in modern warfare. The ultimate goal of counterinsurgency is to gain the hearts and minds of the people, and this requires a repositioning of what war is about and who the enemy is. It isn't just a public relations effort. More broadly, it is a massive pedagogical program—supported by guns.

Soup, Shotguns, and Surgery

Gaining the trust of a population is not only critical for Petraeus and his COIN operations. It is also critical for all forms of political and social action. If we can stomach it, we might examine the tools of social organization deployed by the largest military in history. For across the pages of *FM 3-24*, one can discern an ongoing conversation with the actions of social movements

Stephen Shames, Children of Black Panther Party Members Attend School at the Intercommunal Youth Institute, 1971. Following numerous police shootouts in Oakland at Black Panther party offices and homes it was decided that party children should school separately to ensure their safety.

worldwide.

In January 1969, in St. Augustine's Church in Oakland, California, the Black Panther Party initiated their Free Breakfast for Children Program. In a statement written in March 1969, Huey Newton said, "For too long have our people gone hungry and without the proper health aids they need. But the Black Panther Party says that this type of thing must be halted, because we must survive this evil government and build a new one fit for the service of all the people."[9] After the first year, the program spread nationally, feeding ten thousand children nationwide. The battle for hearts and minds wasn't just a publicity stunt. It was a goal in and of itself.

Perhaps it was a desire for security that led Newton to take advantage of a loophole in California law that allowed citizens to carry a shotgun, provided that the barrel was pointed toward the sky. In May 1967, the Panthers paid a highly photographed visit to the California State Assembly, shotguns in hand. Dressed in their iconic black jackets and black berets, the scene was covered by newspapers nationwide, instilling fear in a white public and excitement in black youth. The stunt thrust the Panthers onto the national stage and garnered immediate interest from people tired of the passive, nonviolent approach of Civil Rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. If the COIN strategy is to protect the population, the Panthers did just that.

Meeting the needs of the people is a key weapon in the war for hearts and minds. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has figured this out:

> Hezbollah not only has armed and political wings—it also boasts an extensive social development program. Hezbollah currently operates at least four hospitals, twelve clinics, twelve schools and two agricultural centers that provide farmers with technical assistance and training. It also has an environmental department and an extensive social assistance program. Medical care is also cheaper than in most of the country's private hospitals and free for Hezbollah members.[10]

Helping people is a great way to get to know people, and getting to know people is a great way to legitimate other political aims.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise, then, that over the last twenty years there has been an increase in do-it-yourself projects (arising out of arenas ranging from activism, to music, to art) that aim to get to know people while simultaneously organizing alternative infrastructural systems. Squatted public parks, pirate radio stations, hybrid artistic community residencies, and community redevelopment organizations are just a few.

In 2007, the art collective Incubate—a trio of graduate students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago—organized a simple micro-grant project called Sunday Soup. The project was simple: pay $5 for a bowl of soup and the ability to vote on a selection of art projects that need money. The money gathered through the soup sales goes to the art project that garners the most votes. This micro-grant project spread like wildfire to cities across the US and the world. If people are the center of gravity in a war for political legitimation, then perhaps the growing interest among artists and activists in interrogating this terrain is an attempt to gain hearts and minds.

In other words, the war of hearts and minds is both a war of going to door to door and a war of infrastructure. Creating meaning in people's lives also implies building a new world, whether one is an artist, activist, marketer, or soldier.

To be continued in **The Insurgents, Part II: Fighting the Left by Being the Left**...

X

Nato Thompson is Chief Curator at New York-based public arts institution Creative Time.

1
See http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf .

2
Rochelle Davis, "Culture as a Weapon," *Middle East Report* 255 (Summer 2010). See http://www.merip.org/mer/mer255/culture-weapon .

3
See http://truth-out.org/news/item/12997-how-petraeus-created-the-myth-of-his-success .

4
Michael R. Gordon, "The Struggle for Iraq: Reconstruction," September 4, 2003, nytimes.com. See http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/04/international/worldspecial/04NORT.html .

5
Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* , trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1997), 55.

6
Joel Klein, "Good General, Bad Mission," January 12, 2007, Time.com. See http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1587186,00.html .

7
Gordon, "The Struggle for Iraq."

8
According to Gareth Porter in an article on the website Truthout.org, "In November 2004, about 200 insurgents attacked in Mosul, and the police force about which Petraeus had boasted to Congressional delegations disappeared." See http://truth-out.org/news/item/12997-how-petraeus-created-the-myth-of-his-success .

9
Huey Newton, "To Feed Our Children," March 26, 1969. See http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1969/03/26.htm .

10
"The Many Hands and Faces of Hezbollah," irinnews.org (news service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). See http://www.irinnews.org/report/26242/lebanon-the-many-hands-and-faces-of-hezbollah .

Amanda Boetzkes and Andrew Pendakis

Visions of Eternity: Plastic and the Ontology of Oil

> Plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation … it is ubiquity made visible … it is less a thing than the trace of a movement.
> —Roland Barthes

Plastic weaves itself into every facet of our contemporary reality. It does not simply surround us, it is an epistemology and the reflection of a galling political impasse. It appears elemental; we rely on it for our built environments and for all the objects we fill them with—our toys and tools, all our gifts and trash. It orients our thoughts, mediates our senses, and shapes social and economic exchange. Indeed, plastic is less a substance than its antithesis, a paradigm in which substance is transformed into a way of being unmoored from the coordinates that stabilize presence and meaning.

Consider the recent preoccupation in contemporary art with installations that amass and redistribute plastic objects. We might think of Gayle Chong Kwan's *Wastescape* (2012) at the Hayward Gallery in London, made from thousands of plastic bottles taken from a wastewater facility in Medellín, Colombia; or Vivan Sundaram's *Flotage* at the 48 Degrees Celsius exhibition in Delhi in 2008. Seoul-based artist Choi Jeong Hwa experiments with the affective qualities of plastic in his stunning constructions such as *Happy Happy* (2010), *In the Mood for Love* (2010), and *Kabbala* (2013). Or we might think of those artists who consider the cultural signification of commodities through their accumulation and classification, such as New York–based Portia Munson in her *Pink Project* and *Green Pieces*.

These works relocate the properties of effervescence and postmodern hyperreality alongside an awareness of environmental costs and planetary limitations. More than reveling in the afterlife of worthless commodities, they disclose a less obvious dimension of the global economy—namely, its integration of the oil industry and its consequent patterning in accordance with the logic and possibility of that substance. Thus, the emergence of a plastic aesthetic is deeply suggestive of both the apprehension and excitability that surrounds global oil.

Although the rise of oil as a primary source of energy began in the nineteenth century, its centrality did not become evident to many until recent decades, when its peak and scarcity became a visible motivator and determinant of world events, such as the two OPEC-engineered oil crises of the 1970s as well as the Gulf and Iraq Wars. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010 underscored what these wars had already made

Akintude Akinleye, Untitled, 2012. Photo: Reuters. Worker from an illegal organization stealing oil from Nigerian pipelines to sell in the blackmarket.

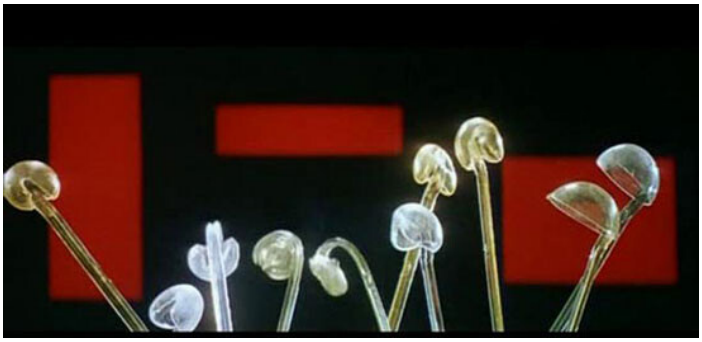
clear: oil has become excessively visible, publically present, and politically charged precisely at the time of its shortage.

If plastic appears irreducible—appears to *be* a constitutive basis, instead of having emerged from and subsequently effaced its earthly basis—then the challenge is to uncover what plastic so readily disguises. Plastic is a petroleum product that claims at least a quarter of all the oil extracted. More than this, though, it is through plastics that we begin to fathom the complete permeation of oil into every facet of cultural life. Plastic—its pleasurable superficiality, its flexibility, its "lightness"—visualizes a time freed from restrictions and limits even as it dovetails with contemporary neoliberal fantasies about the capacity of individuals to endlessly make and re-make themselves. What is the link, then, between the economy of oil and a way of being that these artworks divulge? Between plastics and plasticity? Between objects and objectivity?

In what follows we want to return plastic to its roots in oil, and in turn to see how oil relies on the illusions and aesthetics of plastic to ensure, but efface, its universality. This procedure is not simply a matter of using the dirty truth about oil to unveil the illusions surrounding plastic: rather, it is one of thinking them as two ontological aspects of the same present. We want to re-inject oil into the bad eternity of plastic, but also think through the ways in which plastic's "emptiness" can undercut the claims to objectivity and command of oil itself.

Arche , Money, Time: The Ontological Echoes of Oil

In his 1957 essay "Plastic," Roland Barthes connects the history of plastic to the rise of bourgeois capitalism, and specifically to the bourgeoisie's espousal of imitation



Alain Resnais, Le Chant du Styrène, 1959.

materials used to cheaply reproduce rare substances, such as diamonds, feathers, fur, and silk. For Barthes, however, while plastic was born of the pretension to disguise a cheap imitation as a valuable substance, it is not reviled for this fungible quality; on the contrary, plastic is celebrated precisely because of its infinite transposability. Its artifice *is* the spectacle. It abolishes the hierarchy of substances because it can replace them all.

There is an eternity in plastic, though one very far from the dreams of Platonism or Christianity. This is not the transcendent suspension of change dreamed of by Plato, a dream of Truth, Beauty, and of the continuing power of the Idea to engross and challenge a human body. Instead, this eternity is a persistent "reality" that arrives from one continuous, infinite, and seemingly inexhaustible source, a source without location or specificity. Plastic is always a "some" or an "any," never a "this" or a "that." It feels infinite because it sheds every trace of particularity, every index of a located space and time. Plastic holds form without an internal structure or skeleton, without beams, bolts, or seams, and completely negates the distance between idea and thing, mold and object. Simultaneously eternal and eminently disposable, perfect yet utter rubbish, plastic is what happens to "Ideas" under the conditions of capitalism in the postmodern age.

If we trace plastic back to its foundation in oil, we can pierce this fictional eternity that encloses us. Oil is an *arche* in the sense consolidated by the earliest Milesian philosophers and extended throughout the whole of the classical period. The concept of an *arche* in ancient Greek signals the idea of an origin or beginning, a "first cause," but also significantly that which underlies change and renders it possible. To posit oil as an *arche* is not to suppose an abstruse cosmogony, but rather to tie the domain of appearance to its occluded first principle. Oil is that which generates, extends into, and proliferates as the multitude of plastic beings. It is this limitless breadth of possibilities, one that probably has no rival in nature, that makes oil an oddly feral god, one that mirrors the infinite "well" of creativity from which thought itself draws. Oil's "naturalness" allows us to imagine it alongside earth, water, wind, and fire as an essential element. Yet it is

synthetic, extracted and refined only through exhaustive industrial processes that locate it within the jurisdiction of a paradigmatic artificiality.

There is almost no aspect of postwar growth culture, from its reliance on the automobile to the commoditization of plastic, which has not been conditioned by oil: what remains to be thought is how the universalization of oil—and therefore a revival of a discourse of singularity ("oneness")—establishes the conditions for capital's spectacular plenum, populated by interminable strata of particular pleasures and objects. A "society of the spectacle" that originates from oil rehearses the platonic agonism between appearance and reality. Yet, by its very own rule of homogeneity, oil combines false appearance and terrestrial reality. It is an essence without transcendence or illumination. It is not a substance in the Spinozan sense of something conceived in and through itself; nor is it something eternal or immutable like Spinoza's infinite modes. Instead, oil is a way: in its becoming ontological, oil has become causal. It is ontological and it ontologizes.

No substance, however, can be deemed ontological if it does not first pass through an essential mediation by money. Air, for example, is structurally indispensable to all of nature, to biological life in its entirety. But air is not the substance par excellence of capitalist modernity. If money, within the domain of capitalist sociality, is as close a thing to an efficient cause as we have—a direct impetus to the motion of bodies both human and inhuman, moving containers off of ships, moving workers into factories—then oil is the lifeblood of this mechanism. Oil is the vital material coursing through the symbolic channels of economic transactions. It is not that any of this would continue to work without labor or dreams or language, without social imaginaries or micropolitical systems: it is only that amidst this genuine complexity there remains a bald linearity, a reliance on a classically Cartesian mode of mechanist causation. For a society that envisions itself as infinitely complex, as filled to the brim with particularity and individuality, oil does in the sphere of physical bodies what money does in the sphere of desire.

Oil subtends the present only because it is also a uniquely sensitive region in the broader body of capital itself. Not only do oil companies occupy the commanding heights of contemporary economies, controlling empires of material, land, and labor; oil is also a preferred currency in itself, an unquestioned store of monetary value. Its financialization allows oil to function as a speculative instrument bought to transform money into more money. It is this link between oil and money that exerts an almost alchemical power over the fabric of the capitalist life-world. When we add to this link economist Jeff Rubin's thesis that there is a self-cancelling relationship between economic growth and oil prices, whereby growth feeds demand and increased costs dampen growth, we can begin to explore a reality in which money's universality has reached its substantive limit in oil, and the two jockey for symbolic dominance.

Finally, it matters that oil is very literally time materialized as sediment, buried deep in the ground. Oil is not just time: it is the energy made possible by eons of fossilized death. Though air and water, for example, are primeval substances, they are not recognizably historical. Certainly they have complex histories, but never are they bound to a determinate geological strata, to a specific or irreversible moment in the history of the planet. Air and water appear to us like numbers or primary colors; we imagine them forever reproducing their own essentiality. Oil, however, happens only once. It is wrenched from the deep and driven into visibility: an arrow fired through history. We are therefore witnesses to this fabricated essence called oil, this *causa efficiens* composed of time and death.

Gayle Chong Kwan, Wastescape, 2012.

Objectivity and the Visibility of Oil

It is here that plastics reenter the discussion, for they make visible a stratigraphy of oil capital. Why is this stratigraphy relevant, when oil itself is in no way concealed from view? Inasmuch as the problem of oil lies in its ubiquity and apparent inescapability as a source of energy, profit, and cultural life, the ways we see it seem incontrovertible. The challenge, then, is to leverage a view of oil that does not succumb to its hold on objectivity.

Most often when we think about oil, we do so in one of two ways: either as a prized resource, "black gold"; or as an industry with a specific location that operates within a predictable set of political variables that tend to revolve around issues of environmental negligence and corporate corruption. This division between priceless energy source and toxic apparatus has led to a battle of objectivities in the visual field. On the one hand, the seemingly unstoppable momentum of oil sands technology and

pipeline expansion has been bolstered by a series of corporate and governmental campaigns that repitch oil as productive, prosperous, and even energy efficient. This rationale based on a rhetoric of technological and scientific advancement is strengthened by the claim that the oil industry generates employment. On the other hand, no one can ignore the deluge of media images of pipeline malfunctions, spills, tailing ponds, and monumental "landscrapes" amid headlines about cancer, toxic groundwater, and the ongoing problem of carbon emissions.

Dirty oil has found its way into the world of art and film too, particularly in the documentary genre. Take, for example, the photographer Edward Burtynsky's series *Oil,* which maps the trajectory of the industry from early extraction technologies to the development of the tar sands, from the refinement of oil to car culture and the afterlife of oil manufacture. Ursula Biemann's 2005 video *The Black Sea Files* tracks the construction of a new subterranean pipeline that crosses The Caucasus to pump oil to Western Europe. The video shows the pipeline being built, but Biemann punctuates this endeavor with a human geography of interviews that she conducts with workers, farmers, prostitutes, and refugees whose lives are governed by the pipeline. The video, she claims, "displaces the singular and powerful signifying practices of oil corporations and oil politicians." In a similar vein, Allan Sekula's photographic series *Black Tide* (2008) combines a human geography with scenes of environmental disaster as it documents the cleanup of the Galician coast after a massive oil spill caused by the sinking of the oil tanker *The Prestige*.

If oil has a hold on objectivity, it is through the saturation of the visual field. Oil is hypervisible precisely at the moment when the industry is attempting to overcome its peak and scarcity through extreme technological measures. Attempts to *unconceal* it, in the Heideggerian sense, are foreclosed by the sheer saturation of information, emotion, and opinion that distorts and contorts the ground of rational criticism.

The recent modus operandi of contemporary artists to accumulate and redistribute plastic objects shows us the depth of the problem of oil through different terms of visibility. Oil is not simply a political terrain limited to land claims, environmental management, and economy. It is a cultural and aesthetic mesh that mediates the sensorial field. The general tenor of these works shifts the visual field away from the efforts to objectively expose the dirty truth of the oil industry, to works characterized by a sensorial fullness, robustness, and flexibility. A clear example of this shift from industrial exhaustion to plastic exuberance can be found in the work of Melanie Smith, a Mexico City–based artist. Since the early nineties, Smith's work has addressed what has been called an everyday phenomenology of capitalism in Mexico. One of her better-known works is *Spiral City*, a homage to Robert

Melanie Smith, Orange Lush I, 1995.

Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* that takes the sprawl of Mexico City as its subject. Where Smithson's film culminated in a sequence of spiraling aerial shots taken from a helicopter of his monumental sculpture in the Great Salt Lake in Utah, Melanie Smith's *Spiral City* revolves around Mexico City, the helicopter countering the order of the urban grid by moving in ever-widening circles. The effect is a visualization of the city as entropic sedimentation: it is decentered, disoriented, sprawling, repetitive, voided of life and color.

Smith exhibits the video, however, with a series of installations that seemingly stand in contrast. *Orange Lush*, for example, is comprised of bright orange plastic objects, among them life-preservers, extension cords, buoys, cheerleader pom-poms, water wings, flip-flops, light bulbs, balloons, and water rafts. For all their ordinariness, however, the layout of the objects is not arbitrary: the subtle distinction between full, rounded objects and deflated, pendulous ones thematizes a

broader stalemate between sensorial plenitude and economic exhaustion.

Smith chose orange in particular because it was the color that marked the invasion of Mexico City by cheap commodities in the 1990s, after inflation and bailouts from the US and the Bank for International Settlements caused a devaluation of the peso. At the conjunction of Mexico's preindustrial economy and global capitalism, orange was the color of superadded value and fake excitement about otherwise worthless merchandise, or what the artist calls "chemically-induced enthusiasm." In this way, she visualizes the economy as an aesthetic sensibility, not just to picture an industry like oil or plastics, but to link the dissemination of plastics to jubilant accumulation, as a worthless double of profit that is gathered together as wealth. Orange plastic is not just an objectification of global petroculture; it is also its mood and mode.

A Plastic Thought In the Time of Oil

If plastic has effaced its earthly source, we might be hard-pressed to make the connection between plastics and global oil: whereas plastic persists, accumulates, is valueless, infinitely transposable, and therefore seemingly voided of ontological stability, oil is scarce, undoubtedly earthen (extracted only by extreme measures), it is desired, consumed, and promises plenitude and wealth. Yet both are part of a coextensive economic and aesthetic regime. Looking at oil is not a material corrective to the superficiality of plastic—far from it. Oil generates a plastic operation. Every aspect of the oil industry relies on techniques of transposability that we can associate with plastics as circulating commodities and with plasticity as a myth of eternal and limitless transformation. This industry turns sand into fuel, repitches trash as art, reformulates the scarcity of oil into the accumulation of profit, spins environmental disaster into job opportunities, contorts environmental science into mere "politics," and fabricates the moods with which we should perceive and interpret our energy sources. In the plastic predicament, when the senses are saturated and affects prescribed, the question remains: What kind of critical gesture can be made in the face of plastic's inexhaustible exchangeability?

X

Amanda Boetzkes is professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Guelph.

Jon Rich

The Bachelor Century: Single Sinners Seeking God's Job

The Hymnal

Some out there are passing around a prophecy about Pope Francis that speaks of him as the last Pope of the Catholic Church. After him the sky will shudder and God will bring the flood. This seems to be supported by the Church's familiar numeric appendage to the Pope's name: he is the first Francis but not Francis the First. Is it a sign or some papal scheming?

Pope Francis wants to replace the gold cross with one made of wood. He wants to give the church back to the poor. Popes have their own reasoning for such acts. One need not investigate the Pope's motivation on these matters, but rather their long-term impact, if any.

Alternatively, let's embark on another Sisyphean pursuit.

Since the sixteenth century, writing has aspired towards permanence. That horrific century brought a succession of powers, churches, popes, writers, politicians, and artists who made attempts at immortality by making their marks on the rocks of time. The Catholic Church has remained tenaciously faithful, in a sense, to the fifteenth century. The Church's guards, popes, teachings, sermons, and its Bible have been the center of attention since Michelangelo finished his marvelous works at the Sistine Chapel. As is the case with other holy books, the Bible is a hymnal. Its hymns are recited and sung in the same fashion as the hymns found in other holy books. The fact that the Bible is a hymnal means that there's a strong tendency, which has remained strong for centuries, to convert it from the written to the oral realm. In the latter realm, it is no longer simply a book, a physical artifact that will fall victim to the deleterious effects of light and humidity, but an invocation that unites all, regardless of their faith. The recitation and the sound of bells are meant to be familiar even to heretics and infidels. This phenomenon finds a perfect match in other holy books like the Torah and the Quran. Religions have, since the beginning, sought to make the word of God familiar and approachable. People who treated divine texts as primarily written words became priests, irrespective of their vocational inclination: infidels, heretics, atheists, priests, or theologians. Voltaire is no less priestly than St. Augustine.

The sixteenth century was pivotal in the history of the Church and humanity at large; it gave us gunpowder, the printing press, and America. The printing press instituted the book as the replacement for the cathedral, as the book, with its ability to clone itself endlessly, could outlive the cathedral. Thousands of identical copies are spawned from one manuscript. That's thousands of pocket-size cathedrals that people can take with them everywhere. Erwin Panofsky said that cathedrals are the rhetoric of the Church, but printed books are the rhetoric of the Enlightenment and its own cathedrals. With early books

Pantheon of secular saints from the Positivist Church.

there was also an America—America the Protestant. This church was born into reality through the book and, like Calvinism and Lutheranism, stayed confined within the book. And despite the earnest efforts of Protestant televangelists, the church never morphed into signs, building facades, or TV screens.

Before the advent of the age of TV, the internet, and mobile phones, there was the balcony where the Pope addressed the world. It looked like a TV and had the same influence. Pope Francis's address to the throngs of the faithful from that balcony transformed them into a unified, collective spectator, unlike cinema, where viewers are individuated in public space. The believers standing in Piazza San Pietro under a cloudy sky are patrons of a carnival; they share the same experience and are one in their fervor and desire to sacrifice themselves. The Catholic Church may have preceded television, but it functions in the same way.

The Papal loggia affords the assembly in the Piazza an overwhelming feeling of repentance, piety, and unity in one giant body that is a sum of its small parts. A person can sit in front of the TV fully prepared to receive the sermon and atone for his sins and be absolved at the same time that he is bestowed the power to judge other sinners. Individuals are all sinners but forgiveness is a community act. Watching a soap opera on television, a spectator might condemn a man for being unfaithful to his wife, or might sympathize and express solidarity with him. At the same time, this spectator himself could be guilty of the same act of infidelity, yet not judge himself as harshly.

The Last Days of Gunpowder

Hiroshima was built at the end of the sixteenth century, the century of America, gunpowder, and the printing press. And in Hiroshima, that century was buried on August 6, 1945. It's still unclear why America, the reigning infant of the sixteenth century, decided to drop the A-bomb on the city, especially considering that the Japanese Empire was in decline and on the verge of surrendering. Yet America dropped her bomb on the city, decimating 90 percent of the buildings and infrastructure, killing 80,000 and injuring another 90,000 inhabitants of a population that totaled 350,000 at the time. The survivors were witnesses to the triumph of the history of gods and the end of human history. Among the Japanese people who experienced the kind of destruction one would expect at the end of days, were there any who loved America and hated the Emperor? Common sense would say: yes. Did America drop the bomb because General MacArthur decided to burn the Japanese people back to the Middle Ages? Such a historical intent is unknowable.

What is known is that the bombs dropped in the summer of 1945 ended the long era of gunpowder. Causalities of conventional war are too numerous to count, but what is known of such causalities is that they happen in circumstance similar to car accidents and drive-by shootings. These kinds of deaths occur simply because one happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. A soldier in the battlefield kills indiscriminately—gunfire and stabbings directed at whomever happens to be present. In contrast, the target of the bomb in Hiroshima is entirely ethnic, akin to the way Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi chose his victims. It is a crime against the human race, or a part of that race, because the bomb acts without regard for the political views of its victims. To be murdered because you are American, or Japanese, or Kurdish, or Christian, or Muslim is fundamentally different from being targeted because you are a soldier. In this way, it is possible to draw a distinction between wars among states, which are beholden to the will of their citizens, and wars among kingdoms, which hold the purity of lineage as the core of their power. Before the sixteenth century, every kingdom had its own religion. After that, states and cities were born, and with them came the citizen. A citizen might defend geography, but not history. A citizen might defend the borders and the sovereignty of the state to which he or she belongs, but not the purity of a race.

President Obama repeatedly warned President Asad of the consequences of using chemical weapons against his own people. Such an act is reminiscent of the Hiroshima bombing insofar as it targets a whole ethnic collectivity, not an individual. President Obama laid out some strong arguments for intervention, and added that the world would not forgive Asad for using some of the worst weapons known to man to exterminate the Syrian people. What is happening in Syria is no less than ethnic cleansing.

Today, the death toll in Syria is equivalent to that of Hiroshima. Some of the oldest inhabited cities in the world—certainly older than Hiroshima—are being brought down on their inhabitants' heads. The extent of the civil war in Syria leaves no doubt that it is no longer a war involving states or borders or citizens or geography. It's a war of histories, lineages, and ethnicities. This situation resembles a bitter and horrific reenactment of Judgment Day: life and death intermesh into an indefinable unit, human law is obsolete, death is not punitive but patriotic,

A late 17th or early 18th century report of the The Gunpowder Plot. The plot was a failed assassination attempt against King James I of England and VI of Scotland during the State Opening of England's Parliament in 1605. Robert Catesby led the attempt and Guy Fawkes was among the fellow plotters.

and people are killed for their ethnicity instead of for their actions. The tools of death in Syria are, for the moment, the same conventional tools used since the dawn of war: daggers, swords, guns, and cannons. Yet the death scene itself overpowers those tools in the way it evokes divine punishment or nuclear holocaust.

America: The Cure and the Disease

The offspring of the sixteenth century is a land of immigrants. The early ones were the Europeans, who came with their African slaves. But later, people started immigrating to America from every spot on earth. Since its birth in the early European Renaissance, America's fervor to establish the kingdom of man on earth has been relentless. Hannah Arendt described the American Revolution as the only one that was successful, until further notice. It was successful, according to Arendt, because it was a revolution propelled by abundance and not misery. The second American president, John Adams, was charged with giving meaning to that part of the Declaration of Independence that outlines the pursuit of happiness. Adams noticed that Americans interpreted happiness as ownership. This founding father saw happiness as the cultivation of an independent mind. Individuals would develop independent minds by assembling and engaging in public debates to form their own opinions. Although Adams's brilliant idea didn't change America's habits, it laid the foundation for a country and its citizens. I don't think today's America is there yet. Opinion in the US is shaped by specialists, and American administrations exercise opinion-making in what functions like a large university: appointees serve until their contract expires, after which they go back to their hometowns to proceed with living the American dream through the accumulation of property. It is a country of happy retirees who own what they think will

bring them happiness. Based on Adams's observation that happiness is realized through social and intellectual activity, it is possible to draw up the blueprint of a modern democratic state and its cities. These cities might resemble Washington, D.C., since the pursuit of happiness requires citizens to participate in debates on public matters, which in turn requires a space for public assembly that is owned by the people, who are the source of authority.

For such a debate to take place in a royal court or a mosque or a church, it would have to be subordinated to the interests of the patron of that venue. By contrast, Washington, D.C., is a capital city realized in its entirety as a public space; the houses and apartments there are either leased, or purchased for a defined period of time depending on use. Each newly elected president brings with him new city occupants in the form of new staffers and advisors to replace the former president and his entourage, who go back to their home states. The same goes for military personnel and public servants. If you were to ask an American soldier where he was from, he would answer: "I'm from nowhere." That's because a soldier's definition of home comes from where he happens to be stationed at any given time. But America remains, despite her uprooted soldiers, the undisputed land of immigrants. All Americans come from lands beyond the sea. This vast country hosts people of many ethnicities who, ironically, work hard to maintain their ethnic purity. There are, naturally, interracial newborns, but first-generation immigrants insist on staying faithful to their racial background. The Irish will remain Irish, and the same goes for Italians, Arabs, Chinese, and African Americans.

Public affairs in America are taken care of by employees, not religious authorities. That's why politics and public affairs are the domain of the secular. In America, secularism is strictly concerned with power-sharing and managing public resources. This is the core of the America that Adams conceived of. Parallel to this lies the America that looks for happiness in ownership, and enjoyment through ostentatious living. This America looks forward to a comfortable retirement in an earthly paradise—a paradise that is based on material wealth but that nonetheless resembles the paradise of the religious realm.

This creative, schizophrenic America is secular when it comes to war and politics, and religious when it comes to property and social issues. Because of its secularist politics and its multiple ongoing wars, it seems today to be the only country in the world burdened by its tremendous power.

This America played God in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and today it is the only country that doesn't want to play God anymore. It's a tremendous, depleting, and terrifying burden for a culture to take on. Only gods are meant to carry that load. In America, faith is individualistic and private, and citizenship is public and collective.

A Syrian man walks amid destruction in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, April 10, 2013. Photo: Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP/Getty Images

Despite all of that, America is the creator of the tools that led to the disarming and decline of the sixteenth century. It gave the world the atomic bomb, the television, the internet, and the computer. It was also instrumental in spreading these inventions around the world. With television, oral and visual histories became popular again, and contemplative reading and writing fell into decline. However, many people claim that, with the widespread use of computers and the internet, writing has regained some of its luster.

Let's go back briefly to Nietzsche to remind ourselves that collective human memory—what makes us human—is activated by pain and suffering. To oversimplify Nietzsche, we could say that our collective memory has privileged reactive thinking as a tool of evolution. A man who likes a woman for purely physical reasons is ready to reproduce with her but calls this attraction *love*. This reactive thinking extends to food, sleep, comfort, sport, work, and achievement. In fact, this sense of urgency to react is directly connected to scarcity. When we read Joseph's story in the Torah, or the Quran, or *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Goethe, we are taken by the pain and joy of very specific people. For these people to invest so much effort into finding their better halves elevates love to a universal human value.

With the supremacy of television and the ubiquity of the internet, this elevation of love becomes nearly impossible. No woman is a man's better half and no death is pure and final on TV. Television recycles better halves infinitely, giving them new names, new bodies, and new faces. It also portrays death and suffering in myriad ways, creating a variety that impels us to admire and be entertained by it. This bombardment by images of horror leaves little room in one's heart for a tinge of discomfort, like the one Lionel

Messi might feel upon missing a shot on goal.

All of this was impossible to predict before the events of the Arab Spring. It has become clear, with the abundance of images of death and bloodshed coming out of Syria in the past two years, that death itself has become incapable of pushing us, even for a tiny moment, to think about the death of an individual. More deaths will follow, and staying up to date with them will mean having no time for sorrow, and certainly no time to mourn.

Razan Zaitouneh, the renowned Syrian activist, has written about her activities during the Syrian crisis. These activities have involved examining dozens of daily videos of Syrian deaths from across the country. She said that one time she had to review more the sixty videos multiple times to be able to document and verify the deaths of people taking their final breath. Being the delicate soul that she is, she decided to blog about them as an attempt to grieve and mourn for each and every one of them. The acts of grieving and mourning are the two things that empower a person to become a human being and an individuated citizen. Conversely, indiscriminate death begets nothing but the kind of anger that turns a person to blind faith and makes citizens behave like masses that don't know whether they're sad, angry, or desperate—or even dead.

X

Jon Rich was born in Amman in 1965. He teaches Arabic and Sociology in Lisbon, where he has lived since 1990.

Claire Fontaine

We Are All Clitoridian Women: Notes on Carla Lonzi's Legacy

> Through feminism I freed myself from the inferiority-culpability of being clitoridian … and I accused men of everything. Then I started to doubt myself and to defend myself through every possible thought and inquiry into the past. Then I doubted myself completely in rivers of tears … After that I was no longer innocent or guilty.
> — Carla Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*[1]

Carla Lonzi was a feminist, an art critic, a woman seeking freedom, and above all a politically creative subjectivity. When confronted by her legacy, we find ourselves in an uncomfortable position, where we run the risk of repatriating it and taming it or being dangerously affected by it. The problem with her oeuvre, which is also a problem with her persona—the two cannot be dissociated—is that it fights a merciless battle against complicity with the existing culture, against the incomprehension that accompanies each social and professional recognition, beginning with Lonzi's own.

Her thinking can therefore be regarded as a weapon that spares nothing—including its own author—and whose unsettling power still remains intact and contagious today. But above all, her work is a precious tool because thinking against ourselves has become a vital necessity, as the illusion of a space outside power has completely faded.[2] Lonzi speaks from the different point of view of the unexpected subject, which is the position of feminist political struggles from the French Revolution to the twentieth century.[3] This stance abandons completely the illusion of equality with men and stresses the fact that we must know that *we ourselves* are the result of a shameful but inevitable negotiation with patriarchy, with the Law, and with other forces that structure our lives. There is no longer any "good side of the barricade," because in this perspective, there are no barricades. Our subjectivities themselves are the battlefield. Hence, the importance of embracing the double bind into which Lonzi's work throws us.

Taci, anzi parla, Lonzi's "diary of a feminist" that she kept between 1972 and 1977, is an inextricable tangle of vanity and modesty, a pendulum swinging constantly between a completely self-centered approach and a passion for others that can lead to the deepest transformation of subjectivity. Many characters, although they bear fictitious names, are recognizable: Pietro Consagra, her companion of many years; Carla Accardi, with whom she founded Rivolta Femminile[4]; her sister Marta, who was also part of the group.

Portrait of Carla Lonzi, date unknown. Photo: Lonzi Bassa.

Subjectivity sieved by the practice of feminist consciousness-raising (*autocoscienza*) is the true protagonist of the book. The journal is a document of experimentation within relationships and a recollection of the profound changes that arise from it. Its subject matter is intangible, since it tries to retrace an amorphous and protean form of life, one stripped of its professional and social veils, reduced to its pure potentiality for revolt and freedom. The human material that appears through this process of subtraction is frightening and dangerous, something that capitalism, the social order, and patriarchal politics try to hide and erase. We somehow know, however, that the only way to do something truly meaningful is to plunge into this risky process. This radical approach to autobiography is a form of "existential nudism," a desire for truth at the limit of obscenity. In a text from 1977, Antonella Nappi, who belonged to a different current of Italian feminism, wrote some enlightening lines about the political and existential content of nudity. She stated that in the experience of undressing together with other women, a woman discovers a wholeness of body and personality, accompanied by a quick and irreversible destruction of stereotypes. There is an undeniable closeness between consciousness-raising and this form of nudism that reveals feminists to each other. As Nappi writes:

> To me, being seen and known was a joy, my body was a fact that I couldn't disguise, I couldn't hide parts of it, I couldn't ignore it … I drew a lot of strength from the awareness not only that this body of mine was accepted, but that the process of getting to know me was both physical and intellectual, and that as a whole I was treated with love and sympathy.[5]

Through the gesture of classifying women according to their libidinal metabolism, Lonzi brings forward the brutality of feminine sexual organs and their hidden connection to our political position. Talking about the orgasm means talking about the compromises that we are all ready to make in order to reach and preserve pleasure. That's why it is vital for her to state that her journal of a feminist is also a journal of a clitoridian woman.

In *Taci, anzi parla*, Lonzi's rigor manages to hold together a heterogeneous, seemingly capricious mix of poetry, faithfully transcribed dreams, reflections, and anecdotes. This heterodox way of constructing a book is in itself a tactic to transcend literary genres and to mock certain pernicious conventions of culture. There is a fascinating demand made on herself and others that appears explicitly from the very first lines of her journal.[6] She liquidates professional positions, even political ones, because they are toxically compromising: anything that accumulates and shines, like an electric device, must be dismissed. In a telephone conversation with her sister Marta on January 30, 1973, Lonzi, invited to meet Juliet Mitchell, simply replies that because Mitchell is an academic, she is not interested. After this episode, Lonzi describes Marta's reverence for culture as an attempt by her sister to reduce her inferiority through an ingenuous sacrifice for a small and suffocating elite.[7] "I so much wish she would come down from the stratosphere," Lonzi writes. A merciless poem on Marta's daily activities follows (whose final line gives the book its title[8]). In the poem, the paratactic series of duties that characterize the life of a cultivated bourgeois woman—from feeding her children to translating Plato, from buying clothes to fulfilling social obligations—is chaotically enumerated, to show how meaningless such an effort can be. The attempt to perform in all of these fields can only lead to schizophrenia and solitude: the dream of being a militant, an intellectual, an accomplished person, a mother, and a spouse appears as pathetic and dangerous. This open secret needs to be told over and over again, because without a radical change of perspective, women won't truly have any other model for subjectivizing themselves—no matter how rebellious and anti-conformist they are, no matter what their sexual preferences are. In the preface to her journal, Lonzi gives her final word on the feminine skill of

Cover of the first edition of Carla Lonzi's book Autoritratto, 1969.

multitasking: "For me, doing one thing has a value because it prevents me from doing two."[9]

A day earlier, she laconically remarked that Sylvia Plath "wouldn't have died if, rather than acting like a writer, she had simply written about herself to free herself."[10] Lonzi's own writings don't exist to prove something or to inscribe themselves in a pantheon, a genealogy, a constellation. They come from the exploration of the abyss of solitude and pain, and they seek out the frightening emptiness of freedom. They are sledge hammers for destroying the palace of culture that men build higher and higher every day and for showing it for what it truly is: a fortress made only to exclude.

What is interesting in her conceptual and political operation is the total absence of a need to fight patriarchy with its own weapons: men must just be "abandoned to themselves," which in no way means that they should be avoided or treated like enemies. Abandoning men to themselves comes down to refusing to play into the mythology of a complementarity constructed entirely at the expense of women. It means rejecting a sexuality that is nothing but a form of colonization. She writes:

> The fact that women are objectified by patriarchal culture appears clearly in the difference between the destiny of adult men and adult women. Men create an attraction through their personality that gives an erotic halo even to their decay. Women realize brutally that the fading of their physical freshness awakens, in the best case, a form of tolerance that avoids or delays erotic exclusion. Men use myth, women don't have sufficient personal resources to create it. Women who have tried to do so by themselves have endured such stress that their lives have been shortened by it.[11]

Lonzi's personal life isn't immune to this contradiction. This is probably where the inestimable value of her journal lies, when it shows how difficult and destructive her choices can be on a daily basis. The last pages and years of *Shut up, rather speak* are less and less populated by the collective of women, and are more and more centered on her relationship with her partner, Pietro, more concerned with the challenge of overcoming jealousy and finding a livable balance. We see her unspectacular, obscure, quotidian revolt, her absolute refusal to indulge her own weaknesses. Sometimes we can become exasperated: her lack of sympathy for herself can make empathy almost impossible for the reader. But this fearless exploration of contradictions, even when it leads to a dead end, is even more heroic if considered in relation to the peaks of strength that she reaches during the early years of Rivolta Femminile. It is fascinating to see how easily she abandons the positions of power she has attained through her writing. For example, on August 14, 1972, she writes:

> At first I was accused of dialectical ability by the people who wanted to knock up thoughts at a lower level: I have used it to dismantle the danger of subculture and approximation. I have defended my intuitions with a line of reasoning that didn't add anything to the thoughts of these women but that protected them from the common confutations of the masculine world. This allowed the feminists to abandon the suspicion that the absence of men from the meetings meant that men, with their argumentations, would have made us clam up.[12]

By putting her intellectual power at the service of the feminist cause and by deciding to simply give it up in order to concentrate on herself, Lonzi refused to capitalize on her positions of power within and outside the collective. She said she wanted to finally get rid of the residue that the passage through the masculine world had left on her. She wanted to give up theoretical writing. The ease with which she abandoned her intellectual privilege is puzzling when we measure the importance of her writing, but somehow it is totally coherent: she could only find power in her lack of attachment to writing as a cultural practice. In fact, her skepticism towards culture is the very source of her theoretical strength.

In "La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale" (The clitoridian woman and the vaginal woman), Lonzi demolishes psychoanalytic fallacies regarding women's pleasure. She reveals how an autonomous feminine sexuality, one that dissociates the sex act from reproduction—even within heterosexual relationships—can be the starting point for a different type of subjectivization for women. For Lonzi, being a clitoridian woman has not only sexual connotations, but *existential and political* ones as well. Whenever "a woman claims a sexuality of her own where the orgasmic resolution isn't connected to any mental condition that accepts slavery," then

> she begins thinking in the first person and she doesn't listen to any enticement … She doesn't want to hear emphatic points of view about sex, unity, pleasure. Finally, in full possession of her sexuality, no one can convince her that her efforts will be rewarded and that the pleasure of a moment will be worth a life of slavery.[13]

In the Italian feminist ultra-left of Lonzi's time, a deep connection between knowledge of oneself—especially of one's own pleasure—and satisfaction was regarded as the only way to reach autonomy. There was a vivid awareness that colonization operates through the mind and the body, and the only way to reach freedom was working on one's own subjectivity.

What is probably unique in Carla Lonzi's work is the search for a balance that can maintain this independence, joy, and pleasure for women—a search for the formula for the reproduction of what one could call the "revolt force."

If her oeuvre is representative of the Italian Seventies—although it truly has its own incommensurable specificity—it is because it completely identifies politics with the existential space, with the practices of subjectivization and desubjectivization. This element constituted the strength and the weakness of the struggles of that time and, inevitably, the complication of handling what is left of them.

Graphic material for feminist rally in Rome, date unknown.

From this perspective, a politically precious document is Lonzi's *Vai pure* (Now you can go), a dialogue with her partner, Pietro Consagra.[14]).] Here, her separation from Consagra is clinically documented through a transcription of their recorded conversations. The dialogue also represents Lonzi's ultimate separation from the art world and its ethics. Lonzi in fact abandoned her profession of art critic when she quit her illusions about the freedom of artists, when she understood that the possibilities offered by the creative space don't come without the compromises and mythologies that the artistic profession is based upon.[15]

In *Vai pure*, the couple becomes a sort of metaphor, a theater where the forces of society play out. Work and the labor of love are the two poles around which the discussion revolves: Lonzi and Consagra are separating because Lonzi doesn't let him work the way he would like. Lonzi says:

> If one gives priority to the production of the artwork, to the detriment of the human relationship, the human relationship inevitably cannot fulfill itself, because the two things are competing against each other ... The human relationship is instrumental. That is generally true. When conflicts take place, like between you and me, there are no chances because you give more value to the artwork, and the whole of society is behind you in this. The fact that I get scandalized doesn't bother you at all because you are integrated within society, so you don't see any damage to human relationships because it is totally accepted and nothing counts but the artwork ... From the moment I become a negative element that you resent, you say, "It's better for me to be by myself or to look for other types of contacts," because they are contacts, and not relationships ... Then you say, "All right, I will live without human relationships," but in that dreamy atmosphere that you have always carried with you, which is the mark of your culture, whatever that is, you think that doing this will help to develop your artwork.[16]

Lonzi delivers her objections from the standpoint of the human relationship as a means without an end. She dangerously unmasks the demon of work and the gender struggle hidden inside love.

In her diagnosis of the situation, it is tempting to compare her position to the position of the artist confronted by the professional apparatus: women, she explains, haven't rebelled against the myth of society because even in their private lives they are still crushed, unrealized, oppressed. They cannot even reach the doorstep of life with sufficient stability, because they start with a handicap. They look for love and a relationship with a male partner, but this relationship will only take place in a way that reinforces the partner, helps him to face the world from a stronger position. A woman's need for love was indeed created by patriarchy to help men succeed in life. Women give love an independent value, while men give it an instrumental one. "And then men," she writes, "recuperate this love as an absolute value in the arts, in poetry, in the artworks that live and grow through these non-relationships. Therefore men, after preventing [women] from living love, offer to them its symbol as an object."[17]

The sublimation involved in artmaking is politically unacceptable to Lonzi. She talks about a demand that art makes at the expense of human relationships, and Consagra cannot really contradict her because he claims that an artist needs the "complicity" of his partner to go forward, a complicity that is more than simple support. When Lonzi asks for another example, he says, "One cannot make love with someone who is whistling."[18]

What is interesting in this dialogue is that Consagra, as a man, seems to embody the artwork and its professional

Poster of demanding wages for housework on international women's day, 1974.

values, while Lonzi embodies a desire for radicalism, a need to unmask the violence of productive dynamics, and the possibility of living a life without a frame, a life that questions itself and intensifies itself without hiding behind obligations, habits, opportunism—a life that is, in fact, truly an artwork. By the end of the book, farewells have become inevitable. Lonzi says:

> I don't know how to name it. We eat lunch with the feeling that you have to go to the studio, you come back in the evening with the feeling that you must recharge your batteries and in the morning you are off to the studio again ... Even when we are at Elba Island [on holiday], you don't want to go climbing on the rocks, because you want to work on a drawing, on a project, on something, and you accuse me of stealing time from your work. You give me the remainder of your time in the afternoon. We don't walk around the island, we don't take walks, we meet people only and exclusively for work, we have restricted the world for ourselves to the people that are interested in your

> work, whoever they are, clever people or idiots, but it is the work that counts. You must understand that our whole life is structured by work, all of it, that we are never together for ourselves. It's just a pause, a rest from work. The vital, conscious, and active moment, the promised land is work … You don't have a schedule, you don't have a job, you don't have obligations, but you create a more constraining situation than if you had a job and a boss.[19]

Consagra then responds, "Then *you* make a program for life, *you* make the program." In this remark, all the tragedy unfolds: Lonzi needs to escape from the very logic of the program, she doesn't want to internalize obligations and organize a plan. She tells Consagra how all this makes her feel desperate, and in the last lines of the book she asks, "Do you understand me?" Consagra answers, "For sure." Then she says, "Now you can go."[20]

X

1
Carla Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla: Diario di una femminista* (Shut up. Or rather, speak: Diary of a feminist) (Milan: Scritti di Rivolta Femminile, 1978), 187.

2
Lonzi's political vision is articulated very clearly in "Sputiamo su Hegel" (Let's spit on Hegel) where she affirms, for example, that "the proletariat is revolutionary towards capitalism but reformist towards the patriarchal system," that "women's oppression doesn't start in time but rather hides in the darkness of origins," and that Communism was incapable of including feminism because it was an essentially masculine project. See "Sputiamo su Hegel," in *Sputiamo su Hegel: La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale e altri scritti* (Let's spit on Hegel: "The clitoridian woman and the vaginal woman" and other writings) (Milan: Scritti di Rivolta Femminile, 1974), 29 and 19.

3
Maria-Luisa Boccia, "La costola di Eva: Il Manifesto" (Eve's Rib: The Manifesto), November 22, 2011. See http://fc.retecivica.milano.it/Rete%20Civica%20Di%20Milano/Arte%20e%20Sapere/Archivio/DonnaPensieroScrittura/testi%20e%20dibattito/S02B3B297-02B3B29C?PrevUnread .

4
Rivolta Femminile (Female Revolt) was a feminist group and publishing house founded in 1970 in Milan upon the publication of "Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile," a text written by Carla Lonzi, Carla Accardi, and Elvira Banotti.

5
Antonella Nappi, "Nudity," *May* 4 (June 2010, [1977]): 71–72.

6
"I needed to get out all my dissent about the image that I felt obliged to stick to in the eyes of others: unexpressed and happy to represent something, but not myself. This frustrated my efforts to communicate. In fact it frustrated me, it prevented me from existing. Now I exist: this certitude justifies me and confers upon me that freedom in which I alone have believed and that I have managed to obtain." *Taci,* 9.

7
Taci , 247.

8
"Sister, where are you my sister? / Are you playing the piano / or translating Plato? Are you feeding / your baby girls or going shopping / totally absent? Don't you like / the skirt that you have bought? Are you unsure about the color? / The concert is starting, it's time / for the meeting, the train is leaving, / a friend is coming from London, / a friend of Sandro's. Were you expecting me? / Oh you are busy. / I find you pale but I see that / you are eating. The older one interrupts / all the time, and so do the little ones. / Do you really answer to everything? / Don't you neglect anything about them? / Do you want them to be happy with their most extraordinary / mommy all to themselves? / And as a sister, a friend, and everything else? / Why are you putting the phone down? Haven't you suffered enough from solitude? / And what about me? Do you know me? Do you care? Do you count on me? / It doesn't matter … Shut up. Or rather, talk." *Taci* , 247–248.

9
Taci , 9.

10
Taci, 246.

11
"La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale" (The clitoridian woman and the vaginal woman), in *Sputiamo su Hegel* , 116.

12
Taci , 41.

13
"La donna clitoridea," 107.

14
Lonzi, *Vai pure: Dialogo con Pietro Consagra* (Now you can go: Dialogue with Pietro Consagra) (Milan: et al., 2011 [1980

15
Lonzi writes in her journal on August 16, 1972: "When the possibility of a women's movement appeared, I felt that I had everything ready to offer: the knowledge of men and a life of research that was the implicit content of my life. With this opportunity, I have realized that an identification of myself was happening automatically, which had been left in suspense until that moment, and in that impossibility I had consumed an incredible amount of energy. So I got to feminism, and that has been my party. Someone had to start it, and the sensation I had was that either that would be me, or else nobody would have saved me, so I did it. I had to find who I was, in the end, after accepting being something I didn't know. This isn't a creative process because what bothers me with

the artist is that the role of
protagonist requires a spectator."
Taci, 44.

16
Vai pure , 35.

17
Vai pure, 29.

18
Vai pure, 132.

19
Vai pure, 131–133 passim.

20
Vai pure, 133.

Lars Bang Larsen

The Society Without Qualities

1.

The idea of a society without qualities is an indictment of a state that fails to provide a life of quality for its citizens. The society without qualities is one in which a systemic pressure on cultural and democratic institutions results in a whittling down of civil liberties. Where post-fascism is on the rise and where those who revolt are regarded by the elite as expendable. Where human relations are corroded in profitable ways and the future of the youth is mortgaged. And so you are turned into your own limit: you are your own weakest link because it is up to you to hold things together. It is a society without the historical teleology that the twentieth century had as an "American century."[1]

Of course, the society without qualities is a consequence of the evacuation that has taken place. Having realized itself to the extent that it has shed its historical constraints, capitalism is now free—victorious when identified with the state, when it *is* the state (Fernand Braudel).[2] And so the idea of the state as a caretaker and an educator, an alleviator of pain, is no longer believable. The state has been presented with a new role, which it has accepted. Capitalism's convergence with the state dissolves society—this was what Margaret Thatcher spoke of with the honesty of an executioner.

The rise of the society without qualities comes as a bigger surprise on the European side of the Atlantic. The European welfare state has been dismantled by a right wing that incredulously considers it to be a vestige of socialism, and by ideologically homeless social democrats ready to liquidate what was once commonly owned.

The welfare state is a model of economic redistribution that is frequently mistaken for a social community—perhaps because of the mental (libidinal?) economy that it also is: a psychic investment in, or occupation of, other people through the state apparatus. Because the welfare state maintains infrastructure, education, health care, and so forth, it is believed to guarantee tolerance, trust, and empathy. But we must strip the state of its sham human qualities. After all, if modern man and woman are anyhow without qualities, why should the state possess them?

Contemporary welfare revolves around capitalism and the nation. The success of the right during that last twenty years comes down to its—at this junction technically correct—identification of welfare with these two parameters. What remains is too often a nation-state that continues to dream of its interiority and abjures the social and economic margins of the world—effectively, the nation-state as *cordon sanitaire*. Since 1989, it has often been said that we live in a world with no outside. But don't innumerable social margins count as outsides?

Palle Nielsen and activists from Aktion Samtal, The Model. The Model for a Qualitative Society, 1968. Moderna Museet, Stockholm

2.

According to nineteenth-century pioneering Swiss art historian Jacob Burckhardt, the modern political spirit of Europe was in Renaissance Italy embodied by the state as a work of art.[3] The omnipotent state is a "purely modern fiction" in which war is "a democratic pursuit" and the people become reduced to a disciplined multitude of subjects.[4] If the intelligence, artistic talent, and intolerance of the amoral Renaissance man seemed an exotic contrast to Burckhardt's dull nineteenth century, the Renaissance man has returned in the guise of today's art-loving oligarch.[5] Considering that to Burckhardt, despotism represents the beginning of the modern state, his text can be compared to Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the Enlightenment as the double-face of what is at the same time progressive and totalitarian modern reason. Preferring to convey an impression of a bottomless abyss rather than any notion of moral progress in history, Burckhardt brought the news of "the absence of all guarantee for the future."[6] The society without qualities.

3.

Even as it is voided of significance, "welfare" and social security continue to be a strong referent in politics. The nostalgia belies the fact that no return to what welfare once meant seems possible. The modern state has converted qualities into functions and economic relations. To provide economic protection for citizens is a fundamental function in a world dominated by money and property. But economic protection and the absence of exploitation are two different things. The commonality now offered by the welfare state can simply be interpreted as a foundation for competition.

From the point of view of sociology—usually prudently self-restrained in its acceptance of what exists—the society without qualities is the network society: a social order that is integrated into global networks of instrumentality through new information technologies. However, if the idea of a society without qualities has the potential for becoming, this is ultimately located beyond sociological description. The society without qualities can never become manifest, because it is a place in the future where something that is different survives. Like every active thought, the impossibility of its full legitimation is branded on it. As Adorno said, the true society will leave possibilities unused.[7]

The society without qualities is not a narrative of loss. It is evoked through an interest in description as much as in critique. Description—not as an adequate account, but as a way of exhausting or expending an object that has been revealed.[8]

4.

But the society without qualities can also be embraced as the precondition for a society to come. "The society without qualities is something we are all waiting for" (Ulrika Flink).[9] Waiting … without fascination or anxiety. Across the twentieth century, from one-dimensional wo/man to the public intellectual and the *enragés*, Ulrich—Robert Musil's indifferent Viennese protagonist in *The Man Without Qualities* (1930–1942)—confronts us from another waning empire. References to Musil's novel reappear in epochal texts, such as Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000), where it is quoted to describe the shift of modernization towards the expropriation of the common and the dissolution of the concept of the public. However, in a society without qualities, it is society rather than the human being that is deliberately left blank—stripped of the One, of originary myth and normative expectation. The One is neither the premise nor the promise of the multitude. Why would the many need a form of unity anyhow? And one would like this erasure to become something other than *die Vereinigung von Seele und Wirtschaft*—the union of soul and economy.[10] Let us gaze fearlessly at the modern city that is born in capital.[11]

"The nation States see their traditional role of mediation being reduced more and more,"[12] Félix Guattari wrote in the late 1980s. The difference between then and now is that today it is all out in the open. When no longer interested in redefining citizenship in the positive, nation-states become *mediators* in the purely logistical and expedient sense of the word. Mediation is an end in itself in a logistical world where meaning is mobile. Jaime Stapleton writes about the metaphors of surface and horizontal relationality that dominate both political neoliberalism and post-structuralist approaches to meaning: "A *Society Without Qualities* is a society in which no given *part* has any interior quality or determination of its own, but whose character is determined quantitatively in relation to all other *parts*, that

Charlotte and Sture Johannesson, On Germany—In Time, 1976-2013.

are each determined by their relation to each other and the given *part*."[13]

5.

"Art did not die. But it became a reality machine" (Søren Andreasen).[14] Today art is a norm—knowable, possible, prescriptive. No longer an outsider or pariah, the artist is now identified as an exemplary agent, a problem crusher, the embodiment of the self-consuming subject. By now this is yesterday's news, and hence it is an insight that cannot be universalized, since artists today have developed counter-strategies.

Money is the one thing that connects us and that we cannot truly have in common. In societies without qualities we can, in theory, have any number of things in common. However, after the decline of symbolic orders, it is an enormous effort to call them up and give them words and form. Remember, this is the desert of the real ... So never mind good intentions, they won't get us anywhere: when art addresses the future in (self-)skeptical ways, it refuses nostalgia and hope as sentimental compensations for an uncertain future. There is an indignity in speaking on behalf of others (Gayatri Spivak), but it is equally irrelevant to direct and instrumentalize your symbolic acts, because they are like children: there is no knowing what they will get up to. They wander off on their own and should be allowed their freedom. The aesthetic experience is an overlooked precondition for comprehending social conflict. Perhaps one can incorporate disillusionment into a politics of undoing that urges us to hear the unheard-of with our own ears, to touch the un-apprehended with our own hands.

Gilles Deleuze once remarked that to be a leftist means to orient oneself towards the future, to think a little further ahead. This future orientation is in a general sense also where the leftist political project intersects with art, because art is that which is not yet identified by culture at large, not yet known or purposeful. This doesn't mean that art is inherently leftist, or somehow immune to becoming a thing or a product, only that the Left lets its own project

Learning Site (Rikke Luther and Cecilia Wendt with Jaime Stapleton), Audible Dwelling, 0.2, 2013.

down when it forgets that it is aligned with art in the struggle against capital's colonization of the future.

6.

Aesthetic problems can't be solved in the social sphere, and vice versa, because the two are one, and the one becomes two. The social begins and ends in art, but not the other way around: art dies when it becomes a model. In art, the social limit of freedom can be perceived.

Are models necessary? Social models usually have a mimetic relation to a given reality, and they start with the whole, not the part. What if we check our desire to project figurative qualities onto the future and desist from producing models that may improve society as it exists? What would it mean to engage in historical processes and social struggles, but proceed without a specific model or image of the society to come? How can we take a cubistic approach, dispensing with the falseness of the whole?

Arguably, such an approach can only be articulated momentarily, as a flash, and maybe its sense of undoing and letting go relates first and foremost to aesthetic experience. In the early 1970s, Jean Baudrillard gave an alternative, downbeat definition of utopia: utopia, he wrote, is what is never spoken, never on the agenda, but "always repressed in the identity of political, historical, logical, dialectical orders."[15] Utopia is *what the order of the day is missing ...* Something elusive that dies when aggressive interpretation sets in. When utopia is deprived of its telos, it becomes compatible with aesthetic thinking, with the ambivalence and skepticism through which art returns real events and bodies to virtual non-places. Like utopia, art is insoluble and uninhabitable, its speech threatened by reality principles.

Ane Hjort Guttu, Freedom Requires Free People, 2012. HD video still.

7.

Admittedly, the society without qualities sounds like a famous song by John Lennon about imagining no countries, no money, and no religion too … But unlike Lennon's utopia, in a society without qualities there will still be something to die for. There is no more beach underneath the cobblestones. The vision of a center-less, image-less society could not come from the '60s. However, the credos of 1968 abide, often because we imagine that we, from our winter of capital, have direct access to the Summer of Love and the ethos of May '68. But for all their fighting spirit and their capacity for multiplying political struggles, what makes the *soixante-huitards* unacceptable today is their gender blindness and heteronormativity, their populist eagerness to square off with the spectacle, their Romantic ideas of a radical subjectivity, their inability to articulate their disaffection in something other than affirmative terms, their exaltation of desire, their nationalism, and their awful music.

Why not accept that drama has left politics? This doesn't mean that there is nothing to discuss, or that history has ended, or that suffering has ended. Far from it. Today we are hungry for historical drama because it used to signify change, and if May '68 affirmed something it was that affect and historical change belong together. But with their photogenic insurrections, the '60s created a dramaturgy that speculated on the separation of drama and change, thereby making it possible to instrumentalize affect and turn change into a simulacrum. There is no causal relation between drama and change.

8.

Rote Armee Fraktion, Sendero Luminoso, Brigate Rosse, The Weather Underground, Blekingegadebanden, and so on. Direct action founded on a paranoid logic, whereby armed struggle was turned into the ultimate fetish of the political project. The notion of "political terrorism" is probably a contradiction in terms, if by politics one means that which concerns everybody in the city, whereas terrorism always concerns only a chosen few.

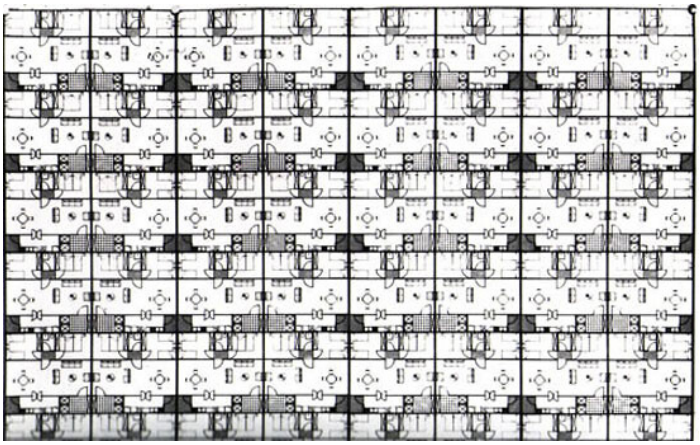
The death of the terrorist was the stake on which the system, through its own violence, impaled itself. This is how Ulrike Meinhof became an icon. The discussion of whether she committed suicide or was in fact murdered in her prison cell is beside the point. What matters is that she invited the system to destroy her, thus making it impossible for it to do away with her. A sacrificial death, because in sacrifice, one destroys an object—but not completely. There is always a remainder.

Terrorism today is religious fundamentalism, individual

Thomas Bayrle, Gridhunting, 2008. Photo print and projection.

loose cannons—and state terror, of course, the one we tend to forget. The conditioned response of the authorities—"We don't negotiate with terrorists"—is now redundant because terrorists no longer make demands. Once they took hostages to negotiate; today they mow down people without articulating a challenge to the system. And so terrorism creates an alibi for the state's atrophied functions according to which disruption is internal to systems of circular control and usually results in heroic law enforcement, increased security measures, and another four years for the president. This can't hide the lamentable fact that Al-Qaeda represents the only alternative to late capitalism.

The difference between late-twentieth-century and contemporary terrorism reflects the shift from a dialectical understanding of history to a cybernetic one. History now plays out inside networks. And so terror is no longer an antithesis to the system but an occurrence inside it. When Al-Qaeda, struck the US in 2001, they targeted material switches (Wall Street; the Pentagon; Washington, DC), thereby temporarily disrupting the flows of people, money, air traffic—in essence, governance.



Archizoom, Plano Tipologico Continuo, 1971. From the project "No-Stop City."

Ironically, the question terrorism can't answer is how to bring back death in a society that denies death as it celebrates the ephemeral, makes death meaningless by its repeated representation in the media, "always as the other's death so that our own is met with the surprise of the unexpected" (Castells).[16] Perhaps this is why hostages are no longer taken: people count for network flow, and killing people is a symptomatically distracted way of targeting the sublime target, the internet. It is obvious that when terrorism begins to revolve around questions of system maintenance, it no longer represents an embarrassment to the system itself.

9.

Two prevalent representational modes in culture today are the shop and the parliament: the department store with a selection of leading brands, and the democratic forum empowered to act on behalf of the citizenry.

Many exhibitions, especially biennials, are organized like the marketplace or the parliament: inclusive, anthologizing, consensus-driven, reproductive, covering bases in terms of expression, media, geographies, and politics. Promising adequacy or completeness, however, will only reflect what already exists. So why do curators so often assume a representational brief instead of seeking to exacerbate difference? Representational models are spatial; they address and reflect the notion of contemporary art as a field or an "art world," and so they do little to change the way that time is eclipsed in a connected world. Breaking the mimetic mold of the curated space may help stimulate the temporal dimension of exhibition-making, and thus augment sensibilities towards change.

Xabier Salaberria, Martello (The Model), 2013. Machined brass and synthetic paint.

10.

Direct responses to capital are difficult because capital is a shape-shifter and a parasite that already banks on a response— *any* response. However, this also implies that its intelligence is predictable. There is a thickness to capitalism. Its lack of love is obtuse. It picks up speed when there is an infrastructure in place for it to work, when everything is ready for it to take over. These conduits exist in the social world, but capital also relies on its mental progress in our brains and nervous systems. At the same time, the credit system turns time into an infrastructure for money. Therefore, our nervous systems, imaginations, and subjective and social time are as good a place as any to start: instead of going head to head with capital, we might learn from its subtractive protocols and become as corrosive as money.

11.

Have our imaginations become so poor that we cannot think society without these two incredibly boring matrices, state and capital? It would be pathetic if we couldn't come up with something better.

X

Lars Bang Larsen is an art historian and curator based in Copenhagen. He has (co-)curated group exhibitions such as Populism (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 2005, a.o.), La insurrección invisible de un millón de mentes (Sala rekalde, Bilbao 2005), A History of Irritated Material and Reflections from Damaged Life (both at Raven Row, London 2010 and 2013). His books include Sture Johannesson (NIFCA / Lukas & Sternberg 2002), The Critical Mass of Mediation (with Søren Andreasen, Internationalistisk Ideale 2012) and a monograph about Palle Nielsen's utopian adventure playground at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, The Model. A Model for a Qualitative Society, 1968 (MACBA 2010). Lars Bang Larsen completed his PhD on psychedelic concepts in neo-avantgard art at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at Copenhagen University, where he is currently affiliated as a research fellow on a grant from the Novo Nordisk Foundation. He teaches as an invited professor at the Haute École de Art et de Design in Geneva, where he is also in charge of the research program Radical Enlightenment together with Yann Blanc Chateigné.

1
"The Society Without Qualities" (or in Swedish, "Samhället utan egenskaper") was the title of a group show that took place at Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm, February 14–May 26, 2013, in the framework of the research project The New Model: An Inquiry, which Maria Lind and I initiated. The exhibition included works by Ann Charlotte and Sture Johannesson, Joanna Lombard, Jakob Jakobsen and Anders Remmer, Sharon Lockhart, Palle Nielsen, Archizoom Associati, Jakob Kolding, Xabier Salaberria, Ane Hjort Guttu, Learning Site with Jaime Stapleton, Søren Andreasen, Thomas Bayrle, and Dave Hullfish Bailey. I curated the exhibition.

2
Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 64.

3
Jacob Burckhardt, *The State as a Work of Art* (London: Penguin, 2010 (1860), 2.

4
Ibid., 8, 87, and 95.

5
Cf. Ritchie Robertson's essay "Burckhardt's *Renaissance*, 150 years later."

6
Burckhardt, *The State as a Work of Art* , 40.

7
T. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005 (1951)), 156.

8
Georges Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* , trans. Marc Lowenthal (Cambridge, MA: Wakefield Press, 2010 (1974)).

9
In an email to the author on October 11, 2012. Ulrika Flink is Assistant Curator at Tensta Konsthall.

10
Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2013 (1930–1942)), 107.

11
See Andrea Branzi on Archizoom Associati, quoted in Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and Against Capitalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press , 2008), 75.

12
Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* , trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: The Athlone Press, 2000 (1989)), 29.

13
From Jaime Stapleton's text "The Monologue," part of Learning Site's sound piece *Audible Dwelling 0.2* (2013).

14
In a telephone conversation with the author, May 21, 2013.

15
Baudrillard, "Utopia Deferred" (1969), in Baudrillard, *Utopia Deferred: Writings for* Utopie *(1967– 1978)* , trans. Stuart Kendall (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 62.

16
Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* , 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 484.