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Editors

Editorial

Thanks to everyone who came out to our fifth anniversary party in December. It's 2014 now and we are still hungover. But we want to tell you about a very strange thing that happened to us there. Late in the night we met a young Chinese artist through a friend, and she told us about a recurring nightmare of hers. What happens most nights is this: each time she produces an artwork, a giant barbarian with a long beard appears wielding a sword as long as a person is tall. And with the rounded blade of the sword, he slices her work in two.

According to her description, the barbarian seems to be asleep, waiting for the moment the work is complete to wake up and appear. And when he slices through her work, each resulting piece suddenly becomes a different thing: one side shatters instantly, but as it shatters, it melts and shape-shifts—mostly into decorative or useful objects of various kinds. Some become souvenirs meant to decorate a bookshelf or mantle above the fireplace, like a piece of the Berlin Wall or a mug with a cathedral on it. Other bits turn into Biedermeier sofas and lightly-used Ikea shelving units, into clay pots and porcelain vases and discount store pans and blenders and kitchen utensils for scrambling eggs.

While this might seem unusual, what happens next is much stranger. Once the barbarian has sliced through the artist's work, the other part bursts into pure blinding light, like a gigantic paparazzi camera flash turning into a religious epiphany. And then the work is gone forever.

After the brilliant light washes over everything and fades away, some of the useful objects are left scattered around, giving the impression of a destroyed living room full of things bought off Craigslist. And the artist told us that the flash of light also has the effect of erasing her memory, so that she is unable to recall the work that was just destroyed, much less how to go about remaking it.

This dream seemed significant, and so we wanted to know who she thought this barbarian might be. Was the barbarian a critic, framing the work and creating meaning effects to harness its untapped energy? Was he a collector converting the work into mute investment furniture? Was he a right-wing hardliner making a massive budget cut? A curator with an incisive observation? A bearded hipster experimenting with his cool new sword? An impoverished neighbor from the countryside trying to use the work for firewood?

The artist could not say for sure who this barbarian was, and now the dance floor was starting to fill up and we were all being jostled around. Someone spilled a drink. Several conversations started at once. Does anyone have cigarettes? The young artist felt like dancing, and right before she headed to the dancefloor, she leaned in and screamed to us over the music: "I just remembered! The barbarian says something before he leaves!" By now we could barely hear each other. "He stares straight at me

and he says: As You Free People Eat All The Light And Call It Creation We Will Copy Your Clumsy Lies Into Funky Pop and Hire Your Best Spies as Our Own Discount Cinematographers!" At least, it sounded something like that.

—Anton Vidokle, Brian Kuan Wood, Julieta Aranda

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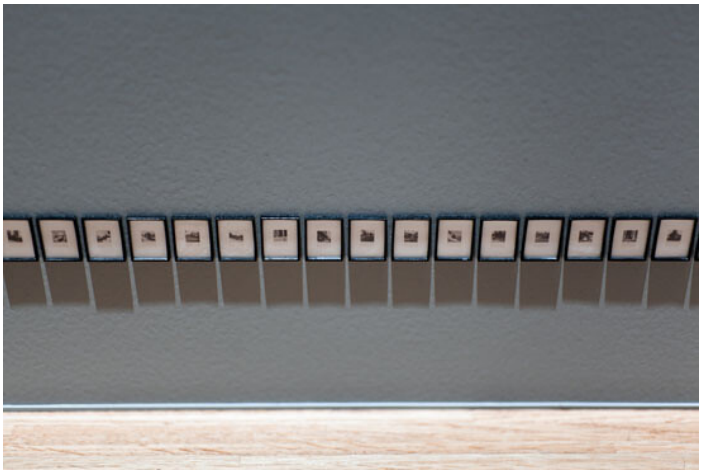
Julieta Aranda is an artist and an editor of *e-flux journal.*

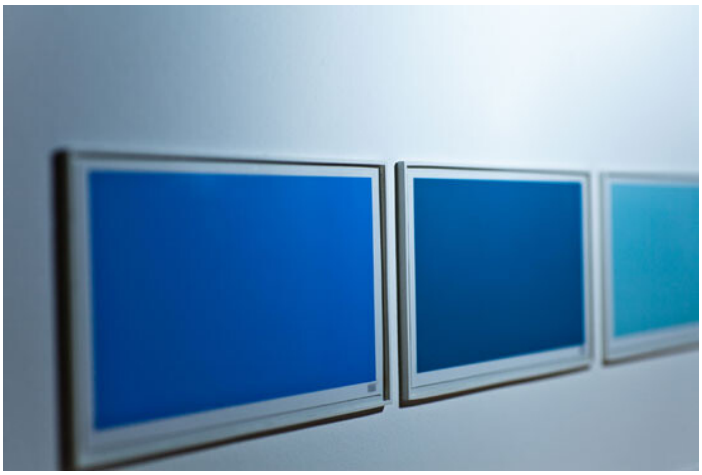
Brian Kuan Wood is an editor of *e-flux journal.*

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

Walid Raad

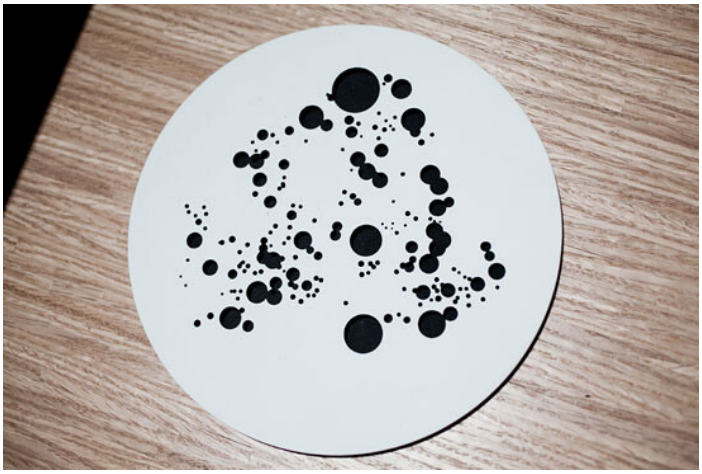
Section 139: The Atlas Group (1989–2004)





In 2005 the Sfeir-Semler Gallery opened in Beirut, in an industrial quarter called Karantina.

Some of you already know that Karantina was the site of a



brutal massacre of civilians in 1976. I am not going to talk about this here.

The Sfeir-Semler Gallery opened on the fourth floor of a large former warehouse. It is an 800-square-meter space, with clean four-meter-high, sixty-centimeter-thick white walls, smooth concrete floors, and diffuse northern lighting all around. It is the white cube of white cubes. We have never had a space this beautiful in Beirut. Some of us have been waiting for a space like this for forty years.

The name of the person who opened the gallery is Andrée Sfeir. Andrée also owns a gallery in Hamburg that I work with. And when she opened the new space in Beirut, Andrée began asking me about the possibility of exhibiting my project called *The Atlas Group (1989–2004)* in the Beirut gallery.

I should say that *The Atlas Group (1989–2004)* is a project I worked on for fifteen years. It is a project about the wars in Lebanon, but it is also a project I have never shown in Lebanon. For some reason, I could never do it. I always feared that something would happen to the works. It's not that I thought it would be censored or anything like that. I just felt that the works would somehow be affected, though I could not say exactly how.

In 2005 I refused Andrée's persistent offers to show this work in Beirut. And I tried to explain my feelings to her, without much success.

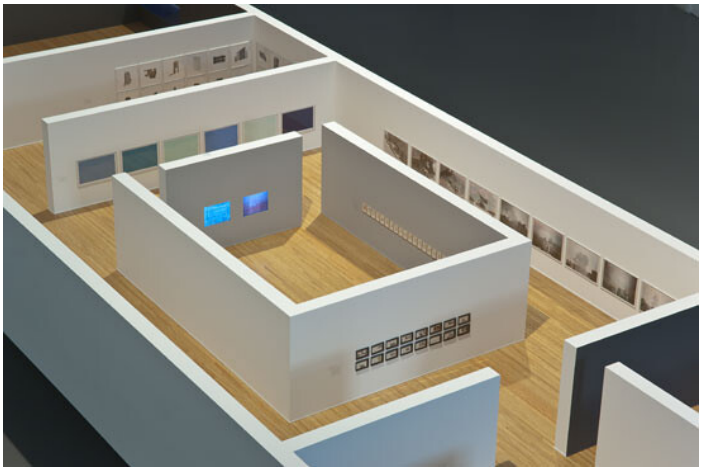
In 2006 she asked me again. I refused again.

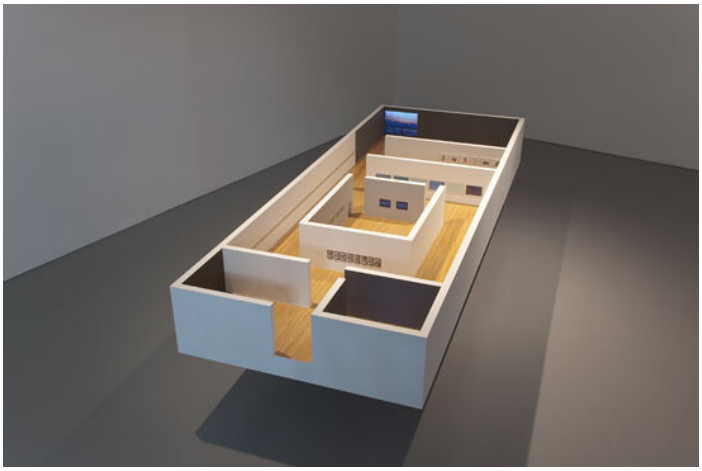
In 2007 she asked me again. I refused again.

In 2008 she asked me again. But this time, I agreed. I don't know why. I just agreed to do it.

I proceeded to print and frame my photographs, to produce the sculptures and videos, to design the exhibition space, to print all the wall texts. And I sent these to the gallery in Beirut.

Three weeks later I went to the gallery to see my mounted display, and this is what I confronted. I found myself facing the reduction in scale of every single one of my artworks to 1/100th of their original size. Each and every artwork I had





done now appeared to me as a miniature object.

At first, and given my psychological history, I thought my mind was playing tricks on me. I was convinced that I was in the midst of a psychotic episode.

So I called Hassan. Hassan is an installer in the gallery. I asked him to stand with me in front of this "situation" and to describe to me what he saw.

Hassan arrived, and immediately he began to marvel at the detail of the small-scale reproductions, which proved to me that the works also appeared to Hassan at 1/100th of their original size. But I also know from my own reading in psychology that, in the history of psychiatry, no two people have ever experienced the exact same psychotic episode at the same time. And I doubted that this situation was a historical exception. I then became convinced that I was not in fact in the midst of a psychotic episode but that my assistant, my framer, and my printer were behind all of this. I became convinced that, without telling me, they had decided to make everything small. They produced all my works at 1/100th of their size as some kind of practical joke. Or better yet, as some kind of gift, because they know how fond I am of all things miniaturized.

A couple of hours later, when my assistant, my framer, and my printer arrived, they were all struck by the technical aspects of the miniaturization. They assured me that they had nothing to do with this. In fact, they felt that the joke was on them. They also felt betrayed by the fact that I went behind their backs and chose to work with another team on this piece, as if they were not up to the technical challenge. One of them even said to me spitefully: your works look better small anyhow, when one cannot see them well.

Hearing this, I immediately realized that I had no other choice. I was forced to face the fact that, in 2008, in Beirut, all my artworks shrank.

So I decided that I needed to build a new white cube better suited to the new dimensions of my works. And that is exactly what I did.

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All photos by Jakob Polacsek

Dedicated to Carlos Chahine and Markus Reymann

Walid Raad is an artist and an Associate Professor of Art in The Cooper Union (New York, USA). Raad's works include *The Atlas Group*, a fifteen-year project between 1989 and 2004 about the contemporary history of Lebanon, and the ongoing projects *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* and *Sweet Talk: Commissions* (Beirut). His books include *The Truth Will Be Known When The Last Witness Is Dead*, *My Neck Is Thinner Than A Hair*, *Let's Be Honest*, *The Weather Helped*, and *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*.

Lindsay Caplan

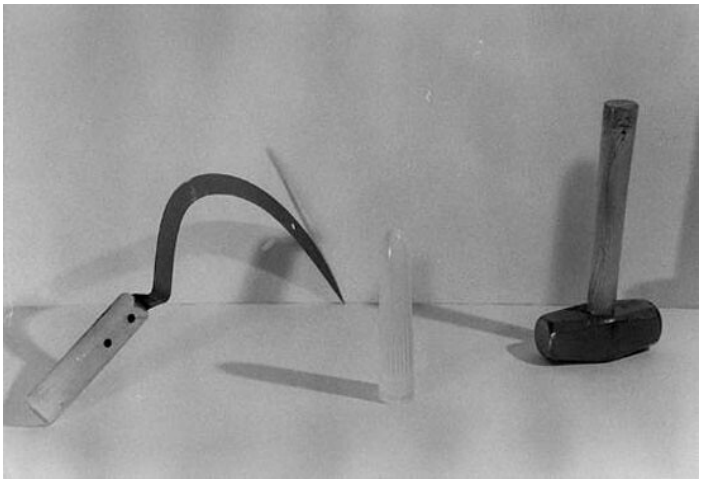
Framing Artwork

My premise is this: that the ways in which we describe and understand artistic labor are integrally tied to how we imagine what artworks should do in the world. Underlying the idea of artistic production as authentic, voluntary, and self-valorizing, for example, is the utopian promise that art is prefigurative, that it can posit in an experimental, provisional way the liberatory modes of being we wish for everybody. Another idea—that art production is exploitative, alienated, precarious, and ultimately only geared toward profit—still contains the promissory note that art (or art criticism) can and should unveil false consciousness, that art can show with unique lucidity our reality just as it is. On the one hand, artists are models for what labor *should be*; on the other, they have become a terrifying example of what labor *is*. Authentic or alienated. These paradigms operate in our discussions of artistic labor just as much as they operate in broader discussions of contemporary art and art history. This makes the reverse of my premise just as true: that how we imagine what art should do is intertwined with our idea of artistic labor. What I hope to show is that it is precisely this feedback loop between artistic labor and art's utopian claims that makes this type of labor different from other types—which is not to say privileged, but different. And in order to grapple with art's current problems and unfulfilled promises, we need to first confront how and why such contradictory meanings operate in concert within the expanded field of *artwork.*

A striking example of an artist who seems to unveil the alienated aspect of artistic production is Andy Warhol. In asserting his desire "to be a machine" and to make "Business Art," Warhol eschewed creativity as an artistic value, since for him being a machine meant being standard, the very same as everyone else. In an oft-cited 1963 interview for *Art News,* Warhol explained this idea in his characteristically coy and circuitous manner:

> Someone said that Brecht wanted everybody to think alike. I want everybody to think alike. But Brecht wanted to do it through Communism, in a way. Russia is doing it under government. It's happening here all by itself without being under a strict government. Everybody looks alike and acts alike, and we're getting more and more that way. I think everybody should be a machine. I think everybody should like everybody.[1]

Statements like these have been interpreted as unlocking the meaning of Warhol's appropriation of mass cultural images. Focusing on this level of signification, some have argued that Warhol's Pop leveled formerly vertical notions of culture, introducing a vernacular iconography in order to radicalize and ultimately democratize the realm of "high" art. This was a particularly salient interpretation in West Germany, where, as Andreas Huyssen has shown, a vibrant leftist student movement adopted Pop as part of its



Andy Warhol, Hammer and Sickle, 1976. Photograph.

battle cry against outdated societal values and hierarchies.[2] And indeed, as echoed in his mention of Brecht above, Warhol first deemed his practice "commonism," confounding the Cold War opposition between capitalist and communist economic systems and drawing out their similarities as mass and massifying cultures.

Others have argued, on the other hand, that Warhol captured a darker side of collective desire as expressed through commodities and celebrities. Images like *Marilyn Diptych* (1962), a screen print of twenty-five headshots of Marilyn Monroe arranged in a 5 x 5 grid, with half the Marilyns printed in vibrant three-tone color and half in gradually fading black and white, suggest that glamorous images only manifest false promises and ultimately lead to destructive consumption practices.[3] That Warhol created this work just after the actress's death only underlines this point. But however one interprets Warhol's appropriation of advertising, print media, and celebrity images, all must contend equally with assumptions as art as with the wider sphere of culture and the mediated image environment emerging in postwar America.

An analysis of Warhol's work in the realm of artistic labor is just as difficult to parse—forcing us to ask what, if anything, is unique about artistic labor. Warhol embraced the Taylorist logic of assembly-line production and the managerial position inherent to it, opening his first Factory in 1963 at the site of a former hat manufacturer in Manhattan.[4] As evident in series of photographs taken of him at work, Warhol delegated most of the actual production of artworks to others. Rather deliciously, but not at all ironically, this has led the Andy Warhol Foundation to formulate increasingly rigid criteria for determining what makes an "authentic Warhol" (and with the recent sale of *Silver Car Crash* for upwards of $105 million dollars, this controversy seems to have only added monetary value to "his" work). Responding to the heroic individualism asserted by Abstract Expressionism (and so notably not responding to authorship based on skill but rather on the authenticity of an expressive individual), Warhol's work forces us to confront the production of art and its value in its resolutely social form. But no matter how much Warhol delegated production, he could not equally distribute his aura. Everyone can't be a Warhol, and his collaborators never were. His Factory model shows the persistence of hierarchies in even the most collective forms of production, even when accompanied by appropriately wry circumspection and deflection. Warhol epitomizes this paradox, which is inherent to social production in the capitalist image economy: he delegated his work, dispersing and even deriding authorship, and it was precisely this networked participation and production that contributed to his celebrity status. So while Warhol embodied the artist as manager, he was less the "Organization Man" of the 1950s and more of a Mark Zuckerberg or Jack Dorsey of today.[5] Like these social-network figureheads, Warhol is a beneficiary of others' participation in his culture of cool. His factory is in fact a social factory, because he collapses distinctions between producing a product and producing oneself. But whether we see this as a critical gesture, and condemn the system, or a complicit one, and condemn the artist, Warhol's *work*—labor here, not image—shows us the exploitative edge of this field of collective production. It is more than just the fact that Warhol's network continued to be subsumed under his signature. It is that Warhol paints a picture of the art scene as the quickest route to an alienated existence, one in which the human is a machine and there is no pretense or resistance to how social value crystallizes into an object or author.

On the other end of the spectrum, an artist who holds out the promise of artistic labor as liberatory for both society and the self is Joseph Beuys. Beuys is known for his assertion that "everyone is an artist," and it is important to note that this assertion relied on a particular ideal of artistic labor that equated it with creativity *in general.* We could say that if Warhol is the Marx of *Capital*, focusing on the modes of production in the factory (i.e., labor that is already alienated), then Beuys is the early Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* —fixated on species-being, labor as unfettered creativity, the self-valorizing social production of the world.[6] Beuys seemed to be thinking as much when he described his idea of social sculpture in a text from 1971, not shying away from Marxist language in the least:

> This most modern art discipline—Social Sculpture/Social Architecture—will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor or architect of the social organism ... EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who—from his state of freedom—the position of freedom that he experiences at first hand—learns to determine the other positions in the TOTAL ART WORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER. Self-determination and participation in the cultural sphere (freedom); in the structuring of laws

(democracy); and in the sphere of economics (socialism).[7]

Beuys reconnects labor to the creative will of human beings, our self-determination and self-realization. By equating labor with this expansive notion of creativity, he tries to wrest creativity from capitalism, where it is alienated, objectified, monetized, fetishized. Beuys wants to return labor/creativity to the center of how we define ourselves as humans, reminding us that while we produce and are produced by capitalist social relations, we cannot be reduced to them. He has transformative ambitions as well. He believes that recasting labor as a fundamentally creative activity will generate a new society—from social sculpture comes new social relations, and from new relations comes a new economic and political reality.

Significantly, Beuys and Warhol draw upon different notions of the machine, which explains some of the contrasts between their respective performances of artistic labor. While for Warhol the machine means rote standardization, the reduction of labor to repetitive and uncreative tasks, Beuys has his "electricity theory," which reframes mechanization in vitalistic terms. Beuys imagines electricity as a material manifestation of social creativity—an expansion of his idea of social sculpture. At once material and immaterial, electricity is a kind of energy-matter hybrid that pulsates and animates, connecting individuals to other individuals around them and manifesting a collective flow and power with which to produce, together, a world. Often, historians and critics focus on how Beuys's ideas about energy and electricity are meant to vivify objects, leading to an analysis of Beuys as a mystical and mystifying fetishist.[8] However, Beuys sought resolutely to combat fetishism, putting ideas of labor and social relations at the center of his artistic practice and striving to render them visible. Beuys struggled with how to do this, producing, on the one hand, complex informational maps on blackboards in his lectures, and on the other, densely signifying assembled objects.

His most explicit articulation of this idea of electricity as materialized social energy, creativity, and relations is *Honeypump in the Workplace*, Beuys's project for Documenta 6, held in 1977. This work consisted of the Free International University, a series of lectures, discussions, and performances on themes ranging from nuclear energy and its alternatives to human rights and unemployment. Beuys also installed a motorized pump, lubricated with over two hundred pounds of margarine, which circulated two tons of honey through a tangle of plastic tubes that spanned the event space at the Museum Fridericianum. Running continuously over the entire one hundred days of the exhibition, Beuys saw the machine as a symbol, catalyst, and carrier for the energy being generated by the activities of the Free International

Andy Warhol and Paloma Picasso pose in costume, date unknown.

University. *Honeypump* is not the first Beuys work to use the sticky substance. Honey also appeared in *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* (1965), where it covered the artist's head along with sheets of gold leaf. But honey as a metaphor for social organization comes to the fore with particular clarity when paired with the University. Beuys's metaphorical use of honey is a willful misreading of Marx's discussion of the difference between human constructions and the constructions of bees: even the worst human architect imagines his or her structure before making it, while bees (purportedly) work according to mere genetic programming. By using honey as his central material, Beuys suggests a reversal of Marx's terms, holding up the social production of bees as a model and rejecting the idea that to create a form, one needs a blueprint to follow.

With energy as a metaphor and *Honeypump* as its materialization, Beuys invokes a romantic ideal of creativity and collectivizes it. Labor is understood broadly as the creation of oneself and, simultaneously, the world. *Honeypump in the Workplace* is also where Beuys began to reimagine the concept of money in terms of flows of energy rather than crystalized objects. In a text titled "Theory of Money as the Bloodstream of Society," written together with this student Johannes Stüttgen, Beuys tries to imagine how money could socialize value rather than privatize it. His logic is circuitous and his path overlong for

Joseph Beuys, Honey Pump in the Workplace, in the Fridericianum, Documenta 6, Kassel, 1977.

this venue.[9] But the point is that Beuys works from an idea that the liberatory sort of labor that is at once social and self-valorizing already exists, if we can only unravel the objects and operations that obscure it. This is a romantic idea of labor as creativity, and an even more romantic idea of the artist as messianic deliverer of this ideal. But it is meant to contrast with the world of work as it is, holding out "artistic production" in admittedly performative and spectacular ways to highlight how it differs from other modes of work.

It should be apparent by now, however, that despite their rhetorical separation, Beuys's romantic ideal of self-valorizing artistic creation was of a piece with Warhol's alienated system of factory-made art. Why was Warhol's factory so appealing, if not because it offered participants another kind of value? It might be hard to describe this value as creative, but it is easy to call it social—the value found in being part of something fun, cool, desublimating. And Beuys, for his part, did not succeed in dispersing authorship or inspiring everyone to be an artist, which provokes the critical question: Why *isn't* everyone an artist? To explain why, we have to look at the systems that Warhol laid bare—systems that continue to maintain hierarchies, elevating some people at the expense of others. The rarified separation of art from everyday life made works produced in the Factory subject to expert authentication and proved too much for Beuys to overcome, while the desiring subject Beuys both embodied and sought to represent was always there in Warhol's factory, boxing up Brillo or operating the silkscreen.

What does it mean that these artists who related to artistic labor in such opposing ways are so mutually implicated? I would venture to say that it is because art cannot be reduced to an economic activity. Efforts to separate artistic labor, which is supposedly unalienated, from ordinary capitalist labor, which is anything but, blind us to the ways that contemporary artistic labor functions and is legitimated through a *combination* of the two ideals embodied by Warhol and Beuys. We know very well how to critique the ways in which an idealization of artistic labor (embodied by Beuys) eclipses or even justifies exploitative practices. For this reason, many contemporary discussions of artistic labor begin from art's economic and institutional base, highlighting the material conditions of artists, interns, curators, and staff. The premise here is

Joseph Beuys, Die Grünen: Kultur in Der Grosstadt, date unknown. Print on paper. Tate / National Galleries of Scotland Collection.

that art workers are workers like any other—and from this emerges a very rich historical model for analysis and resistance: art worker strikes, campaigns against unpaid internships, expansion of union benefits to precarious laborers, and protests against unfair labor practices in museums, just to name a few. There is an astounding amount of activity and organizing that can be generated from this premise and its attendant focus on art's institutional infrastructure and the art worker's position within it—but this is only part of the picture. Like current struggles in the university, it is necessary to confront the way that art holds out a space of sanctuary at the same time that it exploits that space and our belief in it.[10]

Art is not simply the place where desires get expressed and monetized. It is also where desires get fulfilled and monetized. There will always be a remainder, and that remainder is the libidinal investment in art as a space different from other spaces, and in creativity as a more expansive ideal of production. The persistence of this remainder demands a critique of artistic labor that goes beyond the terms offered by political economy, a critique that takes seriously those desirous investments that become entwined with—but are not reducible to—art's institutions and economic engines. Such a critique would confront the potential for transformation and revelation that persists in and through art and art *work*, as well as in and through capitalism (insofar as capitalism has both a parasitic and productive relation to our broader sense of social life). We cannot separate a critique of one from a validation of the other. This is not false consciousness. It is the knot that inexorably binds the legitimation crisis of institutions to the legitimation crisis of the self. This knot is familiar to those who are used to thinking about how to forge a generative rather than a subsumptive relationship between art and politics. It is also increasingly familiar to those struggling to analyze the labor performed on Facebook, Twitter, and other economies of desire that congeal social relations into a form.[11] Beuys and Warhol prefigure this tangled web, producing a vision of value as simultaneously obscured by its objectification and visualized in its networked expanse. If anything, art is free from the instrumental, practical mandates of labor organizing, and so it is a good place to start thinking through the paradoxes that would otherwise paralyze immediate action. The strength of Warhol and Beuys is how they capture and visualize the contradictions of artwork, pushing us to think of art as an economic activity whose sole purpose is not economic. Art is not an escape from alienation, but it not the perfect crystallization of it either. To hold these two in tension continues to be our challenge and our task.

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A version of this text was originally delivered as a presentation on the occasion of the exhibition SOLO SHOW* at e-flux, Tuesday November 17, 2013.

Lindsay Caplan is an art historian and educator based in Brooklyn. She currently teaches at Parsons and Eugene Lang College and is a fellow at the Center for the Humanities, The Graduate Center, CUNY, where she is working on her dissertation about early computer art.

1
Andy Warhol, "Interview with Gene Swenson," in *Art in Theory, 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* , eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 747. Original citation: "What is Pop Art? Interviews with Eight Painters (Part I)," *Art News* (November 1963).

2
Andreas Huyssen, "The Cultural Politics of Pop: Reception and Critique of US Pop Art in the Federal Republic of Germany," *New German Critique* 4 (Winter 1975): 77–97. For another perspective on the implications and contradictions of these democratizing claims for Pop, see Benjamin Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956–1966," in Kynaston McShine, *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* (New York: MoMA, 1989), 39–61.

3
See, for example, Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 49–65.

4
Caroline Jones explains: "The adoption of the name 'Factory' was a collective effort on the part of Warhol and his collaborators (primarily Billy Linich/Name and Gerard Malanga), clearly intended to displace the time-honored trope of the isolated studio with a term that would make room for them all in its collective embrace." See Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 192–198.

5
By attaching Warhol to the manager model, not only of the factory but also of the more affective economy of "coolness" and culture, I am expanding upon Jones, who argues that "the Factory and its productions were complex signifiers, shifting from the proletarian to the executive to the consumer, playing with gender and power in a social and cultural context that was itself in heady flux." Jones, *Machine in the Studio,* 189.

6
Thierry de Duve argues that Beuys embodied an idea of the proletarian/bohemian, connecting Beuys very much to the notion of species-being in early Marx. See Thierry de Duve, "Joseph Beuys, or The Last of the Proletarians," *October* 45 (Summer 1988): 47–62.

7
Joseph Beuys on the Organization for Direct Democracy, reproduced and translated in Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 268–269.

8
For example, see these highly disparate arguments about the nature of the social relations that Beuys gives form to and how: Donald Kuspit, "Beuys: Fat, Felt, and Alchemy," *Art in America* (May 1980): 78–89; and Benjamin Buchloh, "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique," *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 40–64. Also see Jan Verwoert, "The Boss: On the Unresolved Question of Authority in Joseph Beuys' Oeuvre and Public Image," *e-flux journal* 1 (December 2008), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/01/68485/the-boss-on-the-unresolved-question-of-authority-in-joseph-beuys-oeuvre-and-public-image/ .

9
To give an idea, it begins: "The development of a new concept of money follows logically from the description of creativity and 'ability value' which recognizes the flow of human beings to the places of production as the real capital." For the full text, see Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys,* 264.

10
In their 2004 essay "The University and the Undercommons" (now part of a book), Fred Moten and Stefano Harney struggled with this very paradox: "It can not be denied that the university is a place of refuge and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment." They discuss the continual constitution of insides and outsides, critical modes and complicit ones, formed ultimately to legitimize the university as a whole. The absence of any utopian, redemptive language is striking, but so is the lack of total dismissal or fantasy of exodus or escape. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," *Social Text* 79 (Vol. 22, No. 2) (Summer 2004): 100.

11
For an analysis of the darker side of these practices, see the essays compiled in *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory* , ed. Trebor Scholz (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Gean Moreno

New Ancestors: A Conversation with McKenzie Wark

Gean Moreno: Survivors of the strange hallucination that was called the End of History, we seem to be speaking again, and brazenly, of the Outside—an outside to the existing socioeconomic arrangement, an outside to existing forms of everyday life, an outside to the authority of institutionalized discourse. It is in relation to the reassertion of this figure or trope of the Outside that I read your contribution to *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, and in particular your introduction of the concept of xenocommunication, a kind of laying down of lines of exchange with the alien. What is as interesting as the notion of xenocommunication itself is that its possibility generates an administrative race for portal control. Someone has to patrol the points of contact. And the winners of the race have generally been gruesome power-forms, like the Church or the Party dictatorship. In what you write, I sense the latent proposal that at this moment there is no credible border patrol that regulates contact with the Outside. And this makes our moment one of possibility, of being done with these portals altogether.

McKenzie Wark: It may be because, while a third generation atheist, I come from a Protestant culture. We don't take kindly to authorities who claim to have been granted exclusive rights by the other to be its representatives, be they God-botherers or Lacanians.

My part of the *Excommunication* book, co-written with Alex Galloway and Eugene Thacker, is indeed about xenocommunication, in the double sense of communication with what is strange and also a sort of hospitality toward what is alien. I wanted to propose, speculatively, that communication seems to flourish under a sort of enabling condition inherent to xenocommunication—communication with what, in a sense, isn't there or can't be there. But rather than St. Paul, I wanted to follow the path of the heretics and dissenters who refused to abide by authorized channels of xenocommunication, let alone police them, as Paul did—comparable to NSA of xenocommunication. So I sketched a little counter-history to the Judeo-Christian controllers of the portals to xenocommunication. This counter-history included the heretical sects such as the Babelites, and modern descendants of the heretics such as Charles Fourier, Raoul Vaneigem, and François Laruelle.

Laruelle, incidentally, could be read in a strikingly Protestant fashion. There's nothing to be done to earn Grace. Xenocommunication is all in one direction. The other may indeed communicate to us, after a fashion, but there's no reciprocity, no exchange. Or you could read it via Epicurus and Lucretius: sure, the Gods exist, but they

Film still from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's World on a Wire [Welt am Draht], 1973.

hardly notice we exist. This idea may be more liberating than the notion that God is dead, which only cleared the space for Man to take His place as the correlate of Nature. Perhaps we are better off constructing the space of thought around the notion that the One is unilateral, that there's no exchange, and hence nobody can be the agent with exclusive rights.

GM: Is this one of the possibilities opened up by Laurelle's conception of the unilateral One—that the Outside, what is other to us, is now on the Inside somehow, inside the social totality itself? There is nowhere else to go looking for it.

MW: Yes, whatever you want to call it, the outside, the alien, alterity—it was never far away. There is only what Tim Morton calls "the mesh." There isn't actually a big other. It's very hard to grasp this, as it has to do with the way things aren't neatly nested in a hierarchy of scales, from big to small, passing though a middle range of scales which the human can understand. One doesn't really need a specialist to monitor the portal to the absolute on one's behalf, as if it were on a larger scale that only someone of higher rank could apprehend.

The odd thing is that we believe xenocommunication must have a limit condition in order to set a bound, within which communication about the regular scales in the regular way can proceed. But there's nobody who can actually ground a claim to xenocommunication as a special right. Philosophy has interestingly gone in some different directions to attempt this. One is reactionary: a return to religious language. The other is more ingenious, and rests, for example, on a claim that mathematics is ontology. This is a revival not of religion, but of Pythagoras.

A theological void or a mathematical ontology might give you an interesting way to talk about the absolute, and it might be fun and profound and perhaps even compelling. But it isn't necessary. It has no reciprocal, iterated,

adjustable means of encountering its object of thought. It's the absolute as fetish. The natural sciences, on the other hand, sometimes really do provide knowledge of things that are inhuman, if not entirely nonhuman. For a long time, science has proceeded via an apparatus, a series of techniques. Science is a kind of media, a communication with inhuman things. Science allows us to read off, as it were, signs of a world utterly indifferent to us, but in a way that does have a limited kind of reciprocity and iteration. You can test the results, adjust them, even improve them. Theology and philosophy's pretensions to somehow exceed that, or regulate it, or legislate for it, are clearly ridiculous. But bizarrely, such claims have returned.

I think a more modest approach is called for, a kind of low theory, which is no more than a creole language for negotiating different ways of living and producing knowledge. But I don't think we can speak anymore of the virtues of the tactical, the marginal, the local, the different, and so on. Tiny things won't save us from big things. It's more a question of realizing that this hierarchy of scales simply doesn't exist. Thought has gone from thinking difference to thinking universality, as if these corresponded to different scales, to little and big. But they don't. Carbon atoms and the biosphere directly communicate. We're living in an era of thinking about how tiny things are simultaneously big things, particularly in such an intensively networked world. We have tended to think local/global and different/same and little/big as concepts collapsed onto one another. Instead, it's time to think the scale-free mesh.

GM: How does one work within this scale-free mesh? Where does one invest energy and resources, if the goal is to stop reproducing the world as it is, if there is no longer a correlation between the artifact (cultural, religious, and so forth) and some version of the absolute, if Utopia can't be captured in any productive way in the object that holds its place, as some kind of anticipation and promise of it, or even a prod to actualize it? Although in *Excommunication* you employ infrastructure as a metaphor for the Real or One, I intuitively want to say that infrastructures—concrete infrastructures, the networks through which resources are distributed and through which "small" and "large" communicate directly (and undo this hierarchy of scales)—are good sites for intervention and inflection. This intuition figures into how I understand some of the complaints you have voiced regarding the ineffectiveness of contemporary art.

MW: It's interesting how otherwise very different critical theories of the aesthetic all ended up in the same place. After Adorno, you could think of the work of art as genuine non-equivalence, as that which refuses the extorted reconciliation of exchange value. After Althusser, you could think about art as part of a specialized superstructural domain, with relative autonomy from infrastructural struggles. After Rancière, you could

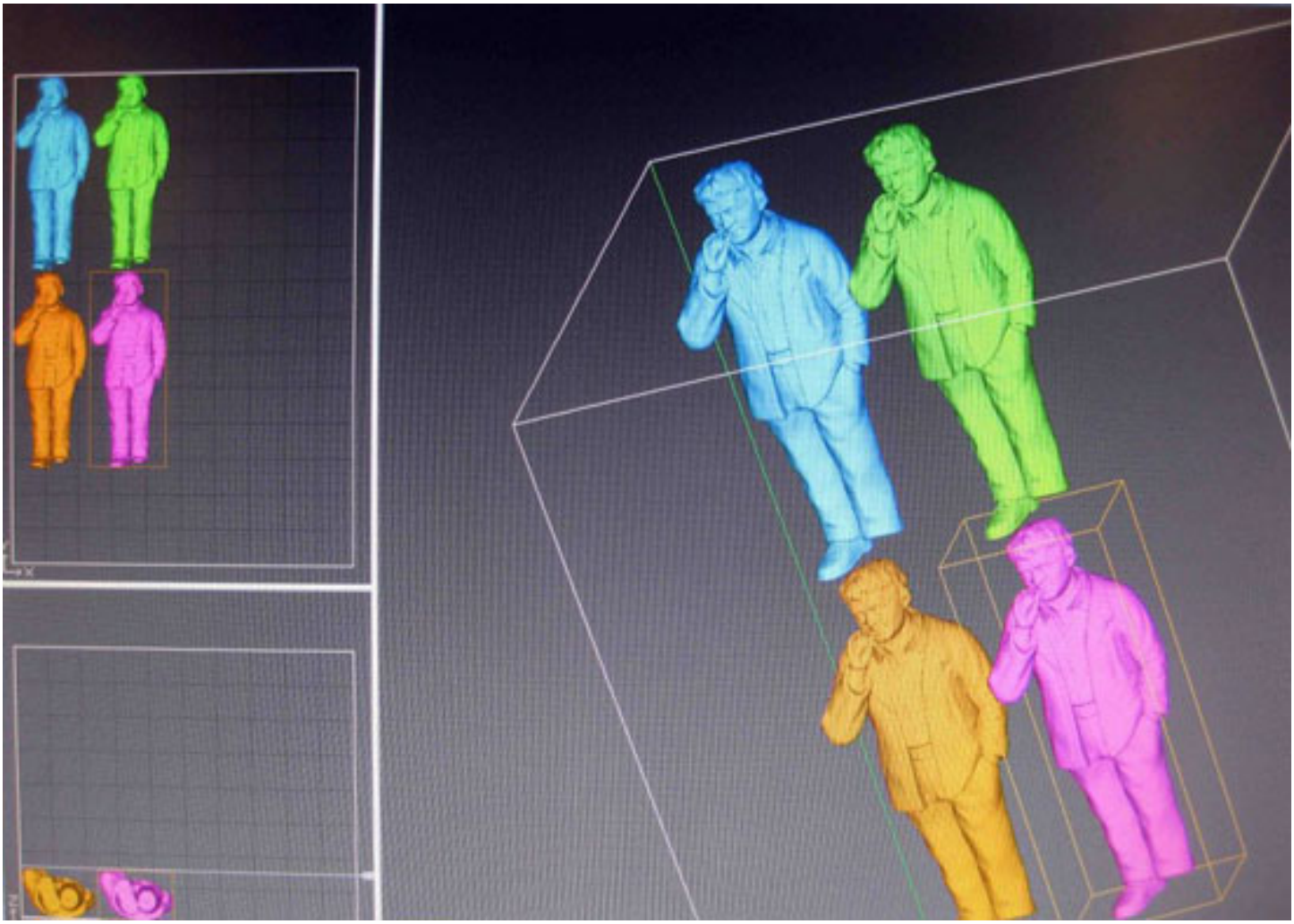
Lenin plays chess with Alexander Bogdanov, during a visit to Maxim Gorky, c. 1908.

assimilate the aesthetic to the political, such that any aesthetic act, if it redistributes the sensible, somehow magically counts as politics at the same time. Or you could go the postcolonial route and see representations of the other as having a special power function in need of deconstruction, in the broadest sense of the word.

All of these, incidentally, tended to be based on some sort of exchange or structural relation between infrastructure and superstructure. It was a reproduction, in a social and quasi-Marxist language of the old subject/object correlation. But what if (1) we never really know in advance what is infrastructure and what is superstructure? The cutting up of the social whole in advance, as a conceptual a priori in Althusser, is just complete nonsense. And (2) what if infrastructure and superstructure are in no way equivalent or comparable instances of the social formation? What matters about infrastructure is that it is base, in every sense—basic, but also messy, disgusting, primal, an encounter via an apparatus with something very inhuman.

This is why I am interested in those critical theories and those avant-gardes that really delved into this vulgar question of the base in different ways: from Alexander Bogdanov, Boris Arvatov, Andrei Platonov, and the various forms of Proletkult in the Soviet twenties, to George Bataille's general economy and Situationist practices of potlatch and détournement. These things were modest in effect, but were really about prototypes of new kinds of aesthetic economy and technology. Incidentally, this is also what concerned Walter Benjamin, although it is quickly read out of him—his interest in the apparatus of cinema as a kind of inhuman perception, and mechanical reproduction as a blow to a certain form of property relation in aesthetics. Or in short: art has to be basic and vulgar or not at all.

GM: Being vulgar and basic, assuming the condition of a prototype of a relation (rather than an



Rendering of 3D-printed Guy Debord action figures (2012) produced by McKenzie Wark, with design by Peer Hansen, and technical assistance by Rachel L.

object)—considering the examples you offer, is the most productive space for art found in the social field? There seems to be here an implicit critique of both the art institution and the current obsession in art practice and theory with self-referentiality and media specificity.

MW: If one has any knowledge at all of the actual world, how could one not respond to the current dominants of the art world with anything but sheer boredom? Not that there aren't interesting counter-currents and pockets, but the dominant capital-A Art World is just decoration. IKEA for billionaires. It's just of no interest to anyone who isn't being paid to pay attention to it. That's why I find design and architecture more interesting domains, where people are not just trying to prototype social relations but also asocial relations, i.e., questions of infrastructure, the inhuman, and so on. Those are fields that don't just play field-specific, self-referential games.

On the other hand, is there not still some terrific potential in the resources of art? What if we turned the whole thing inside out? What if we grabbed ahold of both the Art World and what Greg Sholette calls the "dark matter" of art, all those art teachers and students and Sunday painters, and treated all of that as potential resources for experiments in another way of life? It would be a question of an avant-garde of a more old fashioned kind, one not designed in advance to be fashion-leader in the Art World. One which really did try to abolish and supersede art as we know it. Wouldn't that be fun?

Asger Jorn thought that the problem with the modern world was the split between work, which pours content into forms, and design, which creates the forms for content, and art, which had become a kind of content-less form. He wanted to heal the rift, and indeed to abolish the commodified relation in which forms just hold contents—like tins hold soup—so they can be exchanged and consumed. It would be a question of what Chiara Bottici calls the "imaginal," which is a bit like what Castoriadis called the "imaginary institution of society": a collective, collaborative practice of creating new forms

that are not purely formal, but are proposals for forms of life. The art that still does that is the art that still interests me.

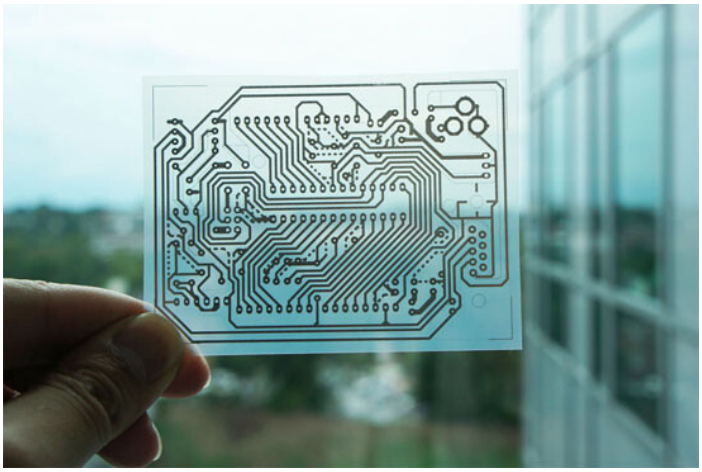
GM: The other thing that we should delve into more is the relation between the natural sciences and the inhuman. This is particularly interesting in relation to what Benjamin Bratton calls the "post-Anthropocene," the moment in which we, our biological formats, as well as certain technological and political horizons, will be phase-shifted, recast as the beta version of new and—to us—alien formations.

MW: Natural science is alien knowledge. The way it breaks out of the correlation of knowing subject and knowable, phenomenal object is via a third thing: the apparatus. The apparatus is an assemblage of tech and labor which registers and measures perceptions of what is inhuman, and mediates these perceptions back to the human, secondarily, as an aftereffect. This is why, incidentally, there can be no philosophy of science anymore, but only a media theory.

Take climate science—a key science of our time. It rests on an apparatus of very powerful computers and communication vectors, which overcome the "friction," as Paul Edwards calls it, between data and communication. It brings together global data according to global standards, mathematical models of the physics of climate drawn from fluid dynamics, and massive computational power. The model and data coproduce each other in a way, as the data sets are all partial, and many data points have to be interpolated to make the models work. And then all of that has to be mediated back to human awareness via tables, graphs, computer simulations, and so forth.

Our ability to even know the basic physics and chemistry of the biosphere and predict the outcomes of adding massive amounts of carbon to it is very recent, maybe only thirty years old. But the apparatus in general is not new, and perhaps not even unique to our species. Our species has always perceived the world via an apparatus. We measured time using marks on a stick or a rock, perhaps right from the start. There was never a point where we didn't have tools. We experience wood or stone or the earth through tools that cut and dig. We have always experienced the world via an inhuman apparatus of labor and tech. There was never a human without the inhuman.

Now it's a question of whether the infrastructure of the human/inhuman apparatus, with its tentacles deep in base matter, can be a means to produce a qualitatively different version of itself. What I hear Ben Bratton asking is this: Can this infrastructure produce another one? Can we modify the means of production? Not so much by "revolution"—which is usually no more than a superstructural phenomenon—but by mutation. A mutation at one and the same time of tools, relations, economies, affects, and so forth. Our job is really to



This printed circuit, developed by Georgia Tech, allows users, professionals, and amateurs to create cheaper and faster prototype electronics.

prototype elements of a new mode of production.

GM: In some way we are back to the secularized outside, the other that is already there waiting to be extracted, not through xenocommunication but through tinkering, through experiments that induce mutation. Science, at the moment, may be the place to look for alien knowledge, but it seems design—with its quasi-artistic freedom and penchant for speculative prototyping—may be where new apparatuses can be generated and through which infrastructures can be tested for porosity and pliability.

MW: Yes, I find design, or the borderlands between design, art, architecture, and technology, to be an interesting zone. It has to be said that this may not be a golden age for science and technology. We are constantly told that we are living in an era of "disruption" and "innovation," which makes one think that in reality it's quite the reverse. It's an era of the relentless same of commodification. But there are lots of people across the whole spectrum, from the sciences to technology to design, who want more than that, and who are actively working outside that framework. One of the great challenges of the times is to reconnect the imaginal energies in the sciences to those in the humanities, and perhaps something like design is a good meeting point for working that out. As my New School colleague Anne Balsamo argues, there's a technological imagination, a cultural construct, which sets certain limits on what kinds of projects tech people can initiate and organize. So in part, it's a question of broadening the technological imagination.

I have made a few modest works which sit in that space. The networked-book version of Gamer Theory, for example, was a way of imagining what the collaborative labor of writing could be like. Or the #3Debord project, where we made 3D-printed Guy Debord action figures. It

was a way of asking questions about the two key concepts of Debord's work: spectacle and détournement. What does it mean to move beyond the world of images and toward the world of things in both spectacle and détournement? This was what flipped people out, I think—that you could make a free .stl file of Debord himself. Isn't that a commodity? Maybe, but they were not for sale, and the file is free. Anyone can make one, or modify one. So what kind of object is that? These might be minor examples of what one might call conceptual design. Maybe it's no big advance over the self-referential and medium-specific obsessions of the art world, but at least it's about different fields of reference, and different media. And it's an inquiry that could point outwards rather than inwards. What's out there? What kinds of practice, nibbling around the edges of an apparatus, might take a little step into the great outdoors?

GM: Let's talk about writing—not your writing habits as much as the rate at which you seem to put material out, your promiscuity with different platforms, and the way you often employ the same material in multiple contexts. Unlike some of the writers you have written about, who often favored self-marginalization, you seem interested in a kind of incessant dissemination and a non-academic form of public exchange. How do you see it?

MW: When Charlie Parker was asked his religion, he replied, "I am a devout musician." While not claiming to put myself on the same level as Bird, it's the same with me. I'm a devout writer. It's just what I do, and pretty much daily. As a former journalist I know how to write quickly. I know that, as Walter Benjamin said, "the work is the death mask of its conception." So at a certain point it's just done and it's time to move on.

One thing that comes with being a writer, one steeped in the moderns and the avant-gardes, is that I don't just accept the conventions of either scholarship or journalism. I'm interested in taking the whole practice as an object of critique and experiment, including economies and technologies. And of course I have been on Facebook for twenty-five years, by which I mean that I came up through Bulletin Boards, Usenet groups, The Well, and in particular the listserv-based avant-garde of Nettime.org. So naturally I'm interested in how one works in and against the dominant textual culture industries of our time. The only way you get to write books—which is what I really love—is if you create the readership for them.

That would be my writerly response. But I am also a former militant, and so I have a certain training in modes of address. I'm more interested in confounding than persuading these days, so in that sense the avant-garde rather than the militant training I had won out in terms of practice. It's best, I think, when there's a certain element of play in writing as a practice.

Vladimir Tatlin's Letatlin presented to the public, date unknown. Photo: State Tretyakov-Gallery, Moscow, 2012.

GM: Although in recent years you have dedicated a great deal of time to the Situationists International, there is a new project afoot on post-revolutionary Russian culture. Would you say something about it?

MW: I think we need new ancestors. The old ones, in art and theory, have been exhausted and are exhausting us. One can't just be done with the past, however. One always takes two steps back to take three steps forward. But I think it's time to see the archive more as a Borges-like labyrinth rather than a lineage, particularly on the theory side. So I'm working on an alternate history of the intersection of critical theory and the avant-gardes in the twentieth century. *The Beach Beneath the Street* and *Spectacle of Disintegration* are putative volumes three and four of a series.

Molecular Red, which I am completing now, is volume one. It's about Alexander Bogdanov, Lenin's rival for the leadership of the Bolshevik Party and the founder of Proletkult. It's also about Andrei Platonov, the finest product of the Proletkult avant-garde. It's a way to thread through a certain moment of the October Revolution, a different moment than the Trotskyist one, which keeps asking over and over where it all went wrong. It's also an alternative to what is usually taken to be the avant-garde of the Soviet twenties—the futurists, constructivists, formalists. In the latter story, Proletkult is usually conspicuously absent, because its practitioners wanted so much more than a new style—they wanted a whole new mode of production in culture and science.

In short, I've been spending some time showing the riches that have been left out. We don't need to keep quoting Heidegger for fuck's sake. Art does not have to be endless iterations of the Duchampian gesture. We don't have to revive Lenin, as if no other radical thought ever existed. I'm rather drawn to heretics. If we must have ancestors, let's not have the Name of the Father. Let's have funny aunts

and queer uncles. It's much more fun, and maybe it's even a way to unblock the stasis in contemporary art and theory. You have to admit that it's been a bit boring.

X

McKenzie Wark is the co-author of *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (University of Chicago Press, 2013) and the author of *The Beach Beneath the Street* (Verso 2011) and *The Spectacle of Disintegration* (Verso 2012), among other things. He teaches at the New School for Social Research.

Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval

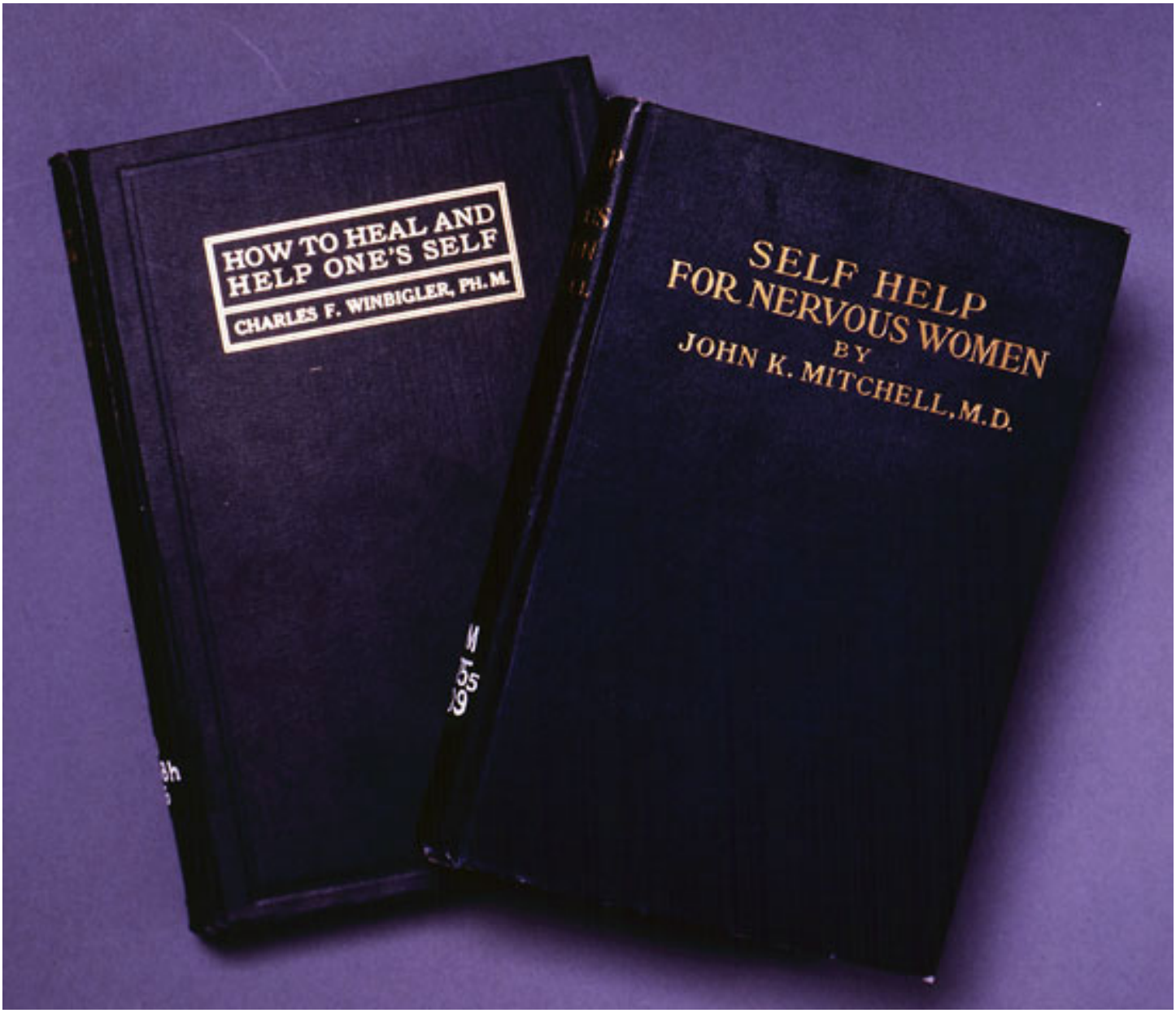
The New Way of the World, Part I: Manufacturing the Neoliberal Subject

The conception of society as an enterprise made up of enterprises comprises a new subjective norm, which is no longer precisely that of the productive subject of industrial societies. The neoliberal subject in the process of being formed, some of whose main features we wish to delineate here, is the correlate of an apparatus of performance and pleasure that is currently the subject of numerous works. There is no absence of descriptions of hypermodern, uncertain, flexible, precarious, fluid, weightless man today. These valuable, often convergent works at the intersection of psychoanalysis and sociology register a new human condition, which according to some even affects the psychic economy itself.

On the one hand, numerous psychoanalysts say that in their consulting rooms they are receiving patients suffering from symptoms that attest to a new era of the subject. The new subjective condition is often related in the clinical literature to broad categories like "the age of science" or "capitalist discourse." That the historical should take possession of the structural should come as no surprise to readers of Lacan, for whom the subject of psychoanalysis is not an eternal substance or transhistorical invariant, but rather the effect of discourses inscribed in the history of society.[1] On the other hand, in the sociological field the transformation of the "individual" verges on an incontestable fact. What is invariably referred to by the ambiguous term "individualism" is sometimes related to morphological changes, as in the Durkheimian tradition, sometimes to the expansion of commodity relations, as in the Marxist tradition, and sometimes to the extension of rationalization to all areas of existence, as in a more Weberian strand.

In their fashion, psychoanalysis and sociology thus register a mutation in the discourse on the human being, which can be related (as in Lacan) to science, on the one hand, and capitalism on the other. It was indeed a scientific discourse which, from the seventeenth century, began to state what a person is and what she or he must do; and it was in order to make the human a productive, consuming animal, a being of toil and need, that a new scientific discourse proposed to redefine the measure of personhood. But this very general framework is insufficient to identify how a new normative logic came to be established in Western societies. In particular, it does not enable us to pinpoint the reorientations the history of the Western subject underwent over three centuries, or still less the ongoing changes that can be related to neoliberal rationality.

This is because, if there is a new subject, it must be grasped in the discursive and institutional practices that engendered the figure of the man-enterprise or "entrepreneurial subject" in the late twentieth century, by encouraging the institution of a mesh of sanctions, incentives, and commitments whose effect was to generate new kinds of psychic functioning. To achieve the objective of comprehensively reorganizing society,



Two early examples of self-help books are featured in this image: Charles Fremont Winbigler, "How to Heal and Help One's Self or a New Outlook on Life," (Los Angeles, 1916); John Kearsley Mitchell, Self Help for Nervous Women: Familiar talks on Economy in Nervous Expenditure (Philadelphia, 1909).

enterprises, and institutions by multiplying and intensifying market mechanisms, relations, and conduct—this involved a becoming-other of subjects. The Benthamite subject was the *calculating* figure of the market and the *productive* person of industrial organizations. The neoliberal subject is a *competitive* person, wholly immersed in global competition.

The Plural Subject and the Separation of Spheres

For a long time, the so-called "modern" Western subject pertained to normative regimes and political registers that were heterogeneous and in conflict: the customary and religious sphere of old societies; the sphere of political sovereignty; and the sphere of commodity exchange. This Western subject thus lived in three different spaces: that of the services and beliefs of a still rural, Christian society; that of nation-states and the political community; and that of the monetary market in work and production. From the outset, this apportionment was mobile; and fixing and altering its boundaries was at stake in power relations and political strategies. The great struggles over the very nature of the political regime gave singularly focused expression to it. More important, but more difficult to grasp, are the gradual alteration in human relations, the

transformation of everyday practices induced by the new economy, the subjective effects of new social relations in the market space and of new political relations in the space of sovereignty.

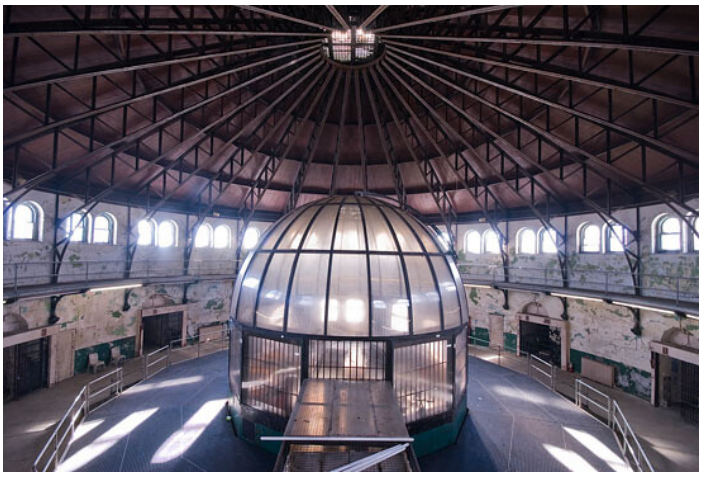
Liberal democracies are worlds of multiple tensions and contrasting growths. We can describe them as regimes, which, within certain limits, enabled and respected a mixed functioning of the subject, in the sense that they guaranteed both the separation and the articulation of the different spheres of existence. This heterogeneity found expression in the relative independence of moral, religious, political, economic, aesthetic, and intellectual institutions, rules, and norms. This does not mean that this feature of equilibrium and "tolerance" exhausted the nature of the dynamic that inspired them. Two major parallel growths occurred: political democracy and capitalism. The modern human was divided in two: the citizen endowed with inalienable rights and the economic actor guided by self-interest; human as "end" and human as "instrument." The history of "modernity" has sanctioned an imbalance in favor of the second pole. Were we to foreground the development, albeit uneven, of democracy, as do some authors, we would miss the major axis, which in their different ways, Marx, Weber, and Polanyi highlighted: the spread of a general logic of human relations subject to the rule of maximum profit.

The expansive commodification that Marx identified as the great price of "emancipation" assumed the general form of *contractualization* in human relations. Voluntary contracts between free persons—contracts certainly always underwritten by the sovereign body—thus replaced institutional forms of alliance and filiation and, more generally, old forms of symbolic reciprocity. More than ever, the contract became the yardstick of all human relations. As a result, the individual increasingly experienced in his relation to others his full, complete freedom of voluntary engagement, perceiving "society" as a set of relations of association between persons endowed with sacred rights. Here we have the core of what is commonly called modern "individualism."

As Durkheim showed, this involved a singular illusion inasmuch as the contract always contains more than the contract: without the guarantor state, no personal liberty could exist. But it can also be said with Foucault that underlying the contract is something other than subjective freedom. There is an organization of normalizing processes and disciplinary techniques that constitute what might be called an *apparatus of efficiency*. This apparatus of efficiency furnished economic activity with the requisite "human resources"; it has continually produced the bodies and souls apt to function in the great circuit of production and consumption. In a word, the new normativity of capitalist societies was imposed through a particular kind of subjective normalization.

Foucault provided an initial mapping of this process, which was problematic. Contrary to what is too often claimed, the general principle of the apparatus of efficiency is not so much a "training of bodies" as a "management of minds." Or rather, it should be said that disciplinary action on bodies was only one moment and one aspect of the molding of a certain modus operandi of subjectivity.

The *productive subject* was the great work of industrial society. It was not only a question of increasing material production. Power also had to be redefined as essentially productive, as a spur to production, whose limits would be determined solely by the impact of its action on production. The correlate of this essentially productive power was the productive subject—not only the worker, but the subject who produces well-being, pleasure, and happiness in all areas of his or her existence. Political economy very soon had as its guarantor a scientific psychology describing a psychic economy consistent with it. As early as the eighteenth century, the wedding of economic mechanics and the psycho-physiology of sensations was initiated. Doubtless this was the decisive intersection that would delineate the new economy of humans governed by pleasure and pain. The new politics was inaugurated with the panoptical monument erected to the glory of the monitoring of each by all and all by each.



The central guardhouse of the Holmesburg Prison, which was part of the Philadelphia prison system until 1995. Built in 1896, this prison is also know for the extensive decades-long dermatological, pharmaceutical, and biochemical weapons research projects involving testing on inmates throughout the 20th Century.

The Modeling of Society by the Enterprise

We are no longer dealing with old disciplines intended to train bodies and shape minds through compulsion to render them more submissive—an institutional methodology that has long been in crisis. It is a question of

governing beings whose subjectivity must be involved in the activity they are required to perform. Henceforth, various techniques help to manufacture the new unitary subject, which we shall variously call the "entrepreneurial subject" or "neoliberal subject," or, more simply, the *neo-subject*.[2]

For the neo-subject, the target of the new power is the desire to realize oneself, the project one wishes to pursue, the motivation that inspires the "collaborator" of the enterprise, and, ultimately, *desire* by whatever name one chooses to call it. The desiring being is not only the point of application of this power; it is the relay of apparatuses for steering conduct. For the aim of the new practices for manufacturing and managing the new subject is that individuals should work for enterprises as if they were working for themselves, thereby abolishing any sense of alienation and even any *distance* between individuals and the enterprises employing them. Each individual must work at their own efficiency, at intensifying their own effort, as if this self-conduct derived from them, as if it was commanded from within by the imperious order of their own desire, which there is no question of resisting.

Just as eighteenth-century philosophy accompanied the establishment of new technologies of power with soothing music, the humanist and hedonistic statements of modern human management accompany the use of techniques geared to producing new, more effective forms of subjection. However novel, the latter are stamped with the blindest, most classical form of social violence peculiar to capitalism: the tendency to transform the worker into a mere commodity.

This does not mean that there is nothing new about neo-management and that capitalism is basically always the same. On the contrary, its major novelty consists in the molding whereby individuals are rendered more capable of tolerating the new conditions created for them—and this even though they help to make these conditions increasingly harsh and abiding through their own conduct. The novelty consists in triggering a "chain reaction" by producing "enterprising subjects" who in turn will reproduce, expand, and reinforce competitive relations between themselves. In accordance with the logic of the self-fulfilling prophecy, this requires them to adapt subjectively to ever harsher conditions which they have themselves created.

This is what is not sufficiently appreciated by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Taking as their subject the ideology, which, according to their definition of the spirit of capitalism, "justifies engagement in capitalism,"[3] they tend to accept the new capitalism's claims about itself in the managerial literature of the 1990s as valid currency. But this is to stress only the seductive, strictly rhetorical aspect of the new modes of power. It is to forget that the effect of the latter is to constitute a particular subjectivity through specific techniques. In a word, it is to underestimate the specifically disciplinary aspect of managerial discourse by taking its arguments too literally. This underestimation is the obverse of an overestimation of the ideology of individual "flourishing," in an ultimately very one-sided thesis that derives the "new spirit of capitalism" from the "artistic critique" issuing from May '68. Yet, what developments in the "world of work" bring out ever more clearly is precisely the decisive importance of control techniques in the government of conduct. Neo-management is not "anti-bureaucratic." It corresponds to a new, more sophisticated, more "individualized," more "competitive" phase of bureaucratic rationalization; and it is only in an optical illusion that it relied on the "artistic critique" of May '68 to ensure the mutation of one form of organizational power into another. We have not emerged from the "iron cage" of the capitalist economy to which Weber referred. Rather, in some respects it would have to be said that everyone is enjoined to construct their own.

The new government of subjects in fact presupposes that the enterprise is not in the first instance a site of human flourishing, but an instrument and space of competition. Above all, it is ideally depicted as the site of all innovation, constant change, continual adaptation to variations in market demand, the search for excellence, and "zero defects." The subject is therewith enjoined to conform internally to this image by constant self-work or self-improvement. His or her own expert, own employer, own inventor, and own entrepreneur: neoliberal rationality encourages the ego to act to strengthen itself so as to survive competition. All its activities must be compared with a form of production, an investment, and a cost calculation. The economy becomes a personal discipline. Margaret Thatcher provided the clearest formulation of this rationality: "Economics are the method. *The object is to change the soul*."[4]

To this extent, it might be said that the first commandment of the entrepreneur's ethics is "help thyself" and that in this sense it is an ethic of "self-help." It will rightly be said that this ethic is not new; that it forms part of the spirit of capitalism from the start. We already find it formulated in Benjamin Franklin and better still, a century later, in Samuel Smiles, the author of a global bestseller published in 1859 entitled *Self-Help*. The latter banked exclusively on the energy of individuals, who were to be left as free as possible. But he persisted with an individual ethic—the only decisive one in his view. He did not envisage "self-help" becoming something other than personal moral strength, which everyone should develop for themselves. Above all, he did not envisage it becoming a political mode of government.[5] He even thought the opposite, basing himself on strict definitions of the private and public spheres: "It may be of comparatively little consequence how a man is governed from without, while everything depends on how he governs himself from within."[6] The main innovation of neoliberal technology precisely

consists in directly connecting the way a person "is governed from without" to the way that "he governs himself from within."

Personal Enterprise as an Ethos of Self-Valorization

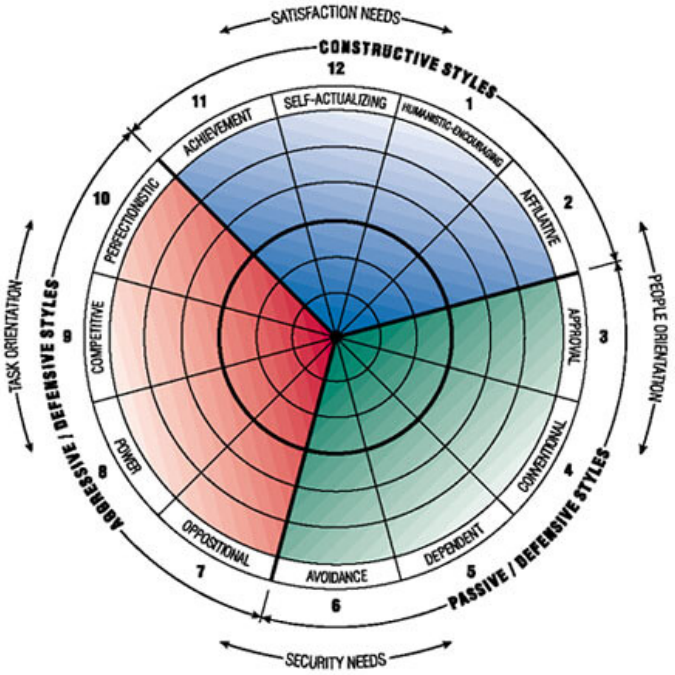
The self's new norm certainly consists in flourishing. To succeed, you must know yourself and love yourself. Hence the stress on the magical expression "self-esteem," key to all success. But these paradoxical statements about the injunction to be oneself and love oneself as one is are inscribed in a discourse that imposes a specific order on legitimate desire. Management is an iron discourse in a velvet vocabulary.

Rationalization of desire is at the heart of the norm of personal enterprise. As underlined by one of its technologists, Bob Aubrey, an international consultant from California, "to speak of personal enterprise is to express the idea that everyone can have a grip on their life: conduct it, manage it, control it in accordance with their desires and needs by developing appropriate strategies."[7] As a way of being of the human ego, personal enterprise is a way of governing oneself according to principles and values. Nikolas Rose identifies some of them: "energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility."[8]

It would be a mistake to disparage this dimension of the entrepreneurial ethic as merely an imposture and fraud. It is the ethic of our time. But it is not to be confused with a weak existentialism or facile hedonism. The entrepreneurial ethic certainly contains these ethical forms when it vaunts the "man who makes himself" and "integral flourishing." But it is distinguished by other features. The ethics of the enterprise is more bellicose in kind; it extols combat, force, vigor, success. Thus, it makes work the privileged vehicle of self-realization: it is by succeeding professionally that one makes a "success" of one's life.

As such, it is at the antipodes of the ethic of "conversion" (*metanoia*) of third- and fourth-century Christian asceticism, which was precisely an ethic of "a break with the self."[9] It is even profoundly different from the work ethic of early Protestantism. For if it likewise summons the subject to constant self-inquisition and "systematic self-control," it no longer makes success in work the "sign of election," which is supposed to provide each subject with certainty about their salvation.[10]

Concerned to secure theoretical support for this new ethic, Aubrey claims to have adopted the formula of "personal enterprise" from Foucault, making it a method of professional training.[11] While it is rather curious to see a critical analytics of power being transformed into a set of prescriptive and performative proposals for wage-earners, the aim is nevertheless highly revealing. In the new world



Human Synergistics Corporation's graph depicts different management styles and is one of the components of a multi-level series of diagnostic instruments, focusing on self-assessment, achievement thinking, and responsible decision-making. The company was founded by Dr. J. Clayton Lafferty, an MD in clinical psychology in 1971.

of the "developing society," individuals must no longer regard themselves as workers, but as enterprises that sell a service in the market: "Every worker must seek out a customer, position himself in a market, set a price, manage his costs, undertake research and development, and train himself. In short, I believe that from the individual's standpoint his work is his enterprise and his development is defined as a personal enterprise."[12] How is this to be understood? The personal enterprise is a "psychological and social, even spiritual entity," active in all areas and present in all relations.[13] Above all, it is a response to new rules of the game that radically change the work contract, to the point of abolishing it as a wage relation.

Labor having become a "product" whose market value can be measured with increasing precision, the time has come to replace the wage contract by a contractual relationship between "personal enterprises." In this regard, use of the word "enterprise" is no mere metaphor. The equivalence between market valorization of one's labor and self-valorization leads Aubrey to identify personal enterprise with a modern form of "care of the self," a contemporary version of *epimeleia*.[14]

"Management of the Soul" and Management of the Enterprise

All such practical exercises in self-transformation tend to transfer the whole burden of complexity and competition exclusively onto the individual. The "managers of the soul," to use a phrase of Lacan's adopted by Valérie Brunel, introduce a new form of government that consists in guiding subjects by making them fully endorse expectations of a certain conduct and subjectivity at work.[15]

Mastery of the self and of relations of communication appears to be the pendent of a global situation that no one can now control. If global control of economic and technological processes no longer exists, people's behavior is no longer programmable; it is no longer wholly describable and prescriptible. Self-control is cast as a kind of compensation for an impossible control of the world. The individual is the best, if not sole, "tracker" of complexity and the best actor of uncertainty.

Contrary to what Foucault's interpretation might be taken to imply, Pierre Hadot stresses that the "culture of self" in the Hellenistic epoch (first and second centuries) referred to a certain order of the world, to a universal reason immanent in the cosmos, such that the dynamic of internalization was at the same time self-transcendence and universalization.[16] In a way, the "asceses of performance" do not escape this logic. Obviously, this order is no longer that of Stoic "Nature," any more than it is the order intended by the Creator with which the "inner-worldly ascesis" of the Protestant ethic was bound up. But that does not prevent this "ascetics" from finding its ultimate justification in an economic order that transcends the individual, since it is expressly conceived to harmonize the individual's conduct with the "cosmological order" of global competition enveloping it. Certainly, one works on the self to render oneself more efficient. But one works to render oneself more efficient so as to render the enterprise, which is the benchmark entity, more efficient. Further still, the exercises that are supposed to bring about an improvement in the subject's conduct aim to make of the individual a "microcosm" in perfect harmony with the universe of the enterprise and, over and above that, with the "macrocosm" of the global market.

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Pierre Dardot is a philosopher and specialist in Hegel and Marx. His previous books include *Sauver Marx?: Empire, multitude, travail immatériel* (with Christian Laval and El Mouhoub Mouhoud) and *Marx, prénom: Karl* (with Christian Laval).

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1
Were we to linger over this, we could show that at several points in his writings and seminars Lacan indicated the importance of the utilitarian turn in Western history. Cf., for example, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2007), 112.

2
For our own purposes we adopt the neologism suggested by Jean-Pierre Lebrun in *La Perversion ordinaire. Vivre ensemble sans autrui* (Paris: Denoël, 2007).

3
Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* , trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 8.

4
Sunday Times , May 7, 1988; our emphasis.

5
Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help, with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (London: John Murray, 1890). In his Introduction (p. 1) the author summarizes his intention: "[our] happiness and well-being as individuals ... must necessarily depend mainly on [ourselves]—upon [our] own diligent self-culture, self-discipline, and self-control—and, above all, on that honest and upright performance of individual duty, which is the glory of man's character."

6
Ibid., 5.

7
Bob Aubrey, *Entreprise de soi* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000), 11.

8
Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 154.

9
Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* , ed. Frédéric Gros and trans. Graham Burchell (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 215.

10
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings,* eds. and trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (London: Penguin, 2002), 79.

11
"L'entreprise de soi, un nouvel âge," interview with Bob Aubrey, *Autrement* 192 (2000): 193. With Bruno Tilliette he had previously written *Savoir faire savoir* (Paris: I nteréditions, 1990) and *Le Travail après la crise* (Paris: Interéditions, 1994).

12
Aubrey, *Le Travail après la crise*, 85.

13
Ibid., 86.

14
Aubrey, *Le Travail après la crise*, 103. We recall that *epimeleia heautou* is the formulation for "care of the self" or "concern for the self" in classical Greek culture. Cf. Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject* .

15
Valérie Brunel, *Les Managers de l'âme. Le Développement personnel en entreprise, nouvelle pratique de pouvoir?* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).

16
Pierre Hadot, "Réflexions sur la notion de 'culture de soi,'" in *Exercises spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), 330.

Melissa Gronlund

Return of the Gothic: Digital Anxiety in the Domestic Sphere

When telegraph lines were first installed in the US and Europe in the mid-1800s, people complained of sightings of ghosts traveling along the wires. In 1848, two sisters in a village near Rochester, New York claimed that rapping coming from the floorboards of their bedroom were Morse-code messages from the dead. Telephones and electric machines were viewed with suspicion, and theater performances often portrayed them as vessels of magical powers. Such supernatural interpretations of emerging technology chimed with popular fascination with the Gothic, which functioned as a nexus for a variety of anxieties: the intrusion of the colonial Other into everyday life (symbolized as the inhuman monster or vampire), fear over women's desire for professional and sexual freedom, and above all, the rapid modernization of daily life.[1] From the 1700s on, the Gothic assumed its primary form in the novel. Fittingly, women constituted a large part of its audience—the Gothic novel often used architecture and private space to address questions of domestic life and the role of women. Old, creaky, labyrinthine houses (such as the Bates house in Hitchcock's latter-day Gothic *Psycho*) became mainstays of the genre, serving as metaphors for both the constraints on women's lives and the suddenly outdated lifestyles that would not go gently into that good night. The architectural elements of these sites also became characters in themselves, aiding and abetting the horrors that went on within.

In its barest bones, the Gothic is a clash of the old and the new, weighted toward the former as it struggles with its own obsolescence. By focusing on the domestic sphere, authors of Gothic novels could reflect on or directly channel those changes that were so difficult to fully comprehend. The sheer unknowable "otherness" of Gothic villains—their monstrosity, vampirity, non-humanity—reflects not only the scale of these great domestic alterations, but also that of the inability to make sense of them.

A similar substrate of anxiety and domestic disruption can be found in recent moving image work. Their reappearance or re-conjuring in these settings suggests a return of the Gothic as a way to wrestle with daunting, ongoing questions prompted by current technological shifts: How has the internet affected our sense of self? Our interaction with others? The structures of family and kinship? The return of the Gothic, which navigates between old and new and holds ties to an earlier era of rapid technological change, complicates the popular notion that post-internet art is concerned with a featureless and anonymous present. Coded and significant mise-en-scènes, anachronistic details, and forms of the digital uncanny upset the idea that moving image work dealing with new technologies is a-psychological or abstract in character. Rather, a preoccupation with the Gothic tropes of the uncanny, the undead, and intrusions into the home show how notions of the individual, the family, and the domestic are in fact being newly contested. These features and impulses

Ed Atkins, A Primer for Cadavers, 2011. HD video, 19'58."

underscore a number of recent art films and videos by artists such as Mark Leckey, Ed Atkins, Shana Moulton, Ryan Trecartin/Lizzie Fitch, and Laure Prouvost, many of which take the internet and the digital as a primary subject. It seems, in looking through this work, that Gothic tropes are returning as a reaction to the unprocessable changes of the "information age."

Last year, Mark Leckey's touring exhibition entitled The Universal Accessibility of Dumb Things (2013) addressed techno-animism, or as he put it, the fact that we are surrounded by "devices that bring non-living things to life."[2] Bringing together stereo systems and other machines, talismanic objects, fossils, "prop-relics" (props from TV shows and films that have achieved the status of both sculpture and documentation[3]), 3D models, and "spirit creatures," the show crystallized a fascination with the agency of objects and object-to-object relations that one can see in other arenas, such as the questions of thingness and objecthood (for example, in the work of Hito Steyerl) and Massimiliano Gioni's Venice Biennale (in which a number of the artists under discussion here featured), with its exploration of the fetish object and mystical or supernatural icons. All these inquiries return to the physical object at a moment when, firstly, the object itself is endowed with more power (phones, cars, and fridges have become "intelligent"), and secondly, when digitization and dematerialization promise a world made of pure ether. They also ask the same question posed by the Victorian Gothic when it bestowed supernatural powers on new technologies: How do these objects function autonomously from human power? (Notably, Freud's essay on the uncanny was written roughly during this same period, in 1919.) The link, aesthetic and otherwise, between current work and the Victorian age is in some ways explicit: Leckey's exhibition design, for example, deliberately referenced Victorian modes of display such as the diorama, and positioned visitors so they would look at the assembled goods from a remove rather than circulate among them.[4] The significance of the connection to the Victorian Gothic, however, goes beyond that of the digital uncanny. The way these works associate horror and intrusion with new forms of visual and reproductive technology suggests that the traditional subjects of the Gothic novel—mainly the home, and the identities sustained within it—are now being radically reorganized, similar to the way the introduction of the TV reorganized domestic life in the 1950s.

Leckey's film *Made in 'Eaven* (2004), for example, shows a digital recreation of Jeff Koons's *Rabbit* (1986) in the middle of an antiquated front room, complete with a fireplace and drafty sash windows. The space is Leckey's studio, recognizable from other videos of his. This sense of familiarity is reflected materially in the 16 mm stock on which the film is shown—a warm graininess that contrasts with the cold digital representation of the silver rabbit. The "camera," or the point of view represented as such, circles

Installation view of Mark Leckey's 2013 exhibition, The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things. Photo: Nigel Green.

the rabbit, but is never itself reflected. Indeed, the rabbit only ever shows its surroundings, but not the artist who films it. As a symbol captured in a place of creation (the studio), the rabbit can be read in various ways: as a representation of the anxiety of artistic influence; as the pressure to produce something as cold, hard, and cash-generating as the Koons rabbit; as the vacuity of the Koons rabbit itself; or as a figure of postmodernity, with its deliberate banality and consumerism.

The conflict Leckey sets up in *Made in 'Eaven* is one between this uncanny outsider and the warmer, familiar space within—a conflict borne out by the technological disjunction of 16 mm and HD, and the refusal of the bunny to reflect any glimpses of a human or human labor. In Ed Atkins's *A Primer for Cadavers* (2011) and *Us Dead Talk Love* (2012), digital technologies are similarly figured as the animate-inanimate. In these videos, the digitally rendered dead look back on what the world was like when bodies had materiality and all that comes with it: hair, nails, and abject bodily functions. In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Atkins clearly linked this state of the cadaverous to new digital technologies and their immateriality:

> Cadavers became the best way to look at representation and, in particular, recent technologies of representation. There is the push in industrial cinema towards high definition and 3D, and at the same time the body of cinema is falling away: there is no celluloid, no tape, no DVD. All you are left with are these reams of code, which, to a certain extent, simply haunt different media.[5]

Similarly with *Made in 'Eaven*, the conjunction of old and new media in Shana Moulton's video work also represents an intrusion, here of the insidious advertising of the American pharmacological industry into her bedroom. This broadcast break-in suggests the flipside of the Victorian panic around the entrance of germs into the home, which could be detected, and entered into popular conscience, thanks to the advent of microbiology. In her video *Restless Legs Syndrome* (2012), Moulton is shown lying in bed watching TV when a commercial for a drug called Mirapex comes onscreen. (The TV is, notably, positioned in front of an unused fireplace.) As she watches in bed, Moulton's legs multiply and begin twitching; at

another point, three vaguely body-shaped, logo-like figures rise out of the TV screen and dance over her prone body. Again, different technologies meet on the picture plane: the seamless diegetic space of her bedroom set, and the clumsy animations of the twitching legs and dancing figures. Although this particular work does not employ the macabre style one associates with the Gothic, the plot is familiar: strange creatures born of technology appear in the bedroom of a young woman, lying alone.

Shana Moulton, Restless Legs Syndrome, 2012. Video still.

The site of these collisions of old and new is revealing: While Atkins and other artists such as Oliver Laric use the non- or pseudo-space of a computer screen as a backdrop, other artists use a domestic background—often the artist's own home (something consonant with the YouTube-esque feel of some of these works). As in the historical Gothic, the domestic sphere is used to personify the familiar, and as such it becomes a character in itself. In *Restless Legs Syndrome*, a mouth and hands appear behind apertures in the wall, so that the room talks above Moulton's head. The threat is to the house and, by extension, the ways of living its walls contain.

The architecture of video itself is emphasized in the installation displays of many of the works mentioned above. In a move that again links these works to the prop-relic or the object endowed with agency, videos by Moulton, Trecartin, and Prouvost are shown in tandem with different structures and props that echo scenes from the respective films. Trecartin/Fitch's seven-part cycle, *Any Ever* (2011), portrays characters in various reality TV-like sites (bedrooms, gyms, airplanes). The different chapters of the video were shown in separate rooms at MoMA PS1 and elsewhere, each of which conjured a semi-indeterminate locale: the body of an airplane, a boardroom, a rec room, and so forth. Trecartin/Fitch's installation acknowledges the varied viewing conditions in which moving image works are now regularly seen: "any ever" space can be rendered, via computers and tablets, into a private viewing space. Moreover, as Maeve Connolly wrote in a text on the tendency of televisual objects to be displayed in such installations, these objects "strongly emphasize use and interaction … privileging affective relations that bind the humans and the objects encountered in fictional narratives."[6] Littered in front of the screen, the items from the film or video extend the haptic space of the on-screen work into the literal playing field of the viewer, bringing him or her further into the affective and bodily resonances of the work.

In art criticism about works that address the internet, Trecartin is now almost ritually invoked. This is perhaps the case because so few other artists have tackled the internet as both a style and a highly efficient mass dissemination machine. Trecartin originally emerged as a very young artist posting all of his videos on the internet, flouting the normal channels of art distribution. (Like many "non-art" YouTube videos, these by and large featured a cast of his friends.) In *Any Ever*, however, he returned, with a bang, to the material—something consonant with the trend of the past two decades toward the use of film paraphernalia (projectors, celluloid film, gels, and the prop-relic) within exhibition spaces. We see a push-and-pull between the material and immaterial in both Trecartin's own practice and its critical reception; he posts his work online while at the same time thematizing this setup in exhibition contexts. Significantly, Trecartin's deliberate McLuhanesque equation of medium and message counters what has become the dominant view of film and video in our digital age: that medium itself has been devalued. Even the idea of a medium, as Francesco Casetti has written, has become a "cultural form: it is defined [instead] by the way in which it puts us in relation with the world and with others, and therefore by the type of experience that it activates."[7] It is to be understood as the full sensory experience of film, and not as the strips of celluloid with which it shares a name—a return to the earlier, pre-1930 theorizations of film, which, as Casetti shows, privileged the response to the cinema rather than the making.

While the ebbing importance of medium holds largely true in the realm of film studies, which concerns itself with mainstream work, this is less the case in artists' moving image work, which has developed from a tradition in which the medium is a powerful signifier—hence my argument that the use of hybrid technologies in some of these works is still intended as legible and meaningful. One could even speculate that the fetish of the film strip has been replaced by the prop-relic object in the gallery: it likewise displays the talismanic potential and material grounding previously associated with cinema as film.

When they first appeared, the photograph and the filmstrip were both regarded as sites of ghostly exchange. This view remained prevalent well into the twentieth century; André Bazin famously commented that film is "time mummified," a notion that, even though formulated in 1958, harkens back to both the idea of necromancy and the Victorian fascination with Egyptian techniques for

Wendy Vainity, Meow, Meow I am a Cat, 2012.

preserving the body. In the nineteenth century, popular lore held that photographs would steal your soul, and photography's association with death has been thoroughly explored. One can only imagine what an eerie and extraordinary experience it must have been to look for the first time at the face of someone missing or dead. The photograph symbolized the "collapsing of time and distance"[8] achieved by telegraphs and railways (a process signficantly advanced by the internet today). The supernatural was used to explain technological operations that were not immediately visible, such as the exposure and development of a photograph, but also more "mundane" processes like electricity or telegraphs. The prop-relics that accompany the digital works replicate this function of the supernatural: they retain the mystery of the event and the otherness of the world beyond. They provide a way of making real the immaterial visualizations on screen, while also making the real virtual, bringing the viewer into the fictional world on display.

For example, Trecartin's long-form work, *A Family Finds Entertainment* (2004), adopts a horror-story plot and Gothic tropes, including the walking dead. In the video, a strange child, Skippy, plays upstairs while his parents are downstairs. Skippy, who is played by Trecartin, leaves the house and is run over by a car; this incident is relayed to another family member, also played by Trecartin, and at the end of this conversation, Skippy returns, apparently alive. The video explores the fracturing of a typical US family. Seen from the perspective of Skippy, it is a banal parody of suburban domesticity; life in the suburbs is presented as so boring that a family will entertain fantasies of the death of one of its members simply for something to do.

The importance of the domestic sphere in these works relates to the patterns of behavior instituted by television, the immediate technological precursor to the personal computer. Connolly argues that the recurrence of the television as a leitmotif underscores "the important historical relationship that exists between broadcasting and domesticity."[9] TV has been theorized as reorganizing domestic time around sitcom schedules, and domestic space—especially the livingroom—around the television set (as opposed to the fireplace). The internet—and more specifically YouTube and other such platforms (Hulu, College Humor, BBC iPlayer, Ubuweb, and so forth)—represents a similarly large-scale shift in the family space, from one of collective viewing to one of atomized individual viewing. The family home, particularly with "old world" effects such as the fireplace, thus reappears in these videos as a significant locale precisely at the moment it is being lost.

The anxiety evoked in Trecartin's films derives from their need to visibly perform the everyday—what Matthew Buckingham, in a film of a different tone (*Situation Leading to a Story* [1999]), called "the familiar

Laure Prouvost, Monolog, 2009. Video still.

Ryan Trecartin, Lizzie Fitch, Any Ever, 2011. Installation view.

awkwardness of people performing their identity for a story without a plot." The multiplication of characters and selves played by Trecartin, and Trecartin/Fitch in *Any Ever*, underscores this sense of a splintered and recursive need, brought on by the camera, for the self to be actively and constantly performed.

Prouvost's films likewise use this mode of the artist talking, often antagonistically, to a remote and undefined audience. In *Monolog* (2009), filmed in her home, the artist seeks to turn the domestic setting into a definite place by means of almost anachronistic, quaint details: pointing out a mouse that runs across the room in front of the screen, or remarking on the fabric of the seats. Her more narrative film *The Wanderer* (2012) follows a terrified protagonist on the run; it is an adaptation of a translation of Kafka's "Metamorphosis" by a writer who knows no German. The drama of the work ends at a stately home where the main character, Gregor Samsa, tries to burn a flatscreen TV in a grand fireplace (here, again, the fireplace and the TV). Notably, the installation of the film also replicated elements from its scenery. At this point in the film, time bifurcates: the characters freeze like the automata or wax characters in nineteenth century museums, while a modern-day tour visits the historic house. If this is a meeting of old and new, it is one surrounded by profound incomprehension: Samsa's confusion is compounded by the mistranslation. Prouvost's "wanderer" is a fictional character in a real world, one struggling with his own existence in time. Neither he nor we will ever know what haunts him.

The grouping of artists together here under this loose rubric of the Gothic is meant to highlight the ways in which these artists, and others, are representing the fears that accompany change—changes that now, like in the Victorian age, are ushered in by major technological advances. Along with typical Gothic tropes and plot lines, it is the explicit negotiation with the past that most keenly links these works to this nineteenth-century literary movement. Even in artists who are now considered digital natives, it is indeed curious to see which aspects of the internet and the digital are figured as already natural, and which still occupy that ambiguous and frightening territory of the uncanny.

X

Melissa Gronlund is a writer based in London who wishes to severely curtail the rights of the future generation living in her house.

1
In Central Europe, the Gothic also had to do with the changing political landscape, where power was shifting from the nobility to the bourgeoisie. Elites were no longer granted their place via parentage, but rather by socioeconomic success. As a result, power rested not in the bloodlines of a certain family, but with a group of individuals who came to be identified with the nation-state. This change provoked a popular obsession with bloodlines and with blood itself as a signifier of identity, as evidenced in folktales and Gothic novels such as *Dracula*. See Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

2
See Leckey's YouTube video "Proposal for a Show," December 17, 2010, which was made before the exhibition opened at Nottingham Contemporary: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8QWrLt2ePI .

3
See Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward, "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster," *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 2 (Winter 2006).

4
In an essay on Mike Kelley's show The Uncanny, Christoph Grunenberg notes that the public museum arose at the same time as the Gothic novel, and since then, "public enlightenment and the darkness of supernatural horror have been engaged in a tug of war." He also remarks upon the "spectacles" of the "animation of dead matter through the illumination of sculpture galleries with flickering candlelight and the staging of elaborate illusionary tableaux," a setup that was once common in museums. See C. Grunenberg, "Life in a Dead Circus: The Spectacle of the Real," in *The Uncanny* (Liverpool and Vienna: Tate Liverpool and MMK, 2004), 59. Exhibition catalog. Mike Kelley's The Uncanny is a clear precursor of Leckey's Universal Accessibility of Dumb Things.

5
Hans Ulrich Obrist in conversation with Ed Atkins, *Kaleidoscope* 13 (January 2012), http://kaleidoscope-press.com/issue-contents/ed-atkins-interview-by-hans-ulrich-obrist/ .

6
Maeve Connolly, "Televisual Objects: Props, Relics and Prosthetics," *Afterall* 33 (Summer 2013): 77.

7
Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," *NECSUS* 2 (Autumn 2012).

8
See Introduction, *The Victorian Supernatural* , eds. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

9
Maeve Connolly, "Televisual Objects," 77.