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#1: "Value"

vanabbemuseum

# Play Van Abbe

## About

■ The 18-month programme *Play Van Abbe* at the Van Abbe-museum consists of exhibitions, projects, performances, lectures and discussions, taking the collection of the Van Abbe-museum as a starting point. *Play Van Abbe* is subdivided into four parts, each with its own theme.

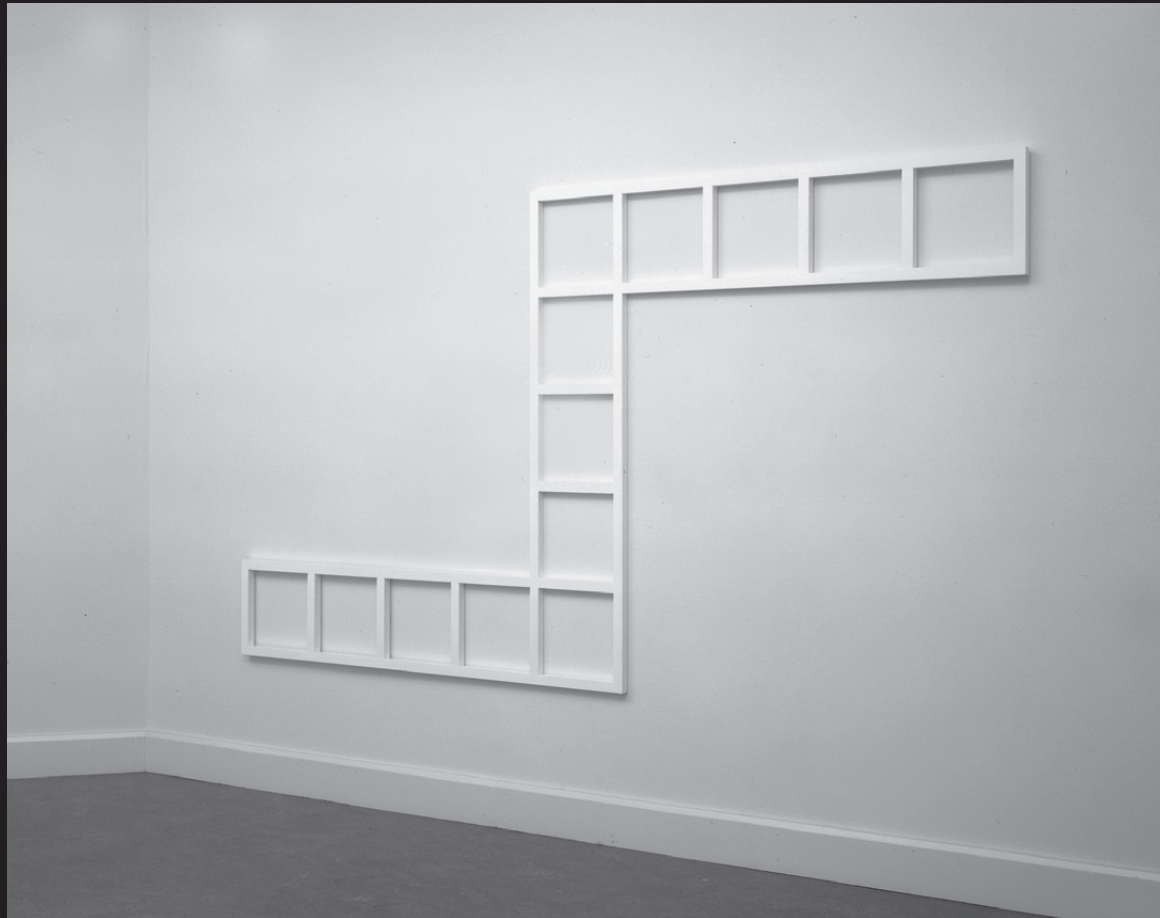
Part 1, *The Game and the Players*, began in November 2009 and ran until March 2010. In this first part the museum focuses on the stories of artists and exhibition makers. Who are these “players” within a museum and which stories do they tell? How was the collection presented in 1983 and how is this perceived in 2010? How does the current director present the collection? In what way does an art museum position itself – both in the present and in the past? These questions were put up for discussion in *The Game and the Players* in three exhibitions: *Repetition: Summer Display 1983*, *Strange and Close* and *Rien ne va plus*. Part 1 of *Play Van Abbe* closed in March 2010 with the project, *If I Can't Dance... Edition III* – The second part of *Play Van Abbe*, called *Time Machines*, opens in April 2010 and will be on view until the end of August 2010. This chapter investigates museum models from the past, asking: how does the museum use presentation techniques to tell a story and what are the hidden assumptions? *Time Machines* includes the exhibitions, *Museum Modules* and *In-between Minimalisms* (10/04 - 12/09/2010), as well as *To the Margin and Back* (10/04 - 16/08/2010).

# The Copyist

*Hedge Funds in Swaps Face Peril With Rising Junk Bond Defaults*  
May 20 (Bloomberg) – It's Friday, March 14, and hedge fund adviser Tim Backshall is trying to stave off panic. Backshall sits in the Walnut Creek, California, office of his firm, Credit Derivatives Research LLC, at a U-shaped desk dominated by five computer monitors. Bear Stearns Cos. shares have plunged 50 percent since trading began today, and his fund manager clients, some of whom have their cash and other accounts at Bear, worry that the bank is on the verge of bankruptcy. They're unsure whether they should protect their assets by purchasing credit-default swaps, a type of insurance that's supposed to pay them face value if Bear's debt goes under. Backshall, 37, tells them there are two rubs. The price of the swaps is skyrocketing by the minute, and the banks selling the insurance are also at risk of collapsing. If Bear goes down, he tells them, it may take other banks with it. "There's always the danger the bank selling you the protection on Bear will fail," Backshall says. If that were to happen, his clients could spend millions of dollars for worthless insurance. Investors can't tell whether the people selling the swaps—known as counterparties—have the money to honor their promises, Backshall says, when phone calls. "It's clearly a combination of absolute fear and investors really not knowing," he says. On this day, a CDS-market meltdown doesn't happen. In a frenzy of weekend activity, the Federal Reserve and JPMorgan Chase rescue Bear Stearns from bankruptcy—removing the need for the sellers of credit-default protection to pay up on their contracts. *Chain Reaction* Backshall and his clients aren't the only ones spooked by the prospect of a CDS catastrophe. Billionaire investor George Soros says a chain reaction of failures in the swaps market could trigger the next global financial crisis. CDSs, which were devised by J.P. Morgan & Co. bankers in the early 1990s to hedge their loan books, now constitute a sprawling, rapidly growing market that includes contracts protecting \$62 trillion in debt. The market is unregulated, and there are no public records showing whether sellers have the assets to pay out if a bond defaults. This so-called counterparty risk is a ticking time bomb. "It is a Damocles sword waiting to fall," says Soros, 77, whose new book is called "The New Paradigm for Financial Markets: The Credit Crisis of 2008 and What It Means" (PublicAffairs). "To allow a market of that size to develop without regulatory supervision is really unacceptable," Soros says. *Lumpy Exposures* The Fed bailout of Bear Stearns in March 14 was motivated in part, by a desire to keep that sword from falling, says Joseph Mason, a former U.S. Treasury Department economist who's now chair of the banking department at Louisiana State University's E.J. Ourso College of Business. The Fed was concerned that banks might not have the money to pay CDS counterparties if there were large debt defaults, Mason says. "The Fed's fear

was that they didn't adequately monitor counterparty risk in credit-default swaps—so they had no idea of where to lend nor where significant lumpy exposures may lie," he says. Those counterparties include none other than JPMorgan itself, the largest seller and buyer of CDSs known to the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, or OCC. The Fed negotiated the deal to bail out Bear Stearns by allowing JPMorgan to buy it for \$10 a share. The Fed pledged \$29 billion to JPMorgan to cover any Bear debts. *Cast Doubt* "The sudden failure of Bear Stearns likely would have led to a chaotic unwinding of positions in those markets," Fed Chairman Ben S. Bernanke told Congress on April 2. "It could also have cast doubt on the financial positions of some of Bear Stearns's thousands of counterparties." The Fed was worried about the biggest players in the CDS market, Mason says. "It was a JPMorgan bailout, not a bailout of Bear," he says. JPMorgan spokesman Brian Marchiony declined to comment for this article. Credit-default swaps are derivatives, meaning they're financial contracts that don't contain any actual assets. Their value is based on the worth of underlying loans and bonds. Swaps are similar to insurance policies—with two key differences. Unlike with traditional insurance, no agency monitors the seller of a swap contract to be certain it has the money to cover debt defaults. In addition, swap buyers don't need to actually own the asset they want to protect. It's as if many investors could buy insurance on the same multimillion-dollar home they didn't own and then collect on its full value if the house burned down. *Bigger Than NYSE* When traders buy swap protection, they're speculating a loan or bond will fail. When they sell swaps, they're betting that a borrower's ability to pay will improve. The market, which has doubled in size every year since 2000 and is larger in dollar value than the New York Stock Exchange, is controlled by banks like JPMorgan, which acts as dealers for buyers and sellers. Swap prices and trade volume aren't publicly posted, so investors have to rely on bids and offers by banks. Most of the traders are banks; hedge funds, which are mostly private pools of capital whose managers participate substantially in the profits from their speculation on whether the price of assets will rise or fall; and insurance companies. Mutual and pension funds also buy and sell the swaps. Proponents of CDSs say the devices have been successful because they allow banks to spread the risk of default and enable hedge funds to efficiently speculate on the creditworthiness of companies. *Seeing the Logic* The market has grown so large so fast because swaps are often based on an index that includes the debt of scores of companies, says Robert Pickel, chief executive officer of the International Swap and Derivatives Association. "Whether you're a hedge fund, bank or some other user, you're increasingly seeing the logic of using these instruments," Pickel says, adding he doesn't worry about counterparty risk because banks

**PLAY**  
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VAN ABBE



You never actually own a Sol LeWitt.  
You merely look after it for the next generation.

Play Van Abbe.

Soll Lewitt  
*Untitled* (wall structure), 1972  
Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

## From the editors

*The typical magazine, sold at a typical news stand, at a typical airport, has inspired this first edition of the free Play Van Abbe journal – entitled, The Copyist. The matter-of-fact anonymity of a magazine and its casual existence amidst other media paraphernalia makes it an ideal vehicle for notes of economies: monetary, imaginary, fictional...*

*In its ambitious 18-month Play Van Abbe programme, the Van Abbemuseum has embarked on a four-part exploration into what the museum of the 21st century might be. During this time, the Van Abbemuseum aims to destabilise the idea of a “permanent collection”, activating its dynamism via a series of interruptions, outside interpretations and inside re-presentations.*

*The Copyist – a title referring to both the act of transcribing certain events in real time but also the duplication of already published material – mirrors the outside/inside tension of the Play programme. Using a dual structure of core and wrapper, the journal invites curators, artists, activists, researchers, cultural commentators and writers to contribute a constellation of ideas at the core of Play Van Abbe (in this case, those pertaining particularly to Part 1 and Part 2), while wrapping these within a broader socio-political framework.*



The Copyist – 3 – Wrapper



# The Politics of Perception Art and the World Economy

## Brian Holmes & Claire Pentecost

### ■ POLITICS

*Crystal Casinos, the lives of oranges and “collateralized debt obligation” are all part of the economies of value governing the state of the world as we think we know it.*



An old man with a hearing aid stands with his back to a low wall, juggling a profusion of juicy oranges and bright red tomatoes. One by one he plucks them from the air and sets them down in perfect pyramids, orange and red. The juggler is the neoliberal ideologist Friedrich von Hayek, who thinks that that to act in a world of commodities, all you need to know are their prices:

*It is a profoundly erroneous truism, repeated by all copy-books and by eminent people when they make speeches, that we should cultivate the habit of thinking what we are doing. The precise opposite is the case. Civilisation advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them.<sup>1</sup>*

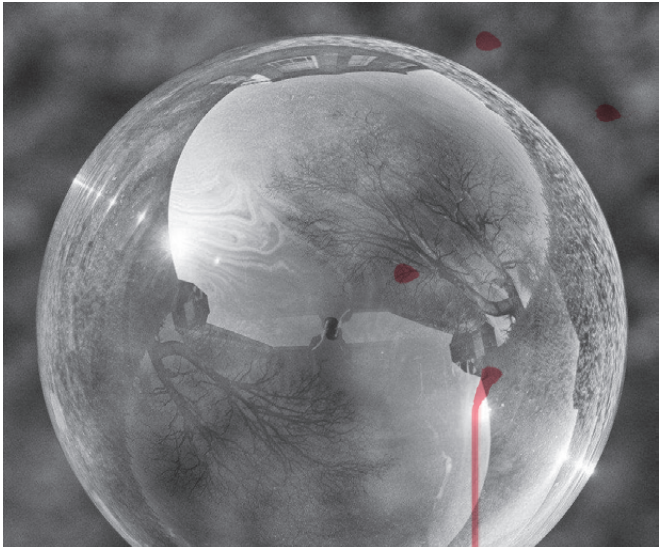
On the other side of the wall is a garden crossed by winding paths. Here and there, gold coins lie scattered on the ground, as if devoid of any value. A bespectacled man in a woolen suit is watering a row of beans in the sun. His name is Karl Polanyi, and he reflects aloud on the history of the industrial revolution:

*The middle [or trading] classes were the bearers of the nascent market economy; their business interests ran, on the whole, parallel to the general interest in regard to production and employment... On the other hand, the trading classes had no organ to sense the dangers involved in the exploitation of the physical strength of the worker, the destruction of family life, the devastation of neighbourhoods, the denudation of forests, the pollution of rivers, the deterioration of craft standards, the disruption of folkways, and the general degradation of existence including housing and arts, as well as the innumerable forms of private and public life that do not affect profits.<sup>2</sup>*

Both these men were economists, and both became famous in the wake of the Great Depression and the Second World War. Their ideas developed in opposite directions, and over the long run, it is the former with his principle of ignorance who has been vastly more influential. Could the latter have anything to say to us today, in the wake of yet another global crisis? Do artists, curators and intellectuals need to think about what they are doing in the world economy?

### *The Crystal Casino*

After many long walks, drives and conversations in the prodigious city of Istanbul, we set out to discover where the tomatoes and the oranges come from. We thought we might also see how the phantasmatic juggler operates in one of the world's most prolific gardens. This quest led us down the Mediterranean coast to Antalya, the fastest growing province in Turkey, the center of the country's tourist industry and the leading producer



of hothouse vegetables for export. On these coastal plains we found acres of crystal palaces: the older glass-paned and newer plastic-wrapped greenhouses of the global horticultural industry. Feeding on the same sunny clime were stretches of condominiums for vacationers, shopping malls, and clusters of five-star hotels including replicas of the Kremlin and the Topkapi Palace.

At first glance the scene was uncannily similar to one we had investigated a few years earlier in the Spanish coastal province of Almería. But with significant differences. The Spanish horticultural industry had shallower roots in both time and space. There it had mushroomed in a compressed twenty-year period so that there were none of the older glass and steel palaces erected in Antalya in the 1940s and 50s; rather we saw uninterrupted stretches of flat white reflective plastic roofs stretching into the distant haze. In Spain the vegetables were grown not in local alluvial soil but in packs of imported substrate, regularly cleared and trashed in dumpsites – pesticides, herbicides, plastic and all. The draining of the regional water table to make all this gardening possible in an arid, semi-desert landscape had brought the region much closer to the brink of ecological collapse. And the precarious labour was supplied by migrant Africans, mostly working without papers and suffering the bigotry inflicted on foreign workers worldwide. In Turkey seasonal labour is drawn from the villages of eastern Anatolia, under conditions largely unknown to us, surely not without their own forms of suffering and discrimination.

In both countries we were struck by the singular views of intensive horticulture abutting luxury tourist destinations, locals struggling to make a living through a global export system in unobscured proximity to golf courses, upscale shops, restaurants and marinas designed for the mobile upper classes of globalisation. Such a composite offers a perfect example of what we have come to come to think of as an aesthetics of visible blindness: the capacity of select groups to enjoy the fruits of globalised capital while ignoring the price paid in drudgery and insecurity by others. In Spain we had wondered what kinds of dark glasses the tourists must wear, not to see the damaging excess of the real-estate boom, the unsustainability of swimming pools and golf courses springing from the thirsty desert, the conditions of brutal labour exploitation rivaling those of the nineteenth century. Such a blindness is structural: it's part of what keeps the whole system going even when it's clearly headed for social and ecological disaster.

Our guidebook on the trip to southern Turkey was written not only by Hayek and Polanyi, but also by the generous Istanbulite sociologist Zafer Yenal, who had given us the name of a grower so that we might see something more than the astonishing view from a rental car. Equipped only with a bad map and a vague idea of our informant's territory, we lucked into the right village and spoke his name at the local café. Hospitable cell phones immediately went into action and five minutes later we were having coffee with Mikhat, a distinguished tomato producer, and Aydin, the owner of an orange grove and also the muhtar, or village headman. Aydin had taught himself English from a dictionary while working in the greenhouses, and now served us as an excellent translator, with plenty of his own opinions.

The two of them spent their Sunday afternoon giving us a tour of the typical production chain in Antalya. We visited the family owned greenhouses and orchards, the washing and sorting facility, the box folding plant and warehouse. The closest we came to the beginning of the line was a high-tech seedling company. But a full mapping of the production chain is impossible for those who are directly involved. The growers don't decide what they will plant. In what is called a “buyer-driven market,” the exact patented varieties of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and other vegetables grown are dictated by an increasingly consolidated oligopoly of transnational distributors and intermediaries who deliver fresh and processed produce to supermarket shelves. Control of the type of seeds actually in circulation, limited to relatively few out of the vast diversity cultivated through the history of human agriculture, amounts to mastery over the most basic form of shared intellectual property. These gigantic distant players also determine just what other imported inputs – pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers – will be used by small producers throughout the Mediterranean. Such conformity is mandatory if they want to enter the market, and the producers themselves have no bargaining power over the price of these necessities.

Last on our tour was the wholesale depot where teams of kerchiefed women packed produce for shipment and where we sat in the office of the local buyer for a taciturn cup of tea. This buyer marked the end of what could be seen of the production chain from a producer's vantage point, being the nearest representative of the price mechanism signaled by markets in Istanbul, Russia, Europe and beyond. We were witnessing the scene of our guidebook outlined by Friedrich von Hayek:

*The most significant fact about this system is the economy of knowledge with which it operates, or how little the individual participants need to know in order to be able to take the right action. In abbreviated form, by a kind of symbol, only the most essential information is passed on and passed*



on only to those concerned. It is more than a metaphor to describe the price system as a kind of machinery for registering change, or a system of telecommunications which enables individual producers to watch merely the movement of a few pointers, as an engineer might watch the hands of a few dials, in order to adjust their activities to changes of which they may never know more than is reflected in the price movement.<sup>3</sup>

Hayek believed that human productivity was most effectively coordinated by the market mechanism, registering changes in the availability or need of products across the earth. Fluctuating prices took the place of knowledge, because the chance to make a profit by selling high or buying low signaled exactly where resources could be allocated most efficiently. There is an eerie correspondence between this theory and the way things really work. What small producers are able to know is indeed reduced since they choose neither the seeds nor the chemical inputs or even the type of bee used to fertilise the plants in the greenhouses. On the selling side of their business they “watch merely the movement of a few pointers to adjust their activities to changes of which they may never know more than is reflected in the price movement.”

In this way they become like players sitting at a roulette table, watching the spinning numbers that will determine how well they fare in a given year. “We are farmers, gambling is what we do for a living.”<sup>4</sup> For both inputs and outputs the farmers are deeply integrated into the global food market, and since they have no control over the price of either, their sense of working blindly has intensified as world food prices and petroleum-based input prices oscillate erratically on the readouts of the electronic markets, climbing one year to the heights of prosperity, falling precipitously the next. Whether or not they can make meaningful adjustments to global markets affected by fluctuating demand, oversupply, natural disasters, changing standards, currency exchange rates and commodity market speculation makes the difference between whether they will go bust, hit a jackpot, or just get by. In this way, we discovered, the lives of villagers trying to join a world of consumer abundance are affected by the wild hopes and deep anxieties of what the political economist Susan Strange long ago called “casino capitalism.” With its elegant greenhouses gleaming in the sun alongside the debt-financed palaces of postmodern tourism, Antalya appeared as the land of the crystal casino.

#### *No Accounting For Taste*

We spent the night in the town of Finicke, whose main street is adorned with monuments to the magnificent orange. One shows a globe on a pedestal; on top of this concrete world stands a girl holding an orange out to the sky. Producers of all kinds of things want to offer their goods to the world market, and why shouldn't they? Though the present level of global integration is unprecedented, oranges have been coveted treats in northern climes for centuries. The oranges we brought back from Antalya were some of the best we ever tasted: juicy, sweet and full of complex flavours. We wish we could say the same for the tomatoes, whose flesh was hard and flavourless despite their deep red color and impeccable round design. Are the orange trees holdovers from an older horticulture, unlike the tomato seedlings nurtured in mass-produced plastic trays? Are they less subject to the distortions of just-in-time production? Is it easier to breed an orange for long distance shipping than to breed a packable tomato retaining the tenderness and flavour we recall from our childhoods? Is it a matter of luck? Of preference? Or some kind of obscure gamble with the intellect, the heart, the bank account and the senses?

These questions can be existential ones for those who try to place themselves as tasty products in the world vitrine. While grateful for the chance to travel, exhibit and present in far-flung locales, many of us grow uneasy when self-performance on the art circuit turns into a contest to raise your own price as a signifier of others' intelligence, passion, perversity or secret foreknowledge of upcoming trends. In financialised economies where speculation on the future values of the sky above can wreak havoc with the ground beneath your feet, it's quite hard to believe that artistic expression is not just standing in for something bigger to come – like a gigantic hotel, residential complex or entertainment district that will wipe out the gritty neighbourhood whose vibrant local life inspired you. We've thought about these problems for years, while trying to develop other contexts for the expression, reception, elaboration and understanding of art practices.<sup>5</sup> And when food prices spiked with the commodity bubble of 2008, then plunged again after farmers around the world had been lured into costly investments, we found it even harder to keep our desires focused on the next invitation to Asia / Latin America / Western Europe / the Middle East. We too felt like cherry tomatoes on a roulette wheel spinning wildly out of control.

In Antalya province at the site known as Yanartas arises the famous Mount Chimaera, known since late Antiquity for its flames that flicker in the night, for its literally burning ground. Historical sources cite this geothermal wonder as the origin of the myth of the Chimera, a fire-breathing hybrid of lion, goat and serpent; while the natural explanation describes exhalations of methane from metamorphic rocks. This mythical

and real place reminds us of contemporary Chimerica, the hybrid continent we try to call home. For the last ten years its Eastern workers have produced nearly everything its Western consumers crave, while the East side lends back to the West the money received for the floods of goods, in order to keep the wheels of industry turning.<sup>6</sup> This unusual geographic phenomenon, characteristic of the global division of labour and power, has been one of the mysteries of late Neoliberalism. What kept mankind alive on its disjunctive territory, from Chicago to Shanghai, was a system of exchange whose human foundations no one cared to know, as long as the volatile prices added up to profits for politicians and businessmen on both sides. The lure of gain stoked a decade of unsustainable development, reflected outside the centers of accumulation by the ugly mirrors of impoverishment and war. Meanwhile, those tastes that market researchers can exhaustively account for – consumer drives and investor appetites – sucked the juice of life from two vast populations, while setting the stage for an economic collapse on a scale last seen in the 1930s. The natural explanation in this case was not metamorphic but mathematical.

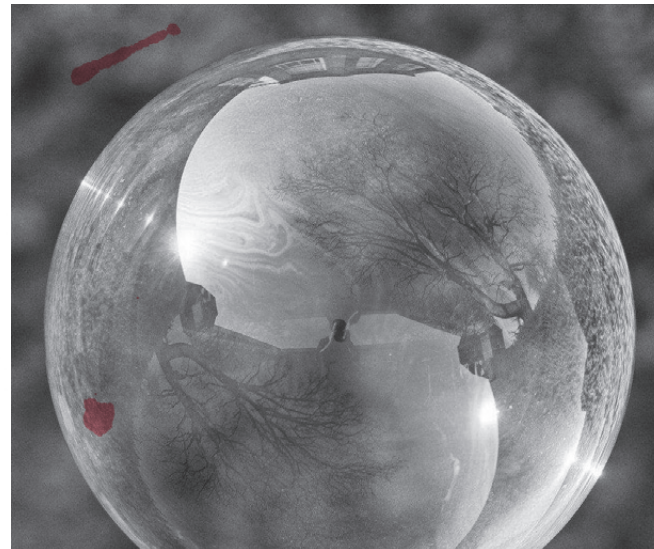
About a hundred and fifty years ago, Marx described the commodity as that product of human labour whose exchange value, seemingly animated with a life of its own, acts to render invisible the social relations that produced it. About twenty years ago, some inglorious number-crunching quant invented a meta-commodity called the “collateralised debt obligation” (CDO). It's a derivative contract whose price is determined by a statistical analysis of the behaviour of underlying assets, which in this case are not things but the ability of borrowers to pay their loans. What these meta-commodities did was allow banks to sell to distant investors the revenue expected from payment on home mortgage loans, so that the bank which initially did the lending got its capital back from thin air, and could immediately go out looking for more borrowers on the ground. To make the deal sweeter for the distant investors, the loans were split into tiny fractions and recombined with hundreds of others, so that the risk of any single failure to pay was diluted by the hundredfold. Meanwhile other quants calculated the statistically average rate of bankruptcy on the housing market, which was considered to have the regularity of a natural phenomenon. Another kind of derivative, known as a “credit default swap” (CDS), was sold as insurance on this risk, and indeed on many others, in combinations and hybrids that defy the imagination.

The brilliance of the math and its perfect correspondence with the laws of financial nature omitted just one tiny detail, which was that this circular, self-reinforcing system entirely transformed the markets it was supposed to regulate and stabilise.<sup>7</sup> Prices rose from the ground like tongues of fire until they reached trembling heights: cut off from all connection with the underlying capacity of the borrowers to pay, the flame fell back to earth and burned everyone it touched. As foreseen, the default insurance went into effect, but for losses exponentially exceeding what had been judged possible in nature. And then, metamorphosing from the joyful illusion that it once seemed to be, the fabulous Chimerican prosperity of the early 2000s turned into a monstrous creature, rampant in every country on the face of the earth.

We do not know exactly where the current crisis will lead. But what we have been foreseeing for the last several years is “Continental Drift”: a rearrangement of the unlikely bicontinent in which we briefly lived, the decline of the US dollar as the world's reserve currency and the beginning of far-reaching changes in the geopolitical order.<sup>8</sup> Rather than speculating right now on what those changes may bring at the global level, it may be more useful to draw some conclusions about the relations of art and economics in the period we have just lived through.

From the current economic perspective, growth is the only measurable good, making the signs of rising profit into the one convincing form of beauty. Wall-to-wall computers, flashing LEDs, gleaming glass and glittering buildings are among the finest sights, but the highlight in the flesh is always the person on the stage, the speculative performance. You too can be a top-value signifier, seemingly animated with a life of your own. And a world-class museum can become the gateway of real-estate paradise, if the bar is more spectacular than the paintings. Since your price is moving upwards on the market, why not let gentrification be your derivative? Very few people involved in contemporary art actually think this way, but very many of the funding decisions in the cultural world are

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Or some kind of  
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made on exactly this basis.

Where the commodity as described by Marx acted to conceal the social relations of labour that produced it, the meta-commodities of our time act to conceal the collective deliberations that create the environment in which any labour, leisure, productivity or culture can take place. The government of human affairs has been privatised by the calculations of a supposedly natural law. The veil over all this is what we've been calling the aesthetics of blindness. But if that is the case, those of us working art face one very important question. How could the veil be lifted?

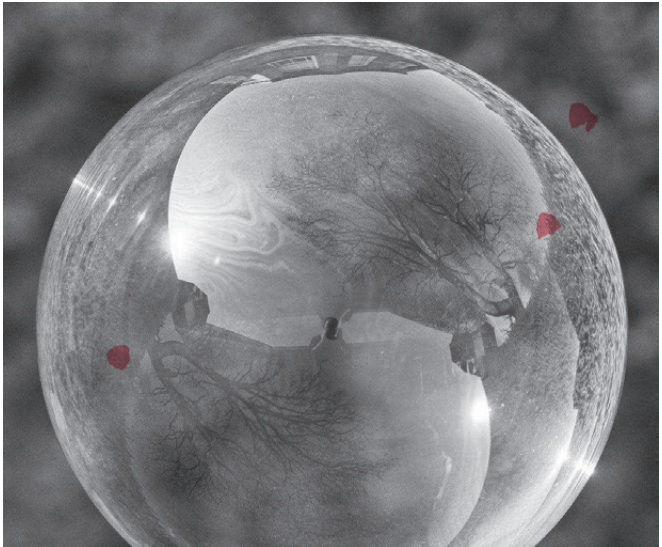
#### *Touching Ground*

Let's look through the spectacles of the man watering the beans in the garden, with gleaming coins scattered here and there as though devoid of any value. Polanyi's major work, *The Great Transformation* (1944), retraces the rise and fall of the gold standard, which served as the global medium of exchange during the period of the British Empire. More profoundly it studies the belief in a self-regulating market, elevated to the status of a natural law whereby supply and demand automatically find their proper equilibrium. The self-regulating market is the underlying structure designated by Adam Smith's metaphor of the invisible hand, then later by Hayek's more pragmatic image of the telecommunications system. Looking further, Polanyi observed that the fundamentals of human existence – labour, or the health of our bodies; land, or the cyclically recurring growth of the natural world; and the human institutions of governance, including money itself – were treated as freely available resources by the capitalist market which invested no care in their reproduction over time. Labour, land and money are “fictitious commodities” by Polanyi's account, because their actual origins and destinies lie outside the market, even though the market depends on and depletes them. The Great Depression and the World Wars are historical examples of the price ultimately paid for their neglect.

The persistent recourse in economics to the illusion of a natural market law serves to justify the core functions of labour and resource exploitation, while the investment of financial signifiers with supernatural powers acts to distract from the many crimes that accompany the system (or some would say, provide its very basis). These include imperialism, or the plunder of distant territories by force of arms; enslavement, or the physical coercion of human beings against their will; the formation of monopolies and oligopolies, permitting the fixing of prices in markets closed to the entry of smaller producers; and more recently the reign of mass deception, whereby will and desire themselves are reshaped by the media bombardment of manipulative messages. The grip of the natural law delusion is what gave Margaret Thatcher her hour of credibility, adamantly repeating “there is no alternative.” It's remarkable that since the present round of computerised and networked financial innovation began in the mid-1970s, the ranks of the number-crunching quants and the formulas they employ are drawn largely from theoretical physics, reinforcing the economists' claim to be describing unequivocal phenomena of nature.

What makes Polanyi so interesting is his refusal of this natural market law. Yet unlike communist planners of the early twentieth century (to whom neoliberals automatically reduce any proponents of an “alternative”) he did not believe that human needs and possibilities could be calculated by a central agency. He understood the dynamics of human societies to be the result of three quite different fields of organisation, each of which does not function according to any inherent natural law, but instead by the more-or-less conscious development of ad hoc principles that gradually work themselves into a sustainable balance. The first of these broad fields of human interaction is exchange, which occurs in a bewildering variety of forms across history, and not only as the reductio ad absurdum of human relations to monetary mathematics. The second, still quite apparent to the citizens of modernised societies, is redistribution as it is carried out by a centralising administration. In recent history this was the welfare-state function, largely banished by the class politics of neoliberalism. The third domain of social coordination, almost as ignored by official scholarship as it is by market fundamentalists, yet one which still pervades and supports contemporary life, is reciprocity: the informal circulation of services, privileges, favours, care and support between individuals, families, clans, friends, voluntary associations and identity groups. It was a notion of open-ended reciprocity that prompted a Turkish sociologist to share his rural contacts with us, that made those contacts treat us as guests to whom they offered time, information, openness and a splendid local lunch. In many more incalculably extensive ways, it is reciprocity that undergirds and makes livable the harsh inhabitation of a world ruled by market numbers.

By recognising these three fields in their heterogeneity and in the specificity of their mutual interaction it is possible to go beyond the eternal quarrels of the liberals, the communists and the anarchists, each of whom insists on the preeminence of just one field: the market, the state or voluntary association. Unfortunately, they cannot even adequately describe the real workings of their single sphere of interest, since society



is always constituted by particular combinations of all three. Rather than operating within or against an idealised totality that does not exist on its own, one finds more chances in navigating between existing realms whose specific relations can be played against each other, and changed for the better.

This multidimensional understanding of society provides the tools to draw up much more useful maps of complex situations, including multiple roles for art. When the market is invested with a superhuman accuracy of judgment, critics and institutions too often validate only what it has already validated. In this scenario the artists become like our counterparts the horticultural producers, conforming their inventions to signals from a distant empire of finance. But neither would it be satisfactory to have the state manage what kind of art will be produced and experienced. Nor is it enough to have an art with no relationship to exchange or redistribution. Art is a shifter between the three broad fields of interaction, dramatising insufficiencies, suggesting possibilities, escaping deadlocks, opening utopias and bringing overly theoretical principles back home to lived experience. As cultural producers we want to bring this full range of possibilities into play – in order to touch the ground, to regain some contact with the fundamental conditions of existence.

Sixty-five years ago, in a phrase whose timeliness verges on the uncanny, Polanyi wrote that ‘the trading classes had no organ to sense the dangers involved in the exploitation of the physical strength of the worker, the destruction of family life, the devastation of neighbourhoods, the denudation of forests, the pollution of rivers, the deterioration of craft standards, the disruption of folkways, and the general degradation of existence including housing and arts.’ The sentence strikes home in a world marked by climate change, financial crisis and war. If exactly the same problems are facing us today, then isn't this what art most urgently needs to become: a sense organ of humanity, a space in which to perceive and express the transformations that human groups are unleashing upon themselves and their environments? A space in which to inquire about the creation of value, the roots of conflict, the sources of vital energy, the paths toward better ways of living?

Of course, much of artistic production already does that, but in contexts made confused and ambiguous by the operations of financialised taste. What is finally becoming more obvious today, in the context of the triple crisis – economic, ecological and geopolitical – is that mainstream cosmopolitan culture has been largely absorbed into a predatory system of capture and manipulation, instilling commercial ideologies and prosumer drives and generating multiple forms of self-interested blindness even in the spaces devoted expressly to vision. The resulting breakdown of the human ecology, or lack of sense in world affairs, is provoking a widening crisis of legitimacy. This explains the election of a relatively idealistic figure like Barack Obama, or at a smaller scale, the selection of a group like WHW to curate the Istanbul Biennial. The question is what to do with the opportunities offered by this legitimization crisis.

Some practitioners have recognised that if art is to play any autonomous role in the shaping of contemporary sensibilities, it should be developed and evaluated within spaces of reciprocity where the predatory functions have no hold, whether these are private spaces, self-organised associations, informal networks of exchange or independent media projects. We are not just talking about strong images emerging from circles of peers

under particularly turbulent social circumstances, which can now capture lots of attention on the markets. If art is to escape overcoding by existing value-forms, it must be created along with philosophical concepts and forms of social practice that are resilient enough to preserve their integrity despite the existing norms and functions. State institutions – not to mention corporate sponsorship – cannot be trusted to provide the context of art production, for one simple reason: the current panorama shows the extent to which they have failed. Yet at the same time, many positive developments on the cultural landscape show that

**Isn't this what art most urgently needs to become: a sense organ of humanity, a space in which to perceive and express the transformations that human groups are unleashing upon themselves and their environments?**

artists, critics and curators who have developed strong networks of reciprocity can also find allies in both state-redistributive and market-exchange institutions, in order to develop singular and transformative proposals and to distribute them widely.

In our view – and this could be our polemic – the forces of reciprocity are not politically alive enough in art today. If we have worked with activism, and if we have developed autonomous critical initiatives like Continental Drift, it's clearly for this reason, to engage in productive dialogues with other initiatives that have opened breathing spaces instead of just adapting to their instrumentalisation. Today under the pressure of a triple crisis that will no longer go away, but only continue to morph into successive forms, it is necessary for artists, intellectuals and curators to develop higher levels of ethical exchange before engaging with the compromises of the state and market spheres. Not to maintain a politically correct consensus or some vain illusion of purity and self-sufficiency, but to find the precise resources that are needed to open up intense and problematic spaces of perception, revealing in advance the further conflicts and collapses which await and threaten – while in the best of cases offering broader perspectives, sweeter affects, clearer concepts and more generous actions in reality.

Polemics aside, we'll close with an attempt to answer this essay's recurrent questions. They have to do with the origins of taste, the creation of alternatives, and the place of perception in artistic expression. Since one of the problems we've identified is an excess of economically animated forms and performances – a visible blindness – our research will shift further toward a tactile dimension.

#### *Worlds At Your Fingertips*

In a memorable passage from an unfinished book, a philosopher performs the simplest experiment in perception: touching one hand with the other. Maurice Merleau-Ponty worked in the tradition of phenomenology, trying to provide a philosophical definition of the primary scientific act: the clear and distinct perception of an object by a subject who stands outside it, exterior to what is being perceived. But when your fingers touch your own fingers, perception doubles back on itself and the subject becomes inseparable from the object. In this common experience the scientific mind must confront its own presence, its pulsating inherence to the phenomena that it wants to put at a distance. Like the casting of a gaze, touching involves the expression of a desire to know the world that is indissociable from whatever we will ultimately know of it. Yet there is a still more common and more poignant experiment in perception: one hand touching someone else's, my hand touching yours. It is through this common experience that one discovers other worlds.

The self-reflexive turn of phenomenology shows that expression – and along with it, the vast material of spoken and written language – is an irreducible part of perception.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the upsurge of the new and the encounter with the other can only be sensed in historically shared frameworks of words, ideas, artworks, urban forms etc, themselves existing flush with perception and in intimate contact with its proliferating differences. To perceive is to constitute the object with the quality of your own attention, but also to be constituted by it: perception is a self-affecting movement that changes the very nature of one's sensorium, while spilling over through language, gesture and affect to others who also perceive, reflect and evaluate. In this way sense is made. Overflowing from each body in the world, the reciprocal relation of perception and expression gives rise to cultural experience: crisscrossing artifacts of sensate desire, overlaid upon each other in complex patterns that point beyond whatever they designate, toward the depths and the horizons of the worlds we constitute together.

Merleau-Ponty called this intertwining of perceptions “the chiasm” – a Greek word designating a point of crossover between two flows. An example would be the optic chiasm, where the nerves coming from the left and right eye cross and intermingle before vision separates again into different areas on the right and left sides of the brain. We have yet to find Lake Chiasma on the natural landscape, but we know this feeling of plunging into and emerging from intertwining perceptual worlds.

The emphasis on perception could evoke practices of a documentary nature: attempts to film, photograph, sketch, graph, record, speak or otherwise represent the world. Such practices are extremely important, because they offer a chance to begin overcoming the blindness of contemporary society. Yet we must take one further step toward a politics of perception. In a critique of phenomenology and specifically of Merleau-Ponty, another philosopher shows that what is never taken into account by the scientific gaze is the human imagination. What happens, asks Cornelius Castoriadis, when we focus our attention on dreams, on delirium, on hallucinations? When last night's dream is taken as a valid object of perception, “all of philosophy is knocked out of order.”<sup>10</sup> Yet dreams and visions, like images themselves, are also common phenomena. They are the bearers of their own particular kind of truth and capacity to change the world.

There is a name for the insurgence of the image as a productive force in human thinking: the radical imagination. Castoriadis defines it as “the capacity to posit that which is not, to see in something that which is not there.”<sup>11</sup> This imagination is not only

visual: it is auditory, tactile, gustatory, olfactory, it is sexual and affective, it touches other people. Here is the intersubjective force that transforms our relation to nature. Those who proclaim the inexorability of market law do not only refuse to perceive its obvious failings; they also try to cover up the human potential to see what is not there, to express an aspiration. The politics of perception is inseparable from a collective exercise of the radical imagination. As Castoriadis explains: “I call autonomous a society that not only knows explicitly that it has created its own laws but has instituted itself so as to free its radical imaginary and enable itself to alter its institutions through collective, self-reflective, and deliberate activity. And I call politics the lucid activity whose object is the institution of an autonomous society.”<sup>12</sup>

Polanyi wrote the history of the self-regulating market up to its first culmination in the mid-twentieth century, showing that its claim to a basis in natural law was fictive, and that under the cover of this fiction it destroyed the traditional institutions on which it was based in reality. He called for the creation of new institutions, which could successfully re-insert or “re-embed” the world market into a tissue of acknowledged interdependencies that would stabilise it and keep it from exerting its most destructive effects. Today we are light years from that kind of wisdom. Yet it is still possible to conceive another society, not by the appeal to natural law but by the exercise of the radical imagination, and by its transformation through a political process into collective institutions.

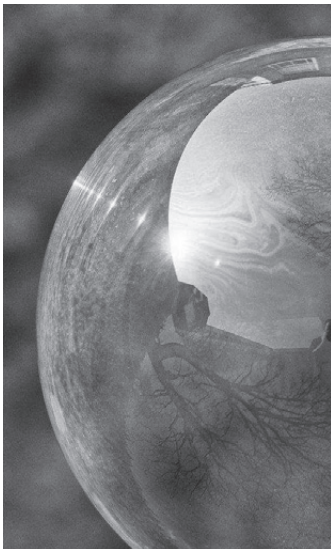
Museums in the overdeveloped countries are still primarily used for historical conservation and the validation of isolated personal expression, though they are increasingly becoming sites of social design as well, launching pads for new product-behaviours.<sup>13</sup> But what contemporary societies more urgently need are experimental institutions where the perception of lived environments, the creation of tastes and values and their codification into laws and definitions of reality can all be played out again in concentrated symbolic forms, which include contestation, ambiguity and internal contradiction. It is the artists' intervention on powerfully articulated symbolic material that can touch others, elicit responses and open up a space of reciprocity for many different uses of the radical imagination.

An international exhibition or biennial can be this stage or arena, a time made of many temporalities, a place where many places and their inhabitants come to meet. This does not mean that everyone will agree. In an age marked by extreme exploitation, environmental destruction and violent conflict, it's likely that they won't. But the exhibition can also be a place to sharpen new symbolic weapons, or to shift the terms of old arguments. Instead of instilling preprogrammed behaviours in a manipulative way, it allows for self-conscious experimentation with the orientations of one's own perception, and for debate about the possible worlds that are bodied forth in images.

We were touched by our visit to Istanbul, and by our glimpse of a life out in the countryside that we could never have imagined – despite its arrival in bits and pieces to faraway supermarkets. As in the naïve image of the girl standing on a globe and holding the fruit of her local culture up to the sky, we wanted to offer some food for thought in return: a glimpse of the kinds of knowledge that artistic practices can bring, a feel for singular situations whose life on the ground can never be communicated by the abstract movements of a pointer on the dial of the global markets. To engage with this knowledge, rather than ignoring it, is one way to contribute to a systemic change. Maybe it's another kind of gamble, but this is what we are looking for in art today: a politics of perception. ■

#### Notes

- 1 Friedrich von Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society,” in *The American Economic Review* 35/4 (September 1945), p. 528. Hayek borrows this quote from the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, but uses it for purposes very much his own.
- 2 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957/1st ed. 1944), p. 133.
- 3 Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society,” op. cit. pp. 526-27.
- 4 Calgar Keydar and Zafer Yenal, “Facing Globalization: Transformation and Adaptation in Turkish Agriculture” (unpublished manuscript).
- 5 Cf. Brian Holmes, “Emancipation,” in *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms* (New York: Autonomedia, 2007), available at [www.mail-archive.com/nettime-l@bbs.thing.net/msg02007.html](http://www.mail-archive.com/nettime-l@bbs.thing.net/msg02007.html); Claire Pentecost, “Autonomy, Participation And,” in Rick Gribenas, ed., *Participatory Autonomy* (New York: Autonomedia, 2008), available at <http://www.clairepentecost.org/autopart.html>. Also see the Ten Point program of the Mess Hall autonomous space, which Claire Pentecost had a hand in drafting: see [http://www.messhall.org/ten\\_points.html](http://www.messhall.org/ten_points.html).
- 6 The concept of an economic hybrid between China and the USA was introduced in 2007 by Niall Ferguson who, betraying an extreme lack of foresight, considered this newly founded continent to be sustainable. See “Chimerica” and the Global Asset Market Boom,” *International Finance* 10/3 (December 2007).
- 7 This is the thesis of the brilliant study by Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee, *Financial Derivatives and the Globalization of Risk* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
- 8 See the seminar archive at <http://www.16beavergroup.org/drift>, as well as Brian Holmes, “One World One Dream: China at the Risk of New Subjectivities,” in *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society* (Zagreb: WHW/Van Abbemuseum, forthcoming), available at [brianholmes.wordpress.com/2008/01/08/one-world-one-dream](http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2008/01/08/one-world-one-dream).
- 9 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968/1st French edition 1964), esp. chap. 4, “The Intertwining – The Chiasm.”
- 10 Cornelius Castoriadis, “Merleau-Ponty and the Weight of the Ontological Tradition,” in David Ames Curtis, ed., *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 277.
- 11 Cornelius Castoriadis, “The State of the Subject Today,” in *World in Fragments*, op. cit., p. 151.
- 12 Cornelius Castoriadis, “Psychoanalysis and Politics,” in *World in Fragments*, op. cit., p. 132.
- 13 For examples of the museum as a launching pad for product-behaviours, see Paola Antonelli et al., *Design and the Elastic Mind*, exhibition catalogue, New York MoMA, February 24–May 12, 2008, as well as the website: [www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/elasticmind](http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/elasticmind)





# Television, Eurovision, Europe

## Dubravka Sekulić

### ■ POLITICS

*The Eurovision Song Contest provides more than just a metaphor for the process of European unification, says architect Dubravka Sekulić.*



▲ An image economy of European politics...

Months before my ninth birthday, Yugoslavia won First Prize at the Eurovision Song Contest. It was 1989, and I still remember the anchor Oliver Mwlakar saying something like, “now we can all drink a glass of cold water, it is finished, we won,” just before the last country performed and was able to read out the votes. Eurovision was coming to the only communist country through the competition. And then, a year later, everything was different. The Berlin Wall was down, the German reunification was well under way, and Yugoslavia was counting its last days. At the 35th Eurovision contest in Zagreb,<sup>1</sup> Toto Cutugno won with a song called “Insieme: 92”, which celebrated the scheduled signing of the Treaty of Maastricht and the formation of the European Union. I think of it as being one of the most ironic moments in the story of Europe.

In the next pages I will attempt to explore the post WWII history of Europe from the standpoint of technological development, and in particular television, in relation to Eurovision Song Contest as a grounds for formal competition among nations.

After World War II, European countries were no longer competing on battlegrounds, but on the field of technology. Television was symbolic of a country's technological development, and each country was busy developing its own broadcasting protocols. The most important parameter was the size of image defined by the number of lines per second broadcasted over a continuous analogue signal. Protocols in use ranged from the 405-line standard used by the BBC in the UK, developed by the EMI Research Team, to the 819-line standard used in France, developed by René Barthélemy. Although a third one, the 625-line standard, became de facto standard and the only one used for colour transmission, France continued to use its 819-line standard until 1984 when the last transmitter was closed down. This coincided with the presidency of François Mitterrand, who implemented the 819-line broadcast standard in 1948. France stuck to the 819-line standard so long not

only because it was more advanced, but also to protect the national market. Supranational broadcasting was a complex technical issue, firstly because of converting between varying numbers of lines per second and frame rates used by different countries, and secondly there was little incentive for these countries to synchronise protocols due to the limited number of programmes one could broadcast in a broader region.

Initially, 26 members both from East and West Europe created a standardising body, the International Radio and Television Organisation in 1948. Already in 1950 however, political tensions resulted in some members, mostly from Western Europe, leaving the organisation to form the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).<sup>2</sup> The EBU's main purpose was the promotion and coordination of common standards. In the beginning this process was slow going and the only way out of the deadlock seemed to be the establishment of the Eurovision Song Contest in 1955.<sup>3</sup> The idea came from Marcel Bezançon, the Swiss president of the EBU and was modelled after the Sanremo Music Festival.<sup>4</sup> The Eurovision Song Contest began in Lugano, Switzerland in 1956 and was the first major event in which European countries would compete against each other for some kind of European title (even preceding the European Football Championship which only started in 1960). Moreover, it was the only event to be broadcast live in all seven participating countries.<sup>5</sup> The rest is history: when the second contest was held in Frankfurt, in 1957, ten countries participated. Six of them, a few weeks later, signed the Treaty of Rome, the decisive document for the foundation of the European Union.

As I began travelling to the European Union after 2000, the easiest way to explain that Yugoslavia had never been “behind the Iron Curtain” was not by mentioning Tito and his break with Stalin, but Yugoslavia's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest from 1961 and onwards. We shared common childhood memories. Subscription to Eurovision somehow meant being part of Europe.



The International Radio and Television Organisation ceased to exist on January 1st, 1993 when it merged with the EBU. Consequently, the next contest was flooded with former Eastern Block countries, finally eligible to take part in Eurovision.<sup>6</sup> Something like that had happened a year before when three new states formed after the break up of Yugoslavia – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia – joined the contest. Bosnia and Herzegovina, only barely officially recognised as a country, even sent contestants that were selected in Sarajevo under siege. The name of the song “The Pain of the Whole World” sung by Fazla conveyed what Sarajevo was going through to the rest of Europe. The message, however, could not be heard in Yugoslavia, as it was banned from participating in or even broadcasting the contest due to UN Sanctions imposed in 1992. These sanctions not only applied to the economy but also to culture and sport. Furthermore, for former Eastern Block countries participation in Eurovision also marked a change in the status of television. It became a commodity instead of a privilege. Some of the new Eurovision countries even changed their colour system, switching from SECAM to the more widespread PAL standard, which was used by all Western European countries except France.<sup>7</sup>

The choice of SECAM over PAL in the Soviet sphere of influence was not just a technical affair. The German Democratic Republic insisted on adopting a standard that would be different from that of its Western neighbours. This was meant to prevent the smuggling of television sets, and the watching of programmes made in West Germany. A country's willingness to change its national agenda and adopt different standards in order to participate in Eurovision, shows that standardisation is much more than a neutral, technical issue, and that Eurovision itself is a bit more than just a singing contest. The popularity of the contest transformed it into a pervasive soft power,<sup>8</sup> based on three simple rules.

To be an eligible participant in the contest, a country



has to have a national broadcasting corporation which is a member of the EBU, it has to be part of the European Broadcasting Area,<sup>9</sup> and it needs to have the capacity to broadcast the entire event live.

The combination of the first two rules opens up the competition to countries not conventionally considered “European”. The African and Asian coast of the Mediterranean are within the boundaries of European Broadcasting Areas and, as most of the countries in that region have television companies that are member of EBU (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia), all of them are potential participants in Eurovision. Out of these eight countries, Israel is the only one that has regularly participated in the competition since 1973, winning the contest three times. Morocco was the only other country in the group to compete in 1980.

The third rule requiring the ability to broadcast the contest live, without any interruption, is the most important considering the influence of Eurovision on the standardisation of broadcasting in Europe. This factor played a key role in the withdrawal of Lebanon from the contest in 2005. In 2004, Télé Liban, the only Lebanese member of the EBU, announced that Lebanon would be making its debut on the 50th Eurovision Song Contest, to be held in Kiev, Ukraine. Lebanon was put on the official list of participants, along with two other debuting countries, Bulgaria and Moldova. However, when the official Lebanese Eurovision Song Contest web site went live, it showed no sign of Israeli participation in the contest. Neither could Télé Liban guarantee that the entire event would be transmitted, as this would violate Lebanese legislation prohibiting the broadcasting of Israeli content. Unable to comply with the requirements, Télé Liban was banned from the contest for three years. And as none of Lebanon's other television stations is an EBU member, Lebanon has to wait for the ban to be lifted.

Although the Eurovision Song Contest is ‘not a political event’<sup>10</sup> it is impossible to extract politics from the contest.

# 2018Brabant European Capital of Culture | Candidate

## SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1 France  | 6 Sweden  |
| 2 Italy   | 7 Armenia |
| 3 Morocco | 8 Poland  |
| 4 Poland  | 9 Serbia  |
| 5 Russia  | 10 Spain  |

7. Armenia  
After years of lobbying, Armenia (together with Azerbaijan and Georgia) became eligible to participate in the competition in 2005, when the European Broadcasting Area was extended in such a way that these three countries came under European Broadcasting Union jurisdiction.

## SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1 Bulgaria       | 5 East Germany |
| 2 Romania        | 6 Yugoslavia   |
| 3 Hungary        | 7 Poland       |
| 4 Czechoslovakia | 8 Albania      |

6. Yugoslavia  
During Cold War, Yugoslavia was the only communist country that was member of the EBU who participated regularly in the contest from 1961 to 1991 (with breaks between 1976 and 1980 and also in 1985). In 1989, Yugoslavia won with a song "Rock me" performed by the band Riva, and went on to host the competition the following year in Zagreb (in the current Croatia).

## SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

- |            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| 1 Spain    | 6 Norway         |
| 2 Portugal | 7 Ireland        |
| 3 Malta    | 8 Lebanon        |
| 4 Morocco  | 9 United Kingdom |
| 5 Turkey   | 10 Romania       |

8. Lebanon  
Lebanon never competed in Eurovision. Though it was included in the official programme of the 2005 contest, the discovery was made that official Lebanese communication of the competition did not list Israel among the participants. The title Lebanon broadcaster was in fact required by law to "black out" the Israeli entry during the contest. As that would have broken the Eurovision rule stating that all songs need to be broadcasted without interruption, Lebanon was disqualified from the competition.

## SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1 Lebanon | 4 Georgia |
| 2 Turkey  | 5 Greece  |
| 3 France  | 6 Austria |

3. France  
Of all the countries on the list, France remains the only example of country never to withdraw from the contest for political reasons. Austria withdrew in 1969 when the competition was held in Spain under the Franco regime; Greece in 1975, in protest because of Turkey's debut during the Turkish occupation of Cyprus. The following year Turkey withdrew from the contest because Greece entered the contest with a song about the occupation of Cyprus. Pressed by Muslim countries, Turkey was forced to withdraw once more in 1979 when the contestants held the first time in Israel. Lebanon was forced to pull out of the 2005 contest because of an infringement of EBU broadcasting codes (see e.g.). Finally, Georgia had to withdraw in 2009 because of the obvious political connotations of their entry which was a direct reaction to the 2008 Russian invasion into Georgian territory.

### ▲ Spot the odd one out.

The Lebanon controversy was just one example of when politics played a crucial role in drawing up the final list of entries. There were often cases when countries would pull out as a sign of protest. Greece withdrew from the 20th contest held in Stockholm in 1975, in reaction to the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the fact that Turkey was a debuting participant in the contest that year. Austria refused to participate when Eurovision was held in Spain under Franco in 1969, and Georgia's entry was rejected by the EBU for its overt political connotations in 2009. Actually, 'Eurovision is legendary as an arena for settling diplomatic scores, venting ethnic grievance, baiting national rivals and undermining governments – and, what's more, these moments are almost always the highlights.'<sup>12</sup>

Already mentioned was the 35th Eurovision Song Contest held in Zagreb in 1990 where three entries (Norway, Austria, Germany) sung lyrics dedicated to the fall of Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany. Portugal's entry to the 1974 contest simultaneously announced the coup that would end the dictatorship of Salazar. When the 27th Eurovision was held in Harrogate in the United Kingdom,

just 22 days after the Falklands War between UK and Argentina started in 1982, Spain performed a tango, showing that sometimes not even controversy can be created without words.

Though ridiculed for the increasingly appalling quality of its music, the contest has been platform for peripheral European countries to express their ambition of becoming part of growing European community.<sup>13</sup> The best example of this is Turkey. The country's participation – which has lasted for over three decades – was always perceived as a bid to demonstrate a "Western" orientation, and eligibility for admission into the European Union.<sup>14</sup> After all, Eurovision is about making an impression and drawing attention to the country. Almost all Yugoslav entries in the 1980s brought to the stage a mischievous feeling of summer vacations, with Yugoslavia promoting itself as "The" destination for an exploding number of European tourists. Songs had titles "Ciao, amore" (1984), "Ja sam za ples/I'm up for a dance" (1988), "Rock me baby" (1989), "Hajde da ludujemo/Let's get wild" (1990), with lyrics decrying beautiful girls "that came alone with summer" (Dzuli, 1983). West-



### ▲ The music and lyrics of nation branding...

ern European television stations were flooded with adverts for package holidays on the Adriatic coast, saturated with images of sun, beaches and above all, beautiful women. Video clips presenting the Eurovision entries were using the same visual language. The shift from communism to capitalism that was slowly taking place in Yugoslavia was visible in the ways Yugoslavia portrayed itself for broad Eurovision audience.

While countries outside of the European Union still seem enthusiastic, "old Europe" appears disenchanted and continues to marginalise Eurovision. Italy, one of the prominent competitors in former years, and member of the "Big 5", withdrew from the contest in 1997, with no plans to return. One of the reasons for Italy's withdrawal from the contest was that the block voting, where "new" countries vote amongst themselves, there is little chance that "old" countries will win. The last Eurovision, held in Moscow in 2009, tackled that problem and in break with tradition, the winner was not decided solely by viewer votes, but also by expert juries. This seemed to complete the circle begun with the first introduction of tele-voting in 1998, when the European LGBT

■ In light of their candidacy to become European Capital of Culture in 2018 Brabant wants to investigate the legacy of other major European cultural projects.



**2018BRABANT**  
CULTURAL CAPITAL TOGETHER

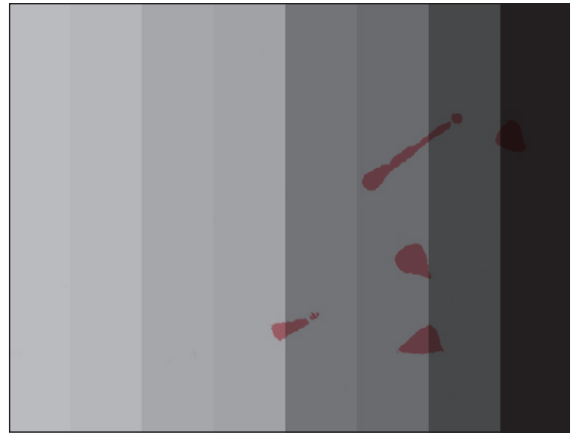
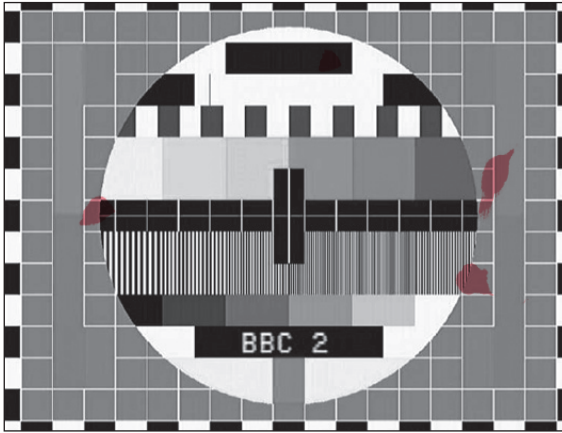
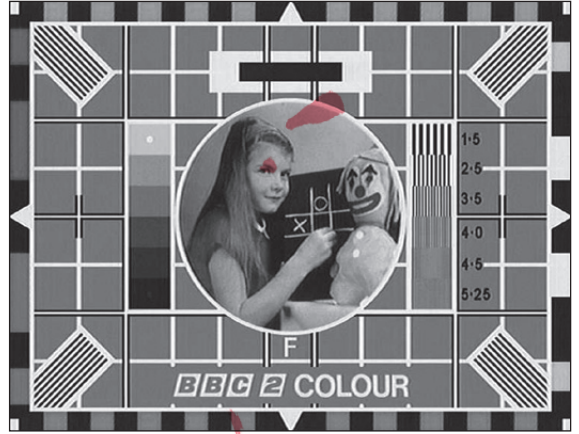
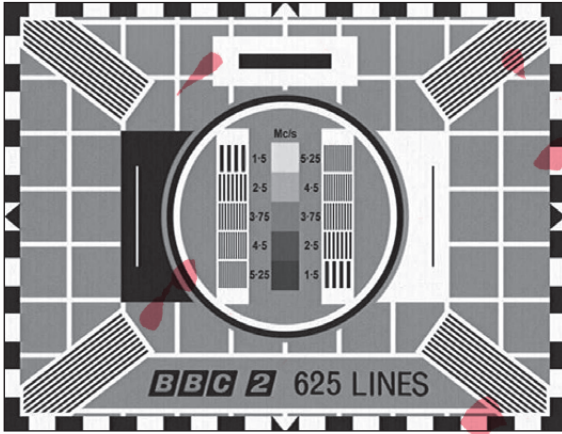
community voted Israeli transsexual, Dana International, to win. This confirmed Eurovision as a space for the articulation of otherness within the geography of Europe.

In 2008, the Eurovision Song Contest came to the landscape where my text began. This time the contest was held in Belgrade, Serbia and all states created after the break of Yugoslavia took part in the contest. They were criticised of block voting and reserving the highest marks for their former enemies in the war. The Bosnian entry became a big hit in the whole of ex-Yugoslavia and the performer, Laka, later said that his only interest in performing in Eurovision was to become visible in the newly formed region. The number of entries to this contest was higher than ever and Russia was won for the first time. It seems that a new chapter of the Eurovision story has begun already. ■

#### Notes

1 The Yugoslavian Broadcasting Corporation (JRT) was a union of radio-television studios from each republic. The Eurovision Song Contest representative from Yugoslavia was chosen every year on Jugovizija (Yugovision), in a competition modelled after the contest. Every republic would delegate a couple of representatives for the competition; a jury would choose the winner. Even Eurovision's voting pattern





▲ The evolution of the test screen and television as a standard.

- 1 was used and representatives of each studio would call and read the votes. The 1989 winner, "Riva", was selected by Television Zagreb, a Croatian broadcaster. Consequently, the final contest in 1990 was held in Zagreb and not in Belgrade, the capital.
- 2 The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) – unrelated to the European Union – is also the world's largest professional association of national public-service broadcasters.
- 3 Although its full title is the Eurovision Song Contest, the contest is usually known just as Eurovision. For the purpose of this text, Eurovision will be used for Eurovision Song Contest.
- 4 An Italian Popular Music Festival established in 1951. The winner of the festival from 1956 to 1966 – and in 1997 – was also the Italian entry on Eurovision.
- 5 Countries that participated in the first Eurovision Song Contest were: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Austria, Denmark and the United Kingdom failed to choose their entries before the deadline and made their debut the following year.
- 6 Countries that debuted on the 39th Eurovision Song Contest, held in Dublin, Ireland in 1994, were Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia.
- 7 The development of both PAL (Phase Alternating Line) and SECAM (Séquentiel Couleur à Memoir) was started to create a European colour standard that would eliminate the problems with the American standard NTSC (dubbed "Never Twice the Same Colour," because of its colour consistency problems). Although the French-developed SECAM was established first (at the end of the 1950s) it was PAL, developed in the German Telefunken laboratories, which got the first official use, in 1967.
- 8 "Soft power's single most important asset is its allegedly non-coercive

- nature – the capacity to reach desirable outcomes without involving force, threat, or payment." Metahaven, 'Brand States: Soft Power, Networks, and Design,' in *Uncorporate Identity*, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010, p. 453.
- 9 The European Broadcasting Area (EBA) is an airspace regulated by the EBU and European standardising bodies. It was defined for the first time in 1961 by the Stockholm Treaty (ST61), and revised several times since. Currently its eastern border is the meridian 40° East of Greenwich, and its southern border the parallel 30° North. Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and the former USSR countries in the Caucasus region are part of this airspace.
- 10 Svente Stöckselius, Executive Supervisor of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest, quoted at [www.eurovision.ua/en/news/00141/](http://www.eurovision.ua/en/news/00141/). From Ivan Raykoff, 'Camping on the Borders of Europe,' in *A Song for Europe*, Ashgate Publishing, 2007, p. 3.
- 11 The Georgian entry called "We Don't Wanna Put In" was seen a direct jab at Vladimir Putin, Russian Prime Minister and as a reaction to the Russian occupation of Georgia in 2008.
- 12 Andrew Muller, "The Politics of Pop", *The Guardian*, 26 March 2005, [www.guardian.co.uk/music/2005/mar/26/popandrock1](http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2005/mar/26/popandrock1). Accessed December 15, 2009.
- 13 After years of lobbying, former Soviet Union states from the Caucasus region, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan succeeded in 2005 in changing the borders of the EBA, thus becoming eligible to compete in the contest. They proceeded to join respectively in 2006, 2007 and 2008.
- 14 The symbolic importance attributed by Turkey to the Eurovision Song Contest is so substantial that the country's first victory, in 2003, was perceived by its politicians as a sign that Turkey was finally being accepted by Europe.

# The Copyist



# Play Van Abbe *Executive Focus*



■ PLAY VAN ABBE  
is a programme consisting of four episodes consuming the museum's thoughts and activities for the next 18 months. A radical response to institutional complacency in this part of Europe and the challenges posed by the financial crisis, the party line is one of transparency, activation and exchange.

# The Peripatetic Vatican Speculation *Charles Esche*

■ COMMENTARY  
Charles Esche evaluates Maria Eichhorn's Aktiengesellschaft, installed at the Van Abbemuseum since June, 2007.

There are few fundamental agreements in art, only opinions and arguments. To start with, we can argue about the purpose of art and why we need it at all, then if we agree that art has always had a place in human society in one form or another, we can then argue about what objects or gestures qualify to be considered art or not, and after that we can always disagree about that troublesome term “quality” and clash over whether the art that we agree is art is actually any good or worthwhile enough to be studied and discussed. Part of the discussion about quality is often related to technique, skill or some unique artistic capacity. More important, I would suggest is that a good artwork is able to speak about its time and place towards another time and place and to not only reflect but also distil the world within which it has been produced. In focusing on its moment and transforming that into an image, art gains the capacity to speak across time, an extraordinary quality to behold.

A work like *Aktiengesellschaft* by Maria Eichhorn sets itself up rather beautifully for a dispute about its quality and purpose. At first glance, its materiality and subject do not belong to what is traditionally considered art. Wooden benches, perhaps modelled on examples from the 1930s, as well as a number of copies of a book, separate a series of precisely defined hidden light-boxes that contain administrative documents connected to the establishment of a public company. They set out the purpose of the company, which is to preserve its initial capital of €50,000 intact for eternity. To achieve this, the company itself must own all the shares, thus never allowing other objectives to interfere with its given goal. In doing this, the company becomes an autonomous entity in some ways, fulfilling a classical post-war demand of art in a way that is both paradoxical and disturbing.

Paradoxical because this work is about the entities which go to make up our form of capitalism: an economic and belief system that is anything but autonomous but obeys very strict codes of satisfying demand and modifying supply. Disturbing because the existence of an autonomous company, rather like autonomous art at its best, reveals the interdependencies between the rest of the things and people in the world. The claims of the free market to be free are tested against the state sponsored actions (served in the name of a national society) to

ensure the health and well being of this entity called a public company, a concern fully visualised in the almost-endless official documentation that the company requires to take on a legal, national existence. In Eichhorn's room, any claims of the nobility of free trade and the invisible hand of the free market seem suddenly diminished. If this is what it takes to produce autonomy then should we not, as a collective, feel less victimised by the economic system than most of us actually do? Could it not be arranged otherwise? Is the free market such a “natural” condition as is often proclaimed?

It is with these questions that Eichhorn's work first stirs the imagination. But it does not stop there, because if the ambition of art is to produce an image that speak across time then this work also must be able to say to the future what life was like in early 21st century western Europe with all its paperwork, its form filling and, above all, the central place it gives to money. Here you will find the €50,000 literally front and centre, sitting harmlessly in its Perspex case, looking invitingly accessible. “How much of a difference would €50,000 make to you today?” it says to a future that maybe won't recognise the terms but will probably understand the insight into the value systems of our time. In the final analysis, this is what makes *Aktiengesellschaft* art of the highest quality, at least for me. It is the best attempt yet to depict capitalism, not as creative or exploitative but simply in its core business of moving money around. It makes no judgement – that is for its viewers/consumers to provide. It is often said that museums have replaced the churches in secular societies, but that seems far from accurate. A better replacement is surely capitalism itself, with its doctrines and sects (social market vs. raw competition), its papal pronouncements (IMF, World Bank), its peripatetic Vatican (Davos, G8-G20) that seeks to keep everyone in the small dogmatic faith and its daily homilies in the form of the stock market and business reports. This is our new church and when this period is looked back on, it will be the artworks that speak of our current obsessions that will last, just as Piero della Francesca, Rembrandt or Jackson Pollock did for their times. Maria Eichhorn's *Aktiengesellschaft* is one of the most successful examples of such a work and as such it belongs in a serious museum of the 21st century. ■



# Aktiengesellschaft Maria Eichhorn

## ■ MUSEUM

*Maria Eichhorn addresses institutional space, financial instruments and value.*

*This text was first published in Maria Eichhorn Aktiengesellschaft, 2007. Maria Eichhorn, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, Köln.*

A joint-stock or public limited company (Aktiengesellschaft) constitutes the purest form of corporation. It is a legal person with a subscribed capital made up of shares where the company's assets alone are liable to claims by creditors (Paragraph 1 German Law on Public Limited Companies). It is characterised by the limited liability of shareholders, its fixed initial capital, its organisation as a corporation, and its members' exemption from personal liability. The subscribed capital of a public limited company, whose nominal value at the time the company is formed must be at least €50,000 (Paragraph 7 German Law on Public Limited Companies), is a fixed number which indicates the value of the tied assets.<sup>1</sup>

A public limited company is a production and trading undertaking. It issues shares to increase its capital. Its primary interest is profit.

As my contribution to Documenta11 a public limited company is to be formed for an indefinite period. Within the structure of the company, its functions are to be adapted and its attributes rewritten, that is to say, the form and content are to be developed and established in ways that differ from those usually practiced in companies. The assets assigned to the company when it is founded are to remain unchanged. The assets are not to become part of the macro-economic circulation of money and accumulation of capital or be used to create added value. All of the shares will be transferred to the company itself. The company will therefore be the owner of its own shares – all of its shares. The money assigned to the company in the form of contributions at the time of its formation continues to belong to the company. However, the company no longer belongs to the shareholders because they have transferred their shares to the company. The company belongs to itself, as it were. That is to say, it ultimately belongs to no one. Therefore, the company's assets – its money – no longer have any relation to the shareholders or to anyone else. The concept of property disappears in this case.

To found a public limited company, one or more individuals lay down the articles of association of the future company in a notarial deed. The articles set out the company name, its place of establishment and the object of the undertaking. The founders elect the members of the supervisory board, which in turn ap-

points the chairperson. A formation report provides information on how the company was founded. The founders of the company and the members of its managing board and supervisory board register the company with the court for the place where it is established for entry in the commercial register.

### *Joint-stock company Development, function, structure, and meaning of the joint-stock company*

How does a joint-stock company function internally? How does it function in the market economy and the global financial market? What sort of instrument of economic and socio-political power does it represent?

### *Raising capital, mobility of capital*

With the development of the joint-stock company and the stock market the restrictions on capital accumulations of private wealth were overcome through access to the financial sources of society as a whole<sup>2</sup> and at the same time this eliminated the discrepancy between the need of capitalist production for long-term investment, on the one hand, and its need for great mobility of capital, on the other.

### *Stock market*

The joint-stock company is the only legal form which enables capital to be raised through the stock market. The first stock market is attributed to the city of Bruges (1409). It was followed by Antwerp in 1460. The colonisation of large parts of Asia, Africa, and South America played a decisive role in the development of new financial markets. For example, the two great shipping companies, the British East India Company (1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1602), founded what are known as "ventures" and issued stock. The Dutch company made the stock market in Amsterdam one of the most important stock markets for a considerable time.

### *Corporate responsibility*

The history of business is one of the reduction of responsibility and the expansion of legal privileges for undertakings. The creation of the joint-stock company accelerated this development. When it is entered in the commercial register, the company becomes a legal person, with the result that the shareholders are relieved of

personal liability. Therefore, under the law, a joint-stock company's primary responsibility is not to its employees or customers, but to its shareholders since it is they who own the company.

### *Trade, speculation*

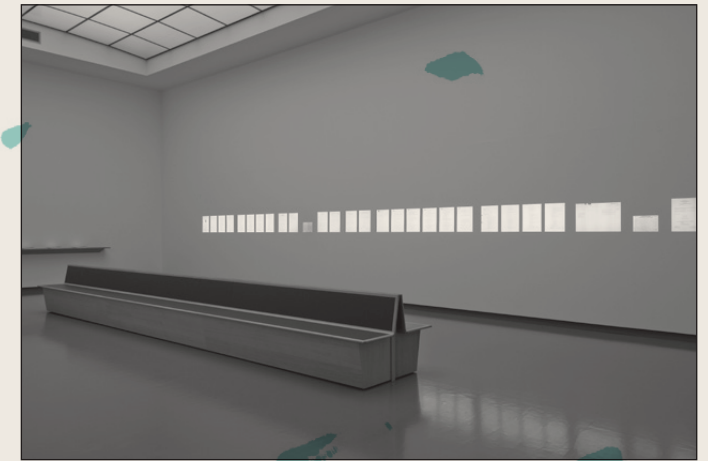
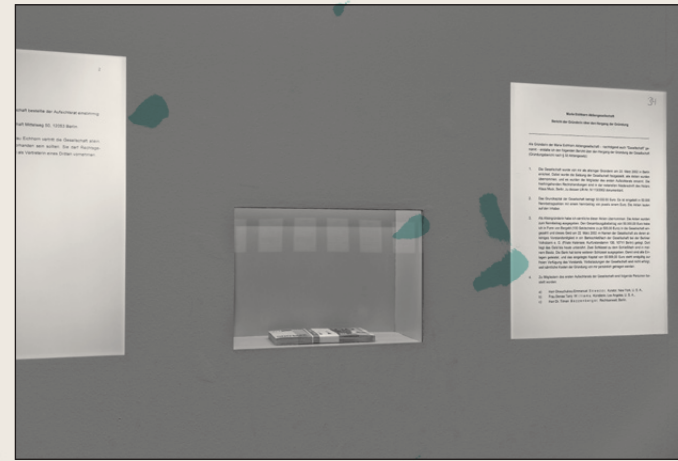
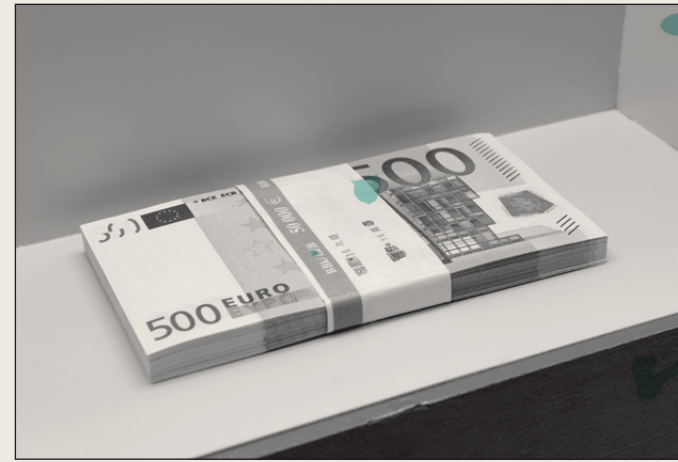
The development of a market in which property rights and claims to added value are traded gives capital an opportunity to increase its value through trade on this market. To attain ever greater profits, finance capital needs ever more speculative undertakings, as demonstrated by the extreme rises in stock market prices in the 1980s and the further acceleration in the late 1990s.

### *Law*

The law is venal.<sup>3</sup> One of the most enduring successes on this front was achieved by companies in 1886, when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad Company that a private company was a person under the framework of the United States constitution and therefore had the right to complete protection of its fundamental rights.<sup>4</sup> Since these undertakings had the financial means to defend and apply these rights, they could act more freely and with fewer restrictions than any citizen could. Since that time, other than under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the United States has been ruled by an alliance of corporations and the state.

### *Legal obligation to disclose results, joint decision-making*

The German Law on Public Limited Companies is constantly being amended and adapted to the needs of corporations. For example, the ruling Socialist/Green coalition in Germany wants to adopt a "Law on transparency and disclosure" which would eliminate the obligation to give all shareholders written notification of counter-motions. In the future all motions and the reasons stated for them are to be published only on public limited companies' webpages. The shareholders would then have to make the effort to examine the counter-motions themselves. Shareholders without Internet access would be cut off entirely from information on counter-motions.<sup>5</sup>



▲ *Aktiengesellschaft*, installation view Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2007.

### *Self-determination*

Public limited companies are also founded to counter the effects of privatisation and to free themselves of the whims of financially powerful companies. In 1997 the Genova dockworkers association CULMV (Compagnia Unica dei Lavoratori Merci Varie) founded a joint-stock company so that it could continue to exercise its self-determination following many months of industrial dispute. Another example is the institutional structure of the Hungarian public broadcasting system. In order to safeguard public programming and protect its independence, three public foundations and single-member public limited companies were established in respect of each broadcaster. The trustees of the foundations are at the same time the governing bodies of the corresponding company. The Communist daily *Il Manifesto* in Italy has been a public limited company since 1995. Rotpunktverlag, a leftwing publishing house in Switzerland, was transformed into a public limited company by its union so that it could operate more independently with the support of its shareholders.

### *The question of the concept of value*

#### *The concept of value*

Since money is used as value for capital accumulation, it is impossible to avoid a loss of

monetary value if this law of value is not applied. Money loses its value when the capitalist laws of value are not applied. Why does money lose its value when the capitalist laws of value are not applied?

### *Money, commodity*

The value of money mirrors the relationships of society, such as unemployment, inflation, and deflation.<sup>6</sup> If money is not turned into capital, its value declines. Turning money into commodities that appreciate in value affirms the status quo of capitalism.

### *Capital gain by destroying (liquidating) capital*

"It's to do with controlling the money, and the money not controlling us," says Jimmy Cauty of the band KLF (Copyright Liberation Front).<sup>7</sup> In August 1994 Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty burned a million pounds. The documentary film made at the time, *Watch the K Foundation Burn a Million Quid*, toured England for several months a year later. The screenings, with Drummond and Cauty present, provoked both acts of violence and great boredom, which resulted from the monotonous display, lasting over an hour, of the banknotes being set aflame.<sup>8</sup>

### *Accumulation (increase, growth) of value and the reduction (loss) of value*

A work of art seen in terms of its ability to accumulate monetary value and its reproductive form. When a work is purchased – when it becomes property – it can become reproducing capital. As soon as it is acquired, all effort is focused on increasing its value. If a work cannot be possessed (in material terms), how can the accumulation of value be assured? Are the mechanisms and structures of the growth or loss of value explored and published? Is the economic value of a work congruent with its aesthetic and art-historical values?<sup>9</sup>

### *Public nature / accessibility of a work*

What makes a work public, accessible, open to appropriation? When it is exhibited in a public space, when it is reproduced, when it is reported on, when it is discussed, when it has entered a canon? How does a work enter which canon? Is a work in a state institution more public, more accessible? How do the mechanisms for producing and reproducing capital function in the art market? Do public institutions display works from the art trade, from collections and institutions, in order to make them accessible to the public or to produce capital from them?<sup>10</sup> Are works in private collections less public than works in state collections? By what



# The Way Beyond “Art”

## Notes on art museums

### Walter Benjamin

#### ■ COMMENTARY

*In a rare incidence of time travel, Walter Benjamin graces the pages of The Copyist with some thoughts on temporality, posterity and exhibition-making in relation to the growing installation by The Museum of American Art, Berlin part of Play Van Abbe.*

gradual stages of public versus non-public/private are cultural institutions formed in capitalist or state-socialist systems of society?

#### *Tradability versus non-tradability, the relations of ownership of a work, copyright*

If a work is set free from the idea of ownership in both material and non-material terms, it cannot be traded. The mechanisms of circulation have no way of exploiting it and have no effect. How is such a work created? Forms or media such as lectures, texts, statements, attitudes, experiences, and events are treated as commodities. They are traded, and not only where they are available on an exclusive basis. What form must a work assume in order to render it unmarketable? Can works be rendered unmarketable by tying them to a specific location, by making them ephemeral or processes, by leaving the author anonymous, or by abandoning copyright?

#### *Ownership of knowledge*

Do non-material goods and commodities circumvent the concepts of property, ownership, and wealth as manifested in law? In Paragraph 266 of the German Commercial Code, which relates to the structure of the balance sheet, the following “non-material assets” are listed under the heading “Fixed Assets”: “1. Concessions, industrial property rights and similar rights and assets and also licences to exploit such rights and assets; 2. Goodwill; 3. Payments on account.” Knowledge and information do not yet appear in the balance sheets of corporations. The possession of specific knowledge or particular information creates power. Power is eliminated where the possession of knowledge is spread and where knowledge and information are published.

#### *Conditions governing artistic theory and practice and the elimination of such conditions*

What conditions are artistic working practices subject to? What are their requirements? Why, how, and by what means are the products of art used as instruments? How and by what means can products in the cultural, social, political, and scientific fields escape economic and political appropriation? ■

#### Notes

- 1 Wolfgang Hefermehl, introduction in *Aktiengesetz, GmbH-Gesetz*, 33rd ed., Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001, xi.
- 2 Karl Marx, “The Process of Accumulation of Capital,” part 7 of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, vol. 1, p. 780: “The world would still be without railways if it had had to wait until accumulation had got a few individual capitals far enough to be adequate for the construction of a railway. Centralization, however, accomplished this in the twinkling of an eye, by means of joint-stock companies.” Originally published as *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Vol. 1, 1867.
- 3 Take the example of nuclear energy. The German state subsidises the nuclear industry to the tune of Euro 2 billion a year. On 14 December 2001, after many years of negotiations with the nuclear industry, the German Bundestag passed a law phasing out the nuclear industry. The opposition (CDU/CSU, FDP, PDS) announced that it would repeal the law when the government changed. The law is venal. In 1997 the municipality of Schönau in the Black Forest purchased its power supply system in order to establish its own nuclear-free energy supply. In 1996 Ursula and Michael Sladek raised over DM 2 million as part of their campaign ‘Ich bin ein Störfall’ [I am a malfunction] to make up the shortfall in buying the system back from the former energy provider. Ironically, the magazine Capital awarded them a special prize as ecological managers.
- 4 “The defendant Corporations are persons within the intent of the clause in section 1 of the Fourteen Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Quotation from the Supreme Court ruling in the case of Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad Company, 1886, available at [www.touro-law.edu/patch/santa/](http://www.touro-law.edu/patch/santa/).
- 5 The Dachverband der Kritischen Aktionärinnen und Aktionäre (Association of Critical Shareholders in Germany) is calling for the retention of the existing rights of minority shareholders and full access to all information with or without Internet access. Together with the Critical Shareholders of Europe United, they want to preserve jobs and educational opportunities, to promote environmentally friendly products and climate protection, and attach social obligations to property ownership. They campaign against the diktat of shareholder value, arms production, nuclear energy, and companies which harm the environment. The Dachverband der Kritischen Aktionärinnen und Aktionäre organises the joint campaigns of its member organisations. In addition, it is the central contact point for the approximately 3,000 small shareholders who have transferred their voting rights to the association in order to exercise social and ecological responsibility.
- 6 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 7: “Just like money, law (which repeats in the capitalist system many of the figures assumed by money) carries no values that are proper to it, but only those that social conflicts

and the necessities of the reproduction of capitalist society, its division of labor, and exploitation produce every day.”

- 7 In 1993 the K Foundation established by the KLF awarded a prize to “Great Britain’s worst artist.” Rachel Whiteread won this prize, which at £ 40,000 was worth twice as much as the Turner Prize, at the same time that she won the Turner Prize.
- 8 This is reminiscent of the potlatch practices of archaic societies, in which property was given away or destroyed. Potlatch also functioned as a form of social regulating agent to prevent individuals possessing excessive wealth. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Function of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by Ian Cunnison, Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954; and Georges Bataille, “The Gift of Rivalry: ‘Potlatch,’” in *Consumption*, vol. 1 of *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, New York: Zone Books, 1988, pp. 63–77.
- 9 In the interviews I conducted from 1997 to 1999 on the history and relevance of the Artist’s Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement by Seth Siegel and Robert Projansky, the question of the different values that a work of art can have arose repeatedly. In this regard Daniel Buren remarked: “Long before my works were ever auctioned, I was against auctions. An auction is one of the ugliest things in the market history of a work ... The market price is increased or decreased by tricks and machinations; for example, in the 1980s when certain works that aren’t worth anything today were getting high prices ... Particularly in the 1980s a lot of artists, especially in America, thought they weren’t taking part in this boom, and they believed that if you have no market value, you have no other value either. That isn’t right, because things change quickly, and market value has nothing to do with value as such.” (Maria Eichhorn, “The Artist’s Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement” von Bob Projansky und Seth Siegel, Salzburg: Salzburger Kunstverein, 1998). Adrian Piper remarks: “I certainly do recognize the distinction between the meaning of the work and its art market value. In fact, I would make a further distinction, there’s the art market value, there’s the aesthetic value, and then there’s the meaning. So, I think it’s really a threefold distinction. And I am very much aware and I fully acknowledge the arbitrary nature of the art market value. It depends on so many variables. For example, what I was saying before about the fact that it took my joining a blue chip gallery to get people to notice the aesthetic value of my work so that they could then attach to it an art market value and buy it.” (Unpublished interview with Adrian Piper, 1998).
- 10 Institutions as part of the art trade: Richard Hamilton’s installation *Seven Rooms* was created for an exhibition at the Anthony d’Offay Gallery in London. When it was presented at documenta X the exhibition space of the gallery was reconstructed exactly. Who sponsored whom in this case? Are public institutions dependent on financial support from the art trade, sponsors, or private collections? And is this dependence evident in the exhibitions?

When Alexander Dorner invited El Lissitzky to design the room for abstract art, this was intended to be just one in the series of “atmosphere rooms” of the Landesmuseum in Hannover. Connected chronologically, these rooms would take visitors on a journey through history, proudly displaying the brightest moments of the cultural evolution of humanity. The ‘Abstract Cabinet’ would show the most advanced art achievements of the immediate past, and from there visitors would enter the last room, the ‘Room of Our Time’ conceived by Dorner and Moholy-Nagy, which was devoted to the present. It seemed that it would be the end of a long journey that began in ancient times and culminated in that room, exhibiting the present.

But, what would be shown as “our time”? The time of the 1930s, or the never ending present? Would “our time” remain the same forever or would it change constantly? If the ‘Room of Our Time’ remains unchanged, than the time line of the Landesmuseum would be closed on both ends, beginning at some point (room) in antiquity and ending with the room exhibiting what was “our time” when this idea was implemented. This would represent a museum model that is linear, chronological and closed on both ends.

We could also imagine the “Room of Our Time” with a display that changes with time, in some intervals, like decades: “Room of Our Time 1930s”, “Room of Our Time 1940s”... “Room of Our Times 2010s”... There are at least two possibilities within this model. One would be based on forgetting where each new decade would take the place of the one before, erasing its previous content. This model would resolve the problem of accumulation, but will bring up another: amnesia.

Another possibility would be based on accumulation. Each decade would be added to already existing content, thus producing an endless growth of artifacts and data. We would have now the opportunity to remember not only the last decade but all those that precede it. But we would face the problem of shortage of space for storage and display, and shortage of time to see everything that is exhibited. This would represent a classical case of the museum of contemporary art which is closed at some point in the past, while keeping an open end toward the future.

In addition to accumulation, this kind of museum brings up another question: selection. How could one decide what should be selected from the present and preserved for the future? And how would one be sure that those selected artifacts and data would be relevant 50 or 100 years later?

Most of the contemporary art museums today are chronological,

evolutionary, with the timeline closed on one end at some point in the not so distant past, and with an open end toward the future. And they follow basically the same storyline established in the mid 1930s by Alfred Barr. But these museums have the same systemic problems: selection and accumulation (endless growth). For a few decades this was an inspirational, and the most advanced, museum model, but today it has become unproductive and clearly unsustainable in the long run. What might be a way out?

Art museums didn’t always exist, they are basically a recent invention, and it seems they have now exhausted their purpose, became obsolete, along side even the very notion of art.

Few of them might be preserved and conserved as examples of what once was art and the art museum, closing the other end at some point, while most of the existing museums would have to transform into another kind of institution of memory. Some of those might become places where we could establish a narrative that doesn’t have to be linear or chronological, but could tell us a story about some events, ideas, phenomena from the past worth remembering. Those places could use any kind of exhibits/artifacts: “original works of art”, replicas, copies, facsimiles, documents, objects, moving images. Regardless of what their previous meaning was, the character of these artifacts would now be closer to the notion of specimen than to the notion of “work of art”. What would be important is the story in which all these artifacts play a certain role. The story would define their meaning and importance, expressed through both the display and written narrative. And most likely the narrative would have both (or rather all) ends closed.

Not only the existing art museum will have to transform, but there will emerge new kinds of places that will change the way we establish collective memory and our understanding of the past. And also the way we decide to remember the past, what kind of stories will become our memories, all that will determine what steps we are going to take toward the future.

We could continue to call these places “museums”, if they have a physical space, a collection that is partially on display and a narrative associated with each exhibit and/or an overarching narrative that would connect all the exhibits in a coherent story. Some of these “museums” could even be about art or art history, but for certain they will not be “art museums”. ■

Walter Benjamin  
New York 2009



# An annotated review of Rudi Fuchs's Summer Display 1983: 'An art historical image of the twentieth century' Pieter Heynen 1983 & Diana Franssen 2010

## REVIEW

A review of a review – following the recent exhibition, *Repetition: Summer Display 1983*, Diana Franssen takes a contemporary critical glance over Pieter Heynen's critique of the original exhibition by curator and former director of the Van Abbemuseum, Rudi Fuchs.



## Invitation card

Pieter Heynen's article starts with an elaboration on the invitation card accompanying the 1983 exhibition by Rudi Fuchs. This invitation card was carefully chosen by Rudi Fuchs and consisted of the floorplan of the Oberen Belvedere Museum in Vienna after the reinstatement of the gallery by Christian Von Mechel. Von Mechel envisaged a new function for the museum, pointing out that he wanted to use the building in such a way that allowed for educational spaces as well as the displaying of art history in a physical sense, i.e. the museum library. The visitor should be able to learn about all sorts of works from all times, not only about the so-called "perfect" examples thereof: the canon. Learning was only made possible by acknowledging the contrasts between the works presented, by looking at them and comparing them. Von Mechel described this way of seeing and experiencing as the ultimate manner in which a visitor could educate himself to become a 'connoisseur'.<sup>1</sup> This card motivated the museum policy on which the 'Summer Display' was built (among others). Rudi Fuchs's ideas about the role of the museum were publicly discussed from the day he started as director in the Van Abbemuseum and became known as the "Museum Discussion", fought out among scholars, artists and museum directors in the magazine, *Hollands Diep*.<sup>2</sup> While Fuchs's predecessor, Jean Leering, saw the museum as an instrument of social reform, Fuchs felt that the first loyalty of a museum should be to art and the artist. The problems confronting a museum of contemporary art were by definition complex for a non-expert audience. The most a museum could do was to provide information concerning the circumstances surrounding the genesis of a work of art, shedding as much light as possible on the work itself. Fuchs offered a 'didactic structure': to make visible our own time by the scientific ordering of artworks and providing information about the past, similar to the concept from Von Mechel. ■

## Ingetogen = Modest

Heynen's vision of the 'Summer Display' is determined by the way artworks are presented in an abundant and almost modest way. He refers to, for instance, Anselm Kiefer – with his painting *Fallender Engel* (1979) – as a 'silent romantic youth' instead of a 'roaring Prussian general' displayed at the same time in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam with his piece *Märkischer Sand*.

Fuchs's insert in the *Museum in Motion* gives this experience a basis by revealing the movement in a museum context as a standstill: 'The history of a museum is written by art. A museum is the place where an art, en route, is halted and becomes a still image of movement within the culture. That is the paradox of a museum: it can show movement only as standstill. What has been made, has become history – step by step. A museum is the eye-witness of history.'<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the exhibition lies in the way the confrontation was handled or better, juxtapositioned: colour against non-colour, form against non-form, the atmosphere of the work against its content, and the context of the art piece against its origin. Fuchs aimed to make his exhibitions present a broad overview of modern and contemporary art. His device was that the museum should function as 'arena', where radical differences or conceptual diametrical oppositions were confronted or entangled. Fuchs published this idea in a "letter" to his friend and colleague, Johannes Gachnang, director of Kunsthalle Bern. In a museum the dialectic of culture should be shown and it was the task of the museum to inform or educate the public on this subject. Gachnang also attributed great importance to this dialectic principle, as he quoted the Swiss author, Gottfried Keller (1819-1890): 'Neu ist in einem guten Sinne nur, was aus der Dialektik der Kulturbewegung hervorgeht.'<sup>4, 5</sup> ■

## Ahistorical versus art historical presentation

Fuchs's ahistorical presentations gave room to the idea that artists of that time stand in a complex, dialectical relationship to their time and to each other. That is why he combined various works of various artists together into one room. He wanted that each artist or each work would be able to speak its own dialect; the particularity of this dialect should become evident by contrast and by encounter with the other. A beautiful motivation for the attitude was given by Fuchs in the catalogue accompanying his departure exhibition 'Regenboog': '[...] we made an attempt to allow works of art to abandon their individual stylistic security.'<sup>7</sup> As R. Pingan prosaically concludes in his study, these kind of ahistorical presentations also had a pragmatic side. The collection of the Van Abbemuseum was not an encyclopaedic one, where one could boundlessly take an artwork of choice. A lot of artist oeuvres were represented in the collection with only one or two works, meaning that Fuchs's experiments were influenced by this scarceness.<sup>8</sup> It could be true because pragmatics are very often part of the "museum game".

There are early examples of this ahistorical, non-linear style. Although he had problems with the concept twenty years earlier, a model for Fuchs (as he said in an interview in 1986) – was 'In het licht van Vermeer' (Mauritshuis, The Hague 1966). Other examples are for instance Johannes Cladders' exhibition 'Zeit ohne Zeit' (Mönchengladbach, 1969) or Johannes Gachnang's 'Nu de Dos I-IV' (Bern, 1979). An example of experiment with alternative developments, though in a slightly different way, are Harald Szeemann's experiments in 'Jungesellenmaschinen' (1976), 'Monte Verità' (1979), 'Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk' (1983). Pieter Heynen did not refer to these experiments. He went into formalistic analyses between the works presented in the show. Something which critic, Janneke Wesseling took to another level in her review of one of the collection presentations in 1999. She concludes this presentation with the view that Fuchs's 'real passionate, adventurous engagement' is grown into a 'shallow formalistic play.'<sup>8</sup> ■

## De Statua (1983)

Fuchs started to try out these dialectic presentations by means of collection presentations, which then formed the basis for Documenta 7. The principles of the dialectic in confronting concepts on art in one exhibition took place for the first time in the thematic show, 'De Statua': an exhibition on the current status of sculpture that included works by Carl Andre, Georg Baselitz, Joseph Beuys, John Chamberlain, Luciano Fabro, Barry Flanagan, Jörg Immendorff, Richard Long, Markus Lüpertz, Bruce Nauman, A.R. Penck, Giuseppe Penone, Ulrich Rückriem and Carel Visser.<sup>6</sup>

In the second part of Fuchs's directorship he started to build further on these thematic exhibitions, wherein artists were not confronted on the basis of style or formal relationships, but on their attitude. By means of ahistorical combinations of artists and artworks, Fuchs evoked alternative geneologies. Although the 'Summer Display' of 1984 was the highlight of the experiment and the most complex one, the 'Summer Display' of 1983 – the first one after his Documenta 7 – can be seen as a sophisticated example of this search and is perhaps the reason why it is referred to as 'modest' in Pieter Heynen's review. Other critics referred to the exhibition as too entangled with a an hurdle-work of relations, with contrasts, juxtapositions and similarities. But all foremost the phrase "aesthetic-formalism" was heard. ■

'[...] we] made an attempt to allow works of art to abandon their individual stylistic security.'

## Conclusion

As we now look at the reenactment of the 'Summer Display 1983', with respect to the way Fuchs has given the Van Abbemuseum the opportunity to develop new insights in a changing world by juxtapositioning and entanglement older exhibition material, it is up to the visitor to conclude whether Fuchs's ahistorical module still has enough possibilities or whether "the times are a changing" indeed! ■

## Notes

- 1 A. Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, Dresden, 2001, p. 21 'Der Zweck alles Bestrebens gieng dahin, dieses [...] Gebäude so zu benutzen, dass die Einrichtung im Ganzen, so wie in den Theilen lehrreich, und so viel möglich, sichtbare Geschichte der Kunst werden möchte. Eine solche, grosse öffentliche, mehr zum Unterricht noch, als nur zum vorübergehenden Vergnügen, bestimmte Sammlung scheint einer Bibliothek zu gleichen, in welcher der Wissbegierige froh ist, Werke aller Arten und aller Zeiten anzutreffen, nicht das Gefällige und Volkommene allein, sondern abwechselnde Kontraste, durch deren Betrachtung und Vergleichung (den einzigen Weg zur Kenntniss zu gelangen) er Kenner der Kunst werden kann.'
- 2 J. Leering, 'De toekomst van het museum', *Hollands Diep*, 20-12-1975; R. Fuchs, 'Wat Leering beweert is onaanvaardbaar', *Hollands Diep*, 17-01-1976; Constant, G. Lataster, J. Sierhuis ... [et al.], 'Leering maakt de kunst monddood', *Hollands Diep*, 13-03-1976; D.H. Couvé, 'Wat Fuchs beweert is onaanvaardbaar', *Hollands Diep*, 10-04-1976; J. Leering, 'Tegen de ingegraeven stellingen', *Hollands Diep*, 19-06-1976
- 3 F. Haks, C. Blotkamp, *Museum in Motion*, The Hague, 1977, p. 257
- 4 J. Gachnang, 'Bericht des Leiters über die Tätigkeit der Kunsthalle Bern und die von ihm 1977/78 durchgeführten Ausstellungen', *Jahresbericht der Vereins Kunsthalle Bern*, 1978, w.p.
- 5 R. Pingan, *Dat museum is een mijnheer*, Eindhoven, 2005, pp. 364-365
- 6 R.H. Fuchs, *De Statua*, Eindhoven, 1983, p. 11 [08-05-1983 / 19-06-1983] 'It is not the conception but the physical moment within the conception which gives Carl Andre's sculpture its dramatic quality, which makes Beuys an epic poet in sculpture, or which makes Nauman into a philosopher of for. -And from here [...] we have to develop the definition of sculpture.'
- 7 R.H. Fuchs, *Regenboog*, Eindhoven, 1987, p. 50
- 8 Idem., noot 5, p. 440
- 9 J. Wesseling, 'Fuchs' collectie in Van Abbe van wisselend niveau', *NRC Handelsblad*, 30-07-1999



▲ Installation views, *Repetition: Summer Display 1983* 2009, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.



# Climate Controlled? *Steven ten Thije*

## ■ MUSEUM

*Blooming statues and virulent root systems are all part of the currency of change in exhibition making, concludes Steven ten Thije, one of the curators of Museum Modules, in Play Van Abbe Part 2: Time Machines.*

From the start the museum had a certain idealism attached to it. On its walls and in its depots it would assemble and display a comprehensive picture of the history of art. The dream was a complete collection that would halt the chaos of history and showing in one clear view: how things really are. The idealism of the museum involves subjecting reality, as it unfolds, to the unifying idea of one history that develops itself along eternal principles of evolution – upward and forward. By inventorising all the art produced and collecting suitable specimens to explicate their logical development in a certain habitat, the museum created an almost scientific genealogy. The walls and rooms of the museum were like the acclimatised greenhouses in which the species of art could be conserved; paintings would flourish on the walls, sculptures would blossom on the pedestal. It all looks quite harmonious from a distance as long as the plants stay plants, and the air humidified. But what when the neat categories and pot-plant positions start to change?

What happens in the first half of the 20th century in the domain of art can perhaps best be described as a chaotic transformation in both the climate and the plant. In a short period of time both the notion of “history” and the idea of “art” underwent radical changes and spawned a new branch of the museum family tree – the museum of modern art.

It would take a book to describe in detail the

The walls and rooms were like the acclimatised greenhouses in which the species of art could be conserved.

exact nature of the new categorical and foundational shifts underlying the museum of modern art, but we can at least give some indications as to where, along the root system of ideas that founded the museum, these changes occurred. The points to note are threefold and they are all connected. One is a transformation in the understanding of the role of the relation between medium and idea – sign and signified. Two is a change in the understanding of history. Three is a repositioning of the body within the museum space. The four projects brought together in the exhibition ‘Museum Modules’, one of the three exhibitions that comprise the second chapter of *Play Van Abbe*, map out the complicated interrelations between the three trajectories of change.

The first point can be found in the work of the French author and Minister of Culture, Andre Malraux. In a first chapter of an impressive history of art, poetically titled, *The Voices of Silence* (1953) Malraux introduces the notion of the ‘musée imaginaire’, translated as ‘the museum without walls’. In this first chapter he notes explicitly how the proliferation of photographic images has made it possible for us to see so much more art than our forefathers and mothers, seeing elements of works that went unnoticed before. Due to this innovation we can now compose a museum in our imagination, without having to travel to the site of the real work. Here the photograph can, as it were, extract a kind of essence from the work and present it for inspection anywhere, anytime. The previously venerated original can now travel freely in the form of a reproduction where its essence can be consumed by masses of art lovers.

What is striking in Malraux’s account is that he, in a complicated, yet somehow naïve, way, transforms the relation between the original and the copy – the object and the sign (image, word or idea) referring to it. In his account the photograph presents a certain perspective and can even reveal things that were first invisible (by

means of magnification, for instance). This does not however, create a ‘new’ image or artwork. The only thing the documenting photograph does, is infinitely reproduce the artistic core at the heart of artistic expression, without adding to or disrupting it. This understanding of the relation between original and reproduction draws attention to the immaterial idea or style that does not exist in the original’s materiality, but in the form of mass produced images, this core of expression can be boundlessly consumed and delivered.

Readers of Benjamin will recognise a strange, but inverted version of his famous argument presented in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility*, written around the same time as Malraux wrote his first chapter (1936-39). Where Malraux believes that the photograph merely mobilises the essence of an artwork, Benjamin considered the final effect of a perfect reproduction to be the destruction of the unique essence – its aura. Benjamin, who as a young philosopher started with esoteric reflections on the nature of language, suggests in this text that the photographic, or reproducible image, might very well install a radical transformation in the relationship between the sign and the world, the representation and the thing or moment being represented. The pre-modern organisation of that relationship was based on an idea of hierarchy: a fixed order which was the basis for the unique and unrepeatable work of art. In modern times, where images were no longer original, but can be reproduced endlessly and are present everywhere, the notion that inspires hierarchy – distance – is dismantled. The aura, ‘a unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be’ refers to an almost metaphysical notion of distance that marks the true position of a thing within the universal, natural order. The distance between sign and thing was necessary to fix things within their place in history ensuring that they would not come nearer via reproduction. The modern world with its high-technology and mass-culture,



▲ Documentation room *Play Van Abbe Part 2: Museum Modules*.



however, was, according to Benjamin, pressing on this notion of distance – something to which he referred when he stated that ‘the masses have a desire to come closer to things.’

Before we can further explore the consequences of this cryptic phrase, it is best to first pause at the second point of our three points to note: the difference in an understanding of history. There are two interesting historical examples that actively deal with this point: the Museum of Modern Art in New York under its first director Alfred H. Barr and the Landesmuseum in Hannover under the directorship of Alexander Dorner. In the history of MoMA, the clearest expression of a new relation to history can be found in the famous catalogue cover for the equally famous exhibition, ‘Abstract Art and Cubism’, dated (yet again) the same year as Benjamin and Malraux were writing their texts. Intriguing in this taxonomy of modern art is a type of contradiction similar to Malraux’s assertion. In his “map” of the history of modern art, Barr is the first to discard the old idea of national schools and describe the development of art as following international movements. History in the Barr schema is no longer a geographical, national story, but is an international progression of styles and movements. Just as the essence of the work was able to travel in the immaterial photographic image, so the history of art leaves the fetters of “blood and soil” behind it and is carried along global currents. However, Barr, just as Malraux, does not break with the essentialist idea of “one” art history based on unique styles or in unique works of art.

Some years before Barr’s famous ‘Abstract Art and Cubism’ show, it was a German museum director, Alexander Dorner, who tried to draw a more radical conclusion from a similar insight. Dorner not only thought that modern art should not be contained within the narrow parameters of a national history, but in a Benjaminian way, thought that the history of unique works had come to an end. Dorner, inspired by the mind-

blowing consequences of the theory of relativity combined with some evolution theory, thought that the relation between experience and ideas was organised in a way specific to each era. The cave man, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance all had their own understanding of time and space and a way of expressing that in art and language. In his own days, Dorner saw the essentialist, idealist model of the Renaissance coming to an end, evolving into a dynamic, relativistic era, in which the idea of progressing along the line of “one” history was no longer possible. He, therefore, didn’t organise modern art movements in one genealogical schema, but transformed the last room of his museum in a ‘Room of the Now’ (*Raum der Gegenwart*) where, in all ways, history ended. In a dynamic design from the Hungarian artists Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, the aesthetic expressions of the modern times were exhibited: all technical, reproducible, more design than art. In this room, Dorner seems to have speculated on a possible end of both art and history as we know it in the omnipresent, mass-image of the photographic camera or film.

And in the middle, as silent observer and perhaps even instigator of these changes, stands the mass, which brings us to the last point on the list: the repositioning of the body of the spectator. In a sense all the examples mentioned above in one way or another are a result of mass society. The mass-produced images in the masses of copies sold of Malraux’s book, the mass audiences that, in the 1950s and 1960s particularly, witnessed the famous shows of MoMA, the imagined relative and free floating mob of people walking through rooms of the Landesmuseum to find themselves properly expressed in the last room that ended their museum visit. A final historical example that pays tribute to this newly formed, mass spectator can be found in Lina Bo Bardi’s poetic exhibition design for MASP (Art Museum São Paulo). If all the other examples seem to hold on to the static display of an image in a room or on the

page of book, Bo Bardi translated the dynamism of modern society by breaking open exhibition design and space; building a museum with glass walls and presenting the works on glass planes on display furniture that could be easily moved, de- and reinstalled to suit the needs of the mass community using the museum. In a way Bo Bardi is closest to Benjamin’s understanding that the masses dislike distance and want to come closer. She designed her museum humbly as a meeting place, elevated so to make space underneath it for markets and public happenings. In the building she tried to break down the gap between “high” and “low” art, a division that, following the reasoning of Dorner and Benjamin, is a relic of a time long gone.

Now that we have come to the end of our tour of the four examples that give an insight in the force field which formed the museum of modern art, we might finish with a final observation on the legacy of these examples in our current museum for modern and contemporary art. I imagine that some of the readers of this text have wondered how this frivolous and varied excursion around museums of the past could lead us into those overly familiar rooms with white walls and no windows. How did the ‘white cube’ become the final form of this kind of museum? Again, we cannot fully explore this question, but perhaps the white wall, windowless formula presents only one of the possibilities of museum formation, which today might not be regarded as the most productive one. Within this series of examples, the white cube is one of those models that seek to reintroduce hierarchy and essentialism in a time determined by digital photography and the Internet – so antithetical to the idea of a single essence. This is not to say that the concentration and perceptual precision inspired by the serene white cube has to be completely discarded, but it would be nice if we could plant those white spaces in a museum that would not also inspire distance, but instead allow people to get closer. ■



# Chto Delat and Method: Practicing Dialectic *Dmitry Vilensky*

## ■ MUSEUM

*In a series of reflective paragraphs Dmitry Vilensky – member of the activist art collective, Chto Delat – takes stock of contemporary artistic practice.*

### *Mixing Different Things*

The editorial and exhibition policy of Chto Delat is often accused of inconsistency, of lacking a clear “party line.” What is important for us today is to arrive at a method that would enable us to mix quite different things – reactionary form and radical content, anarchic spontaneity and organisational discipline, hedonism and asceticism, etc.

It is a matter of finding the right proportions. That is, we are once again forced to solve the old problems of composition while also not forgetting that the most faithful composition is always built on the simultaneous sublation and supercharging of contradictions.

As Master Bertolt taught us, these contradictions should be resolved not in the work of art, but in real life.

Apropos the polemics with Master Jean-Luc, it is worth noting that one can place quite neatly from one shot to another and still not end up with a whole film. The question is what the third shot in the sequence will be. And how this third shot will relate to what came before the one plus one.

This, apparently, is just what Master Jean-Luc had in mind: it is always useful to emphasise the source of the whole.

### *On the Usefulness of Declarations*

Everyone has long ago given up wracking their brains over the question of whether it is possible to elaborate precise rules for organising the work of a collective. It is now quite rare to come across a new manifesto or declaration. The cult of spontaneity, reactivity, and tactics – the rejection of readymade rules – is the order of the day. Tactics, however, is something less than method. Only by uniting tactics and strategy can we arrive at method.

Hence it is a good thing to try one’s hand at writing manifestos from time to time.

### *On the Totality of Capital, or Playing the Idiot*

Today it is all the rage to say that there is nothing outside the contemporary world order. Capital and market relations are total, and even if someone or something escapes this logic, then this does not in any way negate it. This is a trait of moderately progressive consciousness: such is the opinion of leftist theorists, and the capitalists have no real objections to their equitable thesis.

We should play the idiot and simply declare this thesis a lie. We know quite well whose interests are served by it.

### *Being Productive?*

Master Bertolt said that a person should be productive.

Following his method of thinking, we might boldly claim that a person should be unproductive or that a person should not be productive. We end up with a big mess. We can get ourselves out of this muddle by asking a single question: to what end should we be productive?

By constantly asking ourselves this question, we can resolve various working situations and understand when it is worth producing something and when it is not.

### *On Compromises*

Politically engaged artists inevitably face the question of compromise in their practices. It primarily arises when they have to decide whether to take money from one or another source, or participate in one project or another.

There are several readymade decisions to which artists resort. Some artists keen endlessly that it is impossible to stay pure in an unclean world and so they constantly wind up covered in shit. Other artists regard themselves as rays of light in the kingdom of darkness. They are quite afraid of relinquishing their radiant purity, which no one could care less about except they themselves.

The conversation about the balance between purity and impurity is banal, although finding this balance is in fact the principal element of art making.

Master Bertolt suggested us to ‘drink wine and water from different glasses.’

### *On Working with Institutions*

It is too little to postulate that collaborating with cultural institutions is a good thing or, on the contrary, that it is a bad thing. We should always remember that it is worth getting mixed up in such relations only when we try to change these institutions themselves, so that those who come after us will not need to waste their time on such silly matters and will immediately be able to get down to more essential work.

### *On Subjugation to the Dominant Class*

We cannot deny the fact that the great artworks of the past were produced despite the subjugated position of their creators.

As we recognise this fact today we should emphasise the vital proviso “despite”. We thus constantly remind ourselves what art could and should be if the subjugation to the dominant classes and tastes could disappear.

### *On the Historicity of Art*

Like everything else in the world, art is historical. What does this mean?

First of all, it does not mean that what was created

in the past has no meaning today.

Master Bertolt and Master Jean-Luc demonstrated that art is something that arises from difficulties and rouses us to action.

Those who deny art’s dependence on the powers that be are stupid.

Those who do not see that people’s creative powers never dry up, even in the face of slavery and hopelessness, are blind.

The essence of the great method is to assist the power of creativity in overcoming its dependence on the system of art.

### *The Formula of Dialectical Cinema*

As Master Jean-Luc quite aptly noted, “Art is not the reflection of reality, but the reality of this reflection.”

To this we should add that this reality is transformative. It has less to do with life as it is, and more to do with how the conditions of people’s lives can and must change.

### *On Financing*

Master Jean-Luc unexpectedly spoke out in favour of “ten-dollar financing” for authentic films over Hollywood-style budgets.

At first glance this idea sounds like mockery. Upon more careful reflection, however, we realise that the master was not promoting the total absence of financing. And he made no mention of the sources of this financing.

### *On the Boundaries of the Disciplines*

It is believed that we should have long ago put an end to the division of knowledge into separate disciplines. The mantra “knowledge is one” is hugely popular with many progressive people. They say that there is only one kind of knowledge, which serves the cause of emancipation.

And they are right insofar as there is hardly any sense in using the proud word knowledge to describe methods for enslaving consciousness.

It is a good cause to use all our powers to bring closer that day when the disciplinary divisions will disappear, but it is premature to speak of this today.

We should say rather that knowledge is one, but for the time being it consists of many disciplines. We must try and achieve perfection in each of them.

For now this is the most important contribution we can make to the cause of emancipation.

### *On the Question of Self-Education*

More and more often we hear that all imposed forms of education are unavoidably evil, that we should close all schools and organise ourselves into non-hierarchical

circles in which there would be no difference between the learned and the ignorant, old and young, man and woman, the person born in misery and the person born with a silver spoon. All this sounds nice and of course we know the historical origins of such ideas.

Born at a certain historical moment, they played a supremely important role in transforming all of society and shifting capitalism to a new stage – the knowledge economy, the flexible labor market, exploitation of the general intellect, etc. Does it make sense for those who see all the dead ends of this path of development to repeat these new truisms of capital?

Let us leave the rhetoric of self-education to the corporations, which have such a need for the newly flexible worker willing to engage in lifelong learning.

Why shouldn’t we again think hard about creating a methodology of learning and teaching that takes account of the contemporary moment?

I see nothing bad about having all children study Marxist dialectics, value theory, the history of the workers movement, and art history. The problem is how to make such obligatory courses thrilling and entertaining, how to combine discipline and freedom.

If we are unwilling to think in this direction however, that means we have already lost.

### *On the Theory of the Weakest Link*

The question of where a breakthrough is possible, in what countries – that is, where it will be possible to create new relations outside the dominion of private property and the egotistical interests of individuals – is the most vital question.

The theory of the weakest link proved its utility in the past. Can it prove workable again? On the one hand, we are witnesses to capital’s unbelievable experiments in the development of technology and new forms of life. On the other, we see clearly that the period of prosperity in the First World, paid for with the slave labour of the rest of the world, led to a situation in which even oppressed people in the First World were embourgeoised. Their class consciousness, even in the most progressive circles, is bourgeois consciousness. In the west, even the most out-and-out punk is bourgeois to a certain extent.

The situation outside the First World, however, looks just as hopeless. Since the emergence of cognitive capitalism, the colonial hegemony of western countries has only grown. Detecting new emancipatory potential in the Third World is no less difficult than in the First World, despite the fact that it is precisely here that forms of collective consciousness have been preserved.

We should pay close attention to newly emergent enclaves of the Third World within the First World and of the First World on the periphery. If they cooperate in the future they might become a revolutionary force capable of changing the world.

And of course we should carefully analyse everything that is happening in Latin America.

### *On the Withering Away of Art*

To create an art that withers away – that is, a powerful art that disappears as its functions disappear, an art that reduces its own success to naught – we should build its institutions dialectically. That is, to begin with we need to generate a healthy conflict and then devise a mechanism that would enable us to abolish the gap between the act of creativity and the system that represents it.

This is only possible, however, given a total transformation of the entire system of power and political relations. Here the forces of art (even an art that is withering away) are insufficient. Although we also should affirm that unless art’s function is changed right now, any transformation of power relations will prove impossible.

One artist – Master Di-Gu – believed that his works were so autonomous that they could be exhibited in any context without losing any of their power. In all likelihood, he greatly exaggerated their autonomy. The ease with which his works turned up in any number of the most dubious contexts finally called into question all his utterances. Unfortunately, his fate was typical for most practitioners of critical art, who for some reason considered themselves independent.

Another master – An-Os – suddenly decided that only by resurrecting the object’s commodity aura could the struggle in art be continued. He failed to take one factor into account, however: the commodity aura had not gone away during the time it took for him to learn this expression. Following this path, he thus became one of the multitude of artists who are as difficult to count as the grains of sand on a beach.

### *On the Utility of Reading, Viewing, and the Supreme Privilege*

Many people greatly enjoy reading, viewing films, and visiting museums. There is nothing wrong with this.

What is wrong is that in our society only a tiny minority is capable of creating something from their experience of reading books, watching films, and visiting museums.

There is an old argument. Should art dissolve into life, or should it, on the contrary, absorb the entire experience of life and express it in new forms? Which position is the most correct one today?

Art should absorb the entire experience of life and express it in new forms. The principal task of these new forms – to come back transformed and dissolve into life, thus provoking life’s transformation – is to change the world, the thing that everyone so loves talking about.

### *Ideas and the Masses*

Ideas mean nothing unless they seize the consciousness of people. Does this principle allow us to judge the quality of ideas? No, it does not. History teaches us that ideas need time in order to possess the consciousness of many people; it is a lengthy process. We can say with certainty, however, that ideas that do nothing to possess people’s consciousness mean very little.

Therefore we have only ourselves to blame for the fact that we have remained unpersuasive.

### *On Universality*

A universal method might well be applied to a multitude of particular cases.

But the great method is unlikely to arise from a multitude of particular cases.

### *On World Art*

Everyone remembers how the Great Teacher wrote in a manifesto about the origin of world literature. Who would be so bold as to talk about world art today? Of course this would sound totalizing and bombastic.

Statements of this sort will always appear suspicious.

It is just for this reason that we should try to speak of world art.

### *On Leaders*

Even in the most horizontally democratic organisation the police can fairly quickly determine who they should arrest in order to paralyse its work.

We should consider organisational models in which this situation would be inconceivable. We don’t need an absence of leaders, but a surplus. Only when each of us becomes a leader can we reject this notion itself. For the time being, however, we should not forget that our leaders need special protection from the police.

The brightest minds are willing to write and meditate on the dialectic, but only a few of them are capable of doing this dialectically.

The best artists make works on politics, inequality, and ordinary people, but only a few of them do this politically.

The best politicians try to mitigate people’s hardships – to guarantee that their rights and freedoms are observed, to help the weak and the sick – but only a few of them are capable of questioning the very system of relations that destroys, robs, and cripples people.

### *On Defamiliarisation and Subversive Affirmation*

Nothing has so spoiled the consciousness of the handful of politically minded contemporary artists than using the method of subversive affirmation. Many of them have decided that this is the most appropriate method for critiquing society and raising consciousness. But is this the case?

It is as if everyone has forgotten that capital has no sense of shame, that it is essentially pornographic. Of course it’s tempting to turn soft porn into hardcore, but what does this change? This does not mean that we should discard these methods altogether. We should simply always employ them in the right proportions. It is not enough to make shit look shittier and smell smellier. It is vital to convince the viewer that there is also something that is different from shit.

And we shouldn’t count on the fact that viewers will figure this out for themselves.

### *Is It Possible to Make Love Politically?*

Master Bertolt said that love between two people becomes meaningful when a common cause arises between them – serving the revolutionary cause or something of the sort. Only then are they able to overcome their finitude in bed as well.

The most vivid example of dialectical affirmation in history is Benjamin’s thesis that communists answer the fascist ‘aestheticisation of politics’ with a ‘politicisation of art.’ It turns out that aesthetics is on the side of fascism, while art is on the side of the communists. I think that we shouldn’t so easily farm out aesthetics to history’s brown-shirted forces. Today we should re-examine this thesis and, most likely, conclude that we really lack an aesthetics of the politicisation of art.

Only in this case we will have the chance to see, perhaps, the emergence of something comparable in power to the Marseillaise.■



# An Oblique Angle

## Arnout Rigter

■ COMMENTARY

A work by Tino Segal, This is Exchange, was recently active in the space of the Van Abbemuseum as part of Play Van Abbe Part 1.



It was presented in the space of a gallery located on the second level, where a visitor would find two actors dressed as museum security guards standing alone in the room. The guards would approach the visitor and what one might hear would be the title of the work and an offer: to exchange half of what was paid to enter the museum in return for the visitor's opinion of market economy.

The offer was very real and so was the conversation that followed. The work ran, undocumented, for hundreds of hours from the end of November, 2009 to February, 2010 and in this column, one of the actors, Arnout Rigter (who is also Eindhoven's poet laureate) reflects on the diverse values of exchange.

Of course, you can talk about market economy with anyone, always, anywhere (for free!) Sure, you can go to the museum, pay to see art. But in this room, you can get back half of your entrance fee if you talk. Feel uncomfortable with that? I will try to set you at ease: "Every opinion is worth the same price!"

It is not my job to moralise or judge you. You don't need to have any expertise. You may say whatever you want.

Nothing will happen to your opinion either. I am forbidden to record you. You leave no fingerprints. The gallery stays white. You can exchange whatever you like, and stay safe in your anonymity. This is, practically speaking, as useless as art can be.

One warning is needed: this art works like a mirror. You can see yourself in it, although you don't always notice this immediately. There are as many different tones in the blank, white walls as there are people compelled by this work to reflect as they enter the room. If you walk in in a

shy way, the whole space will seem introverted. If you are a bit grumpy because of your "conceptual-theoretical" nature, than the room suddenly becomes "conceptual-theoretical" as well. If you are open for it, the space will open and can be filled with everything.

A second warning: someone is watching you. There is a person already in the room, who has been standing there for one hundred hours, who gets used to the white. I can tell you, in the emptiness of the gallery you stick out nicely. And in your absence, I have lots of time to dream and muse.

What is so interesting about an exchange in a room that is white and empty? A natural biotope is a cocktail of diversity from which life springs. The earth hangs at an oblique angle because another sphere bumped against it – creating seasons, variation. The bump turned out to be of value.

Most of the time we don't like to bump, we play it safe, our opinions are the same: "Market economy could have been a good basis, but got out of balance. There are certain factors which should withdraw from market-ing systems."

Perhaps our exchange would create a space of greater diversity, if you posed the opposite: "Supply and demand will regulate itself completely. Governmental influences will confuse the clear game."

Than suddenly the word "clear" would appear out of place, oversimplified, in the complexity of such a diverse context. In-between the white walls I think (paradoxically) of provocative words like "cocktail" and "biotope". This museum gallery is hanging at an oblique angle: a place reflecting differences, where unexpected things can happen.

NB In the last five minutes of my one hundred hours, a pink-purple dressed little girl made a cartwheel through the room. Valuable? ■

# Play Van Abbe

## Executive Focus



klassieke museum richt zich van oudsher op het tweede type keuzes en vertelt de weg naar het heden als een kralenketting, of zorgvuldig bouwwerk, uitkomend uit een eendimensionale documentatieruimte B2.05

DEEL 2: MUSEUMMODULES

moder van presenteren in musca. wrokkend minimalistism

power of display

luisler

3) Localizing the body How does the building

g: de tijd als een is zouden vertellen uit de daarvan slechts een deel is ntoonstelling Tijdmachines in het museum voor moderne en n vier zijwegen en ons bekende edenis. 'Zijwegen' zijn het tegenwart, ontworpen door rte de São Paulo) MASP, eum, het musée imaginaire duistere hoeken als de ortekenen van de vandaag de erries van een museum voor usea de grillige gang van de

an van het huidige museum 'case-studies' en een 'jonge' baar neutrale witte eze vragen geen eenduidige presentaties ontwikkelt

Opmerking [CW3]: Leuk!

Verwijderd: M

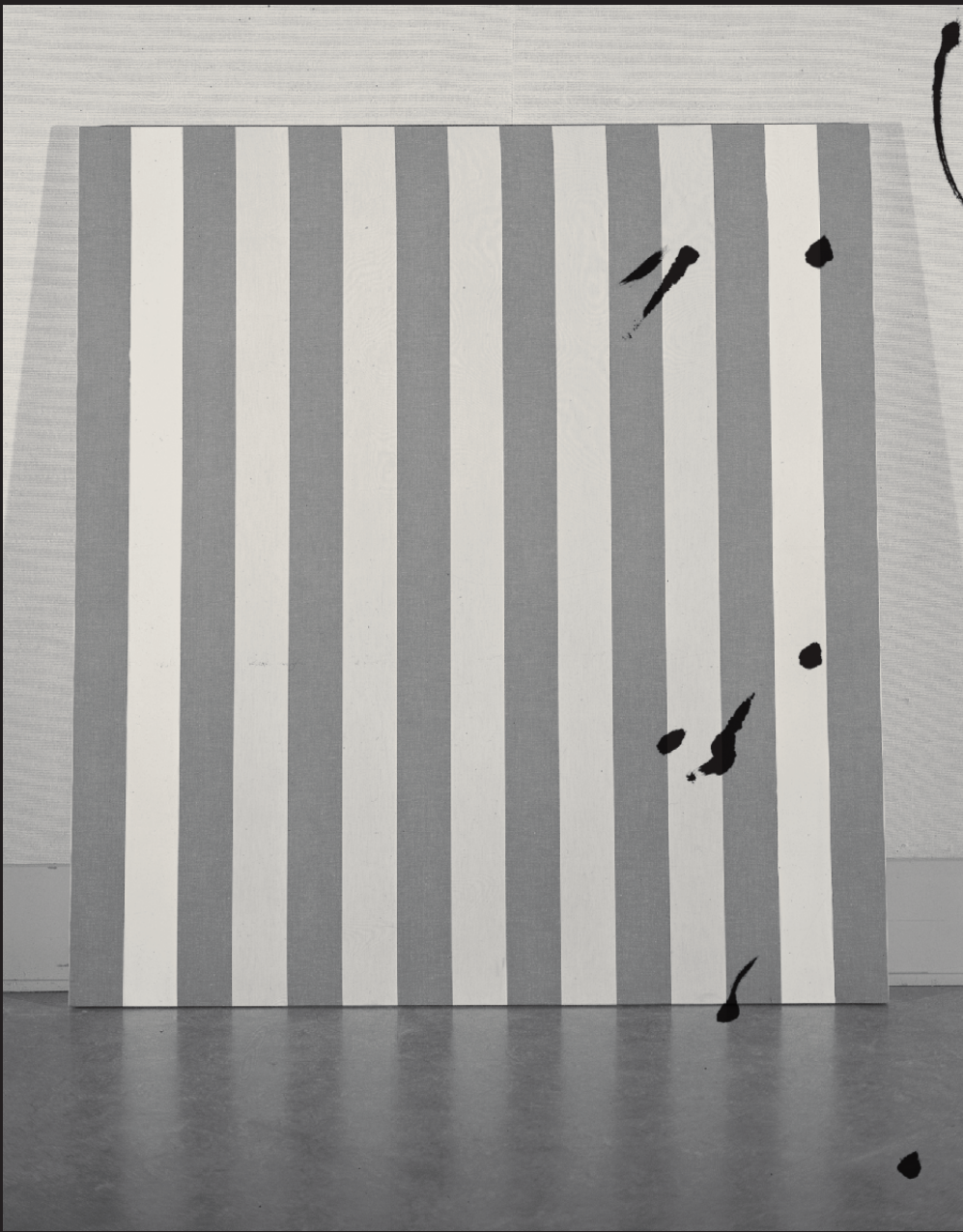
Opmerking [L34]: Hoe (m

■ PLAY VAN ABBE

is a programme consisting of four episodes consuming the museum's thoughts and activities for the next 18 months. A radical response to institutional complacency in this part of Europe and the challenges posed by the financial crisis, the party line is one of transparency, activation and exchange.



**PL  
AY**  
VAN ABBE



You never actually own a Daniel Buren.  
You merely look after it for the next generation.

Play Van Abbe.



# End Days on the Astral Plane

## *Marina Vishmidt*

### ■ FICTION

*A dialogue on the crisis of value, some aspects of form, and spiritual matters, traversing the invisible threads between work, clairvoyance and, not to mention, the personal.*

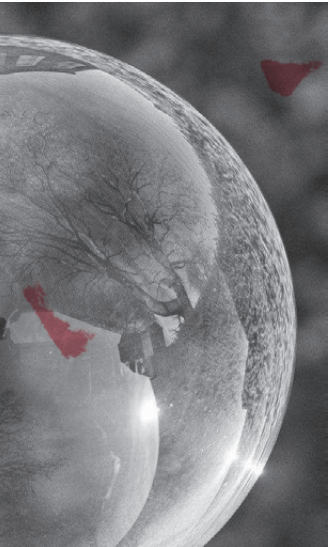
From amongst the winding trees of the natural park – a park cultivated by nature – a couple of seekers emerged, imperceptibly, and stopped. They stood, dismally, casting looks. They had fetched up at Something Awful. Although strangers, each found an ebullient greeting for the other. They affected to be pleased with the vast unmarked space that was so given to pitiless and shining spans on every side. This was at the cost of the inward confusion and torpor they could not help but feel in a natural park that offered prospects so unlike the years of urban dawdling that had shaped them.

They had exited the city with the other burnt-out residents of the Transition Town. Stripped of all pretences and prostheses, they couldn't turn their minds to anything more apt for their situation than walking over the roads. This town was governed by the policy of cycling back through every stage of human civilisation so as not to overlook any lessons in sustainability. Regeneration in the early days had been one thing as far as plagues go, comparable to the wood louse, the bureaucrat, and the smart-casual angel of paper claims. Yet the austerity-era focus on regeneration in its sense of moral salvation had ended up with troglodytes spending most of their time in a network of agricultural tunnels beneath the shuttered remains of the High Street organic trade. This was the stage selectively enforced as Transition. The canal-side blocks still had their takers, but these yearned to pack it in and get to the caves that now honeycombed large sections of the east, though with little appreciable impact on house prices. Yet the canal lingered on, promising happiness, reaching out with sumptuous foliage to shelter the increasingly tender faces and hearty laughter of the troglodytes foraging in their kayaks.

It was all so confusing. They had been walking for a long time and their minds had glanced over many things. Some of them were desultory traces of what they saw or snatches of other times, and some of these in turn froze into the most audacious paradoxes. As the two in the field didn't know each other, they thought to measure these paradoxes in dialogue, where each paradox could stand as a self-enclosed peroration along the model of classical rhetoric that their Arcadian surroundings could not but evoke. Figures of speech could solicit corresponding challenges. All forms invite challenges.

“Why, for example, do I feel such a strong affinity between this vast unmarked space stretching out so vastly on every side as to negate my centrality to this perception, and what I term a sense of self or an inner being? I know this is the doxa of the sublime, but yet: How do I square the limitlessness presupposed by this link, and value? What is the economic index of that which is undefined, or becomes infinite as a relation?”

This was the one who had entered upper stage to the somewhat under-determined but perfectly empty space. She veered, somewhat past her conversation partner, around



and around in the landscape, until she tired and faced her again.

“Well...”

“Well, I have often been struck, and I think this might have some bearing upon the problematic you raise, by the analogy between creativity and ectoplasm. The spiritualist ectoplasm as intangible, but productive of real effects and real ticket sales, as well as spiritual credit. Is it the intangibility that is the value, or the productivist prejudice that seems to live on in the notion of creation? Aren't we just talking about something that exceeds the value form through its indeterminate nature, something that cannot be measured, but is at once the most subject to the value-form, makes the value-form by contagion a liberating agent? Since some of its own freedom rubs of on it and ties them together in a hangman's knot?”

She pirouetted, and faced her interlocutor, without expectation but not without hope. A sheep ran by, glowing feebly.

“A conditional clasp. You mentioned credit. I like that. If we never gave credit to anything, we would not know what it looked like. In other words, without didacticism, there would be no autodidacts. There has to be an inspiration, even if it's revulsion, the inspiration to resist, an edifice of some kind. No punks without BBC documentaries, no counter-knowledge without pompous voice-overs. And nothing like the deadly passivity of your filter-and-mod culture.”

“It sounds like radical cultural grousing, but one could use the same arguments to justify the draft, never did me any harm?”

“It's not just the old and suffering principle of growth as antagonism to the environment, the positive negation, of having something to fight against, no integrity without repression, and more in that vein. Arid acres of self-cultivation in the absence of the ideological whip! It's being exposed to a definite form that elicits the setting of another definite form against it – not just as reaction, but on impulse. Empty squares pullulate, menacing the sky they vouchsafe us glimpses of. And in any case, credit depends on the belief that the sucker is not you; when we credit something, we accept a world where that makes sense, where the coin of our credulity has credibility. They say that attitudes towards money verge on the religious but that can't be true; religion wants you to fight against it, whereas money is the medium of your self-expression, it is the alienation that makes freedom possible. Shadowboxing. This is why it's more a spiritualism than a religion. Ectoplasmic.”

“Solecism?”

“Solipsism.”

“The nature of the medium. We are told that working class girls became clairvoyants to get out of the factory, but not whether they lifted the veil to see that in the future we would all be mediums of a valorisation without end. What was the opposite of hard labour for them is a life sentence for us. Another scratchy, stifling intimacy, like a person turned sheep below the neck, is that between knowledge and alienation. It's form again – being able to see something from far away. The first psychologists were called “alienists” and they must have tussled for professional accreditation with spiritualist mediums. All search for knowledge is a way of making an incision between what is and what could be.”

The landscape stretched out on all sides under the sun.

“Then flexible accumulation as they call it, was one way of separating out one's soul into profit centres, while the measure of that soul that was based in the rhythms of living from day to day with other people was the first to be subject to the rigidity of other people's profit. So far, so flexible, like garroting by telephone cord. And the troglodytes, well, they were just looking to alienate themselves in an old-fashioned way, to see if the whole history could be re-written from scratch, never mind the contradictions staying wholly intact, and how could they not be? They burrowed, they made the structures more flexible by filling them with openings. Take heart for rapt token incision along a defined track. This is a transition that will never change the sense of the possible in people's lives – it adds an option, like adding an egg.”

The sound of car doors closing in sequence, like the declaration of the end of a game of dominoes, suddenly became a part of the meadow.

“All, pronounced the speaker in the lower-left corner, desires for knowledge are a desire to leave the body. Everything you do, everything you start to understand, is part of programme for not being what you are anymore. This is the beautiful compact – or mirror – between alienated labour and the development of the human. I like that, well, I read that, subjectivity emerges in the little incision made by exploitation. Which is why

I'm so interested in recording.”

“Recording...”

“Yes, on one side you have a medium who is transcribing the ether, sustaining herself from the traffic of souls which virtually everyone accepts are there bar the recording technology. Finally, we don't have to believe. On the other, you have the speculation with money, which is just the grim and sorry institutionalisation of the human drive to know and to traffic with the spirits, they are anything that is out of your hands and beyond you. They don't call it the lifeblood of capital for nothing, or just to say something. We cannot divorce capital from ectoplasm because both are based on the irrational, and the irrational is too close to knowledge to be touched.”

A sheep ran by, then another, covered in the kind of soft wool that could be, and often was, distilled into ectoplasm. Grey-goo technicians had ensured that their fleece bore smart directions to nearby market towns, smart because the arrows would change depending on where the sheep stood with relation to the magnetic axis of the earth.

“This is why I get fed up when the discussion turns to the utopian potentials of snatching spirits and plunging them into the boiling water of discourse. The margin of distastefulness borne by academic table-turning is I hope not simply a matter of it being “off”, it could maybe be stated in terms like: there are too many fossilized interests for you to sail beatifically over in your sieve.”

“But surely it's not really speculation since it depends on things remaining the same. That's why they call it a bubble, it's like the flecks of foam on the lips of the dying. Or on the rabid jaws of something else that's not long for it. Whereas speculation, as I would like to say, proper, is an invention, not one which will make things work better now, but which depends on things not working at all, on the loss of the things that work, things like us. We don't want there to be work. We want a new kind of alienation. But we would never know one without the other, those forms that cancel each other out, and will hopefully someday turn their violence on us.”

“And for things to remain the same there has to be a transvaluation of all values and also a separation. Both things had to have taken place for a process like a piece of art that doesn't care where it is because anywhere it goes it is still art. Where it is, that's just prejudice. Naming where you are is making a form to trap yourself with, the thinking goes.”

“And for the one who made it, and for anything she does. Actually, once it becomes anything she does, that gets a little bit rawer, because then it becomes a point about division of labour, and then there's something that can be done with that, *peut-être*. Poetry should increase the sum of the world's available reality.”

“The popular narrative of transformation is based on forces coming from the outside, wrenching forcibly the subject from her circuits of copying.”

“And yet it isn't just the change imposed from the outside, but the form, the form that provides resistance. We have to assume form to speculate collectively, otherwise what we don't even think about will always be valorised, and that will be speculation. Our poor ontic errands. That's the only way they understand it, even now. Well, it is fungibility, not change. We are still exchanging.”

“Well, shall we make a garden of teeth, fed by unemployed springs?”

All the car doors closed one after the other, a spread-out doppler drawl. Birds cross-hatched the sky. The sky was belaboured by a surfeit of thinness.

“In the heyday of learning, the body was thought to be an acrostic for the mind, and that is why people participated in acrobatics and thought of themselves chopping wood when faced with catastrophic axioms.”

“Have we...?”

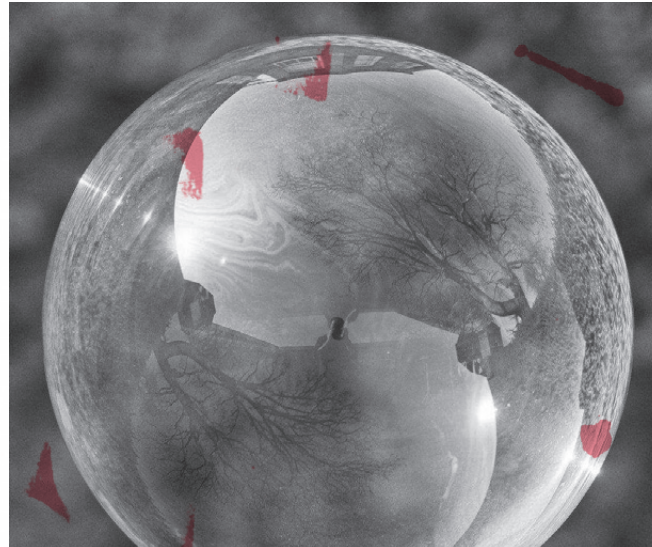
“...been careful to de-animate one subject before reanimating the next?”

“The two faces of materialism: one that patiently determines the material conditions for knowledge, the other lets sensation act as the base of reference. And the base materialist is more sensationalist. And then neither predicts the politics of ectoplasm.”

“Except for the factory girl.”

“No, not her. It's only because we think we're actually in communication with spirits that they ever got us into the factory in the first place. They glitter in mid-air behind her back beneath the artificial sunbeam, presenting itself to her view in the half-moon of her so amazingly reflective thumbnail.”

These reflections prompted them to exit the frame, and hover uncertainly just out of sight. And that's where they are to this day.■





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## Alternative Currencies Chris Lee

### ■ POLITICS

*Chris Lee elaborates on the quirks of alternative currency, wondering whether money really is worth more than the paper it's printed on.*

*The reversal of modern capitalism involves not only the struggle against material bondage and visible forms of repression, but also, from the outset, the creation of many alternative set-ups.*

Felix Guattari, *Autonomia: Post-political Politics*, 1980, 109.

*Slow circulation of money is the principal cause of the faltering economy. Money as a medium of exchange increasingly vanishes out of working people's hands. It seeps away into channels where interest flows and accumulates in the hands of a few, who do not return it back to the market for the purchasing of goods and services but withhold it for speculation. As money is an indispensable wheel in the machine of production, an accumulation of great sums in a few hands means a gigantic danger for peaceful production. Every time the flow of money is interrupted, so is the exchange of goods and services, with a consequent fall in employment. Uncertainty about the state of the economy makes the owner of money careful, causing him/her to hoard it or to spend it reluctantly. He or she distrusts investment. Money circulation is thus slowed down, the turnover of goods and services shrinks and jobs disappear. Such a situation denies incentives to the population, threatening peace and wealth with destruction. Whole nations and states are under the threat of ruin. Our small place cannot liberate the world, but we want at least to give a sign. In the Wörgl area the sluggish, slow-circulating National Bank currency shall be replaced with a medium of exchange with a better circulating performance than ordinary money. "Certified Compensation Bills" shall be issued in denominations of 1, 5 and 10 Schillings and put into circulation. The council shall issue the Bills and the public shall undertake to accept such Bills at their full nominal value in payment for goods and services. In order to turn around the economy of the township, public works shall be planned and paid for with the same Bills.*

Michael Unterguggenberger, Mayor of Wörgl, in a proposal to the Austrian town's welfare committee, read at a meeting on July 5th 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression.<sup>1</sup>

The Wörgl experiment proposed above was for a brief period immensely successful, reviving the economic activity of the town, setting it apart as an oasis amidst the darkest days of the Great Depression. Unfortunately, in the year following

its inception, the Wörgl experiment was ended abruptly by the Austrian supreme court. News of its "miraculous" success had spread, and a briefing was attended in Vienna by 170 mayors from municipalities across Austria willing to adopt Wörgl's economic strategy. This was perceived as a threat by Austria's National Bank, because it violated its exclusive privilege and right to issue currency. In the decades following however, countless adaptations, variations and improvements on mayor Unterguggenberger's experiment

**Whole nations and states are under the threat of ruin. Our small place cannot liberate the world, but we want at least to give a sign.**

have appeared all over the world, with incidences rising particularly in times of economic crisis.

The court decision to terminate this experiment in alternative currency begs the question: Why would a supposedly democratic government deny a community of its citizens the possibility and ability to improve its economic circumstances, especially in light of the clear success of Wörgl? Who was it that sought to deny the will of 170 mayors, and what exactly were they trying to protect?

Initiated under the conditions imposed by a hegemonic exchange standard (fiat currencies), counter-hegemonic ones (alternative currencies) represent a rejection of centralised dominance, and are assertions towards the actualisation of economic democracy.<sup>2</sup> Transcending traditional political distinctions (race, class, gender, place, etc.), they figure a space of conflict inhabited by subjects constructed and constituted instead by their respective network standards (e.g. Wörgl's "Certified Compensation Bills" vs. Austrian Schillings).

These networked subject positions can be understood through an idea called "network power." Central to the concept of network power is the notion of the standard (i.e. the English language, or the US dollar) that facilitates social coordination and cooperation and generates "gravitational force". To sketch this idea out briefly, let's for example examine the network power of the English language.

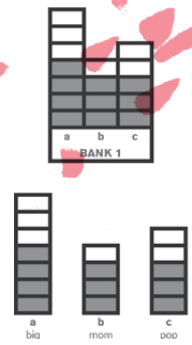


fig. 1

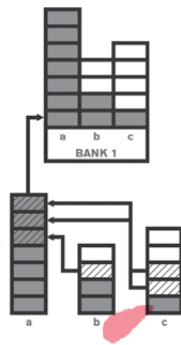


fig. 2

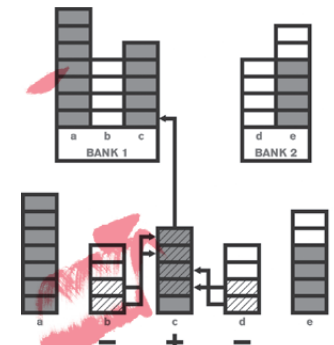


fig. 3

fig. 1  
Bank 1 loans money into existence. Only a fraction of the value created and loaned out actually exists in the bank. (a) gets four units and must repay three units of interest. (b) and (c) get three units each, and pay one and two units interest respectively.

fig. 2  
(a) manages to earn three units of profit off of (b) and (c), and pay off its loan with interest. Now (b) and (c) will not be able to pay off their loans because there is not enough real currency in circulation. Bank 1 has made three units profit.

fig. 3  
(b) and (c) have to earn their interest payments off of one another or from Bank 2's debtors. This exacerbates the imbalance among both bank's debtors (debtors (b) and (d) are virtually crushed here), and the network of debt expands when Bank 2 debtors have to earn profit from Bank 3 debtors and so on... Thus an artificial scarcity of money is maintained in spite of the fact that much of the money didn't really exist in the first place.

1  
As a catalyst to this local economy, the urban public community centre facilitates a market/workshop/school to tap value from the neighbourhood. A job board advertises the available services from cleaning, to maintenance work, to creative consulting, to teaching...

Such a site could also facilitate a workshop for small-scale fabrication, turning the traditional notion of the community centre into a place that doesn't simply provide a public space primarily for the poor, but one that empowers them. These would be akin to the squatted centri sociali that are scattered across Italy.

Initially, local businesses would hire or purchase goods and services from the community centre. The hired workers would be paid in local currency, which they could then in turn spend at the businesses that participate in the community currency. This initiates the locally based economic cycle, and the workers can be hired again.

2  
Although unlikely, it would be interesting to see big-box chain stores participating directly in the local economy, be it through allowing a certain percentage of a purchase being payable in local currency, or only certain items. This income could be used and counted towards corporate community works/charity. Or perhaps some local employees would agree to be paid partially in local currency (which is not unprecedented).

The more people there are that use this linguistic standard, the more attractive it becomes to prospective students of language over say, Swahili. This would be for the very simple fact that learning English would grant one access to a broader network of people with whom one may cooperate or socialise. What you have here is a freely made choice to learn English. But the choice in its substance, resembles a coerced one, mainly because the number of acceptable alternatives for ways of being and ways of cooperating become more limited, as smaller languages die out. This is not to claim that one should necessarily resist network power on the basis that its effects resemble coercion; but a cause for resistance would emerge when a desire to disconnect from the network is frustrated by the lack of viable alternatives, effectively creating conditions of "imprisonment". Suddenly, an inside of the network becomes legible with the possibility or desire for an outside.

This is the kind of situation we are in when we assume that there is only one legitimate money that precludes the possibility of alternatives. The moment this becomes troubling is when we realise that money is not a neutral medium that is the inevitable outcome of rationalised exchange systems, but one who's indubitably coercive bias is a carry-over from a time when overt expressions of this were more commonplace. For example, gold's ascension as a universal standard was fraught with violent conflict because it was a political medium to the extent that possession afforded one status and the capacity to exert power. The flaw was that it (along with its status and power) could also be stolen.<sup>3</sup> What characterised this condition, and what proponents of alternative currencies argue is the fundamental flaw of contemporary money, is that scarcity inevitably leads to coercion. A brief examination of the ancient origins of our current money system give further insight.

Anthropologist (and anarchist) David Graeber, in an article for the journal Mute, traces a genetic link between debt, slavery and money. Through outlining a brief history of debt, Graeber argues that its contemporary form (money) carries a coercive code: programmed into this most common exchange medium thousands of years ago, which culminates in the effect of divorcing value from the labourer.

Graeber begins by drawing a basic connection between slavery and debt. He posits that the coerced condition of slavery is one where all other debts (obligations), etc. that were owed previous to one becoming a slave are negated, and all that remains is the ostensibly absolute debt to one's owner. The reason this is ostensible is because a defining feature of slavery is that slaves can be bought and sold on a market, making the debt quantifiable. He maintains that

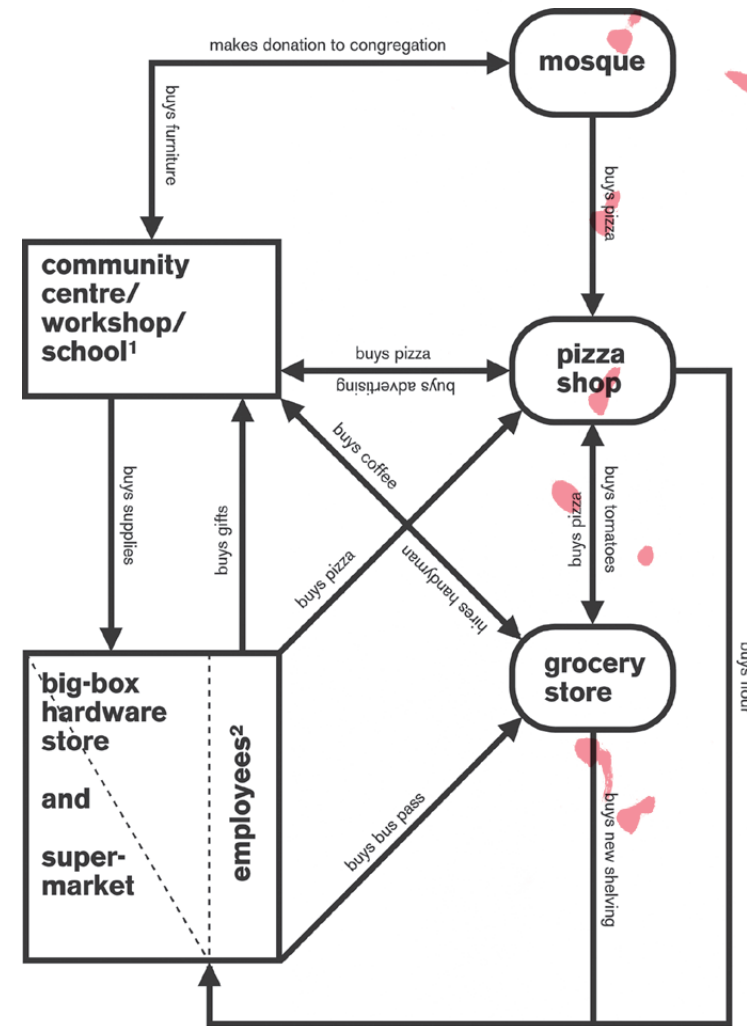
there are two consequences.

The first was that debt made it possible to formulate our modern understanding of money, and that it produced as a result the '...market: an arena where anything [could] be bought or sold, because all objects are (like slaves) disembodied from their former social relations and exist only in relation to money.'<sup>4</sup>

The second consequence is a little more elaborate. Essentially it goes that sovereign rulers, wanting to maintain their position in the social hierarchy, encouraged markets for a handful of other reasons. One was that they were highly convenient for governments because rather than levy directly from the subject population whatever they needed, the presence of markets of available goods and services meant that they could acquire those things with relatively more convenience. The other reason was that these purchases could be made on the terms dictated by the ruler, namely through gold and silver (which were naturally scarce), that only they had control over, by being able to mobilise the resources to extract it directly through mining and indirectly through conquest. They would essentially "dump" this currency on the population, then by way of coercive legitimacy, would demand it back in the form of taxes, thereby instituting a form of structural domination. Thus the relational logic of the taxed subject who's debt is to the state, corresponds here to the debt logic of slavery.

The logics of slavery and scarcity can be transposed to the operations of banks who create money (backed by the legitimacy of the state) into existence (out of thin air) in the form of loans. These banks also charge interest on top of the principal loan which the borrower must pay back as well. The trouble begins when we find that all the other money in circulation, a pool from which the borrower must extract enough to pay back the principal and interest, is also created out of thin air as loans. So the actual amount of money in circulation is always smaller than the amount of money that is legally owed to the banks. This represents a condition of artificial scarcity, and also means that in order for some people pay off their loans others must default. The system functions in spite of it's continuous production of defaulters. In fact it could be said that the system maintains its kinesis because its continuous production of defaulters give substance to the threat of poverty – a disciplinary mechanism driving economic productivity.

It would be a mistake however, to dismissively characterise money as "inhumane" on the basis of its origins and coercive structural effects. Instead, what is needed is a clearer differentiation between the functionality of money from that of currency.





In Douglas Rushkoff's recent book *Life, Inc.* such a distinction is outlined. Rushkoff elaborates that money derives its value from the scarcity of commodities (whether it is naturally scarce like gold, or artificially scarce like dollars, Euros, yen, etc.), and is therefore biased toward storage and accumulation. As such, commodities (and commodity money) as a form of storage for scarce value, are more effective for conducting trade over greater distances of space and time.

Currency, on the other hand, is biased toward spending and circulation. Its "currents" facilitate function, and sustain life. Currency acts as a token of flow, a "map" if you will, of exchange, a marker of social relations, and the medium of an economy that is only as scarce as the people living and working within that economy. An ideal situation would have it so that the amount of currency in circulation would correspond directly to the amount of value produced

Currency is biased toward spending and circulation. Its "currents" facilitate function, and sustain life.

and put into the economy – no more, no less.

Arthur Brock (a "targeted currency-system designer"), in a radio interview with Rushkoff, talks about how the problem with money is that it is a tool that is trying to do things for which it was not designed. That is to say that money, designed for storage and accumulation, is inappropriately employed as currency to manage more common, everyday economic exchange situations. The question remains how alternative currencies are brought into and kept in circulation.

Usually, and particularly in an alternative currency's early stages, there is a strong reliance on the so-called "network of trust". Invariably, these projects require large commitments of time to develop this initial trust built through "leg work", which primarily involves educating local businesses about the potential benefits of involvement. Some alternative currency projects evolved from casual

small bartering clubs, while others have emerged as a direct response to crisis, such as the network of barter clubs of Argentina's *Red Global de Clubes de Trueque Multireciproco* (Global Network of Multi-Reciprocal Exchange Clubs, in response to the Argentine economic crisis of the late 90s to early 00s). Originating as a project of three ecologists who began holding barter club markets in their front-yard, it saw at its peak relatively wide-spread participation with localised clubs across the country (about 7% of the population). Clubs began to falter when the worsening condition of the formal economy drove increasing numbers of people to join these barter clubs. The system experienced shock from counterfeiting and hyperinflation due to a growing percentage of spending currency into the system without necessarily contributing production to it. In addition, between 2002 and 2003 unemployment insurance was made available by the state to 2.5 million people (coincidentally, about 7% of the population), thereby increasing the volume of the official peso in circulation among those in the barter club networks. Although in this instance, participation was relatively wide-spread and robust, the ease with which it faltered suggests that it was for many, more of a self-organised temporary relief measure, than a substantially committed political project.

The long-term cohesion of an alternative currency system could however have very much to do with the ability to relate the use of these alternatives to a larger project or desire that often transcends the conventional value metrics of our current money system. The Liberty dollar from the United States for example, attracted users by aligning itself with right-libertarian values such as minimising state intervention and a return to a currency system backed by silver and gold. On US Independence Day in 2007, Liberty Dollars issued commemorative coins that featured Republican congressman Ron Paul, who advocates the gradual dissolution of the Federal Reserve.

The actual graphic design of some currencies can also provide insight about how they construct subject networks based on common values or desires. For example, local symbols, personalities, and landscapes are often depicted on alternative coin and paper currencies. They affirm a local or regional identity as in the illustrated landscapes of the currency issued by the secessionist Cascadia Bioregion. The depiction of John the Baptist on the Florin, as opposed to the earthly emperor Frederick II, suggests an economic network constituted by religious affiliation; or the depiction of the Statue of Liberty on Liberty dollars makes an appeal to the original ideals of the American constitution,

implicitly protesting its usurpation by the Federal Reserve and Treasury Department. The Liberty dollar at one point circulated over \$20 million in local networks across the United States, becoming as one website claims "...America's second most popular currency." However, in an echoing of the fate of the Wörgl currency, the Liberty Dollar attracted hostile attention and has been shut down. What we might deduct from these stories is that underlying all currency initiatives (whether explicitly stated or not) is their capacity to contest the network power of hegemonic standards, and a desire for economic democracy.

By perceiving economic networks as discreet subject positions, we can begin to articulate a politics of networks, instead of continuing with the unexamined assumption that networks and standards are neutral, objective, and inevitable phenomena outside of the possibility of contestation.

Counter-hegemonic alternative currencies figure a form of direct economic democracy characterised by the agonistic conflict of standards. While in Chantal Mouffe's concept of agonistic democracy, subject positions vie for hegemony, in this "economic agonistic democracy," the alternatives do not necessarily attempt to negate the hegemonic standard by asserting their own, but by their very existence, act as checks and balances against the hegemonic bias. Ultimately, alternative currencies represent the assertion of a democratic right to economic self-determination, and an increasing emergence and diversity of them will gradually actualise a more democratic economy.

In conclusion, I would like to present a speculative diagram/map sketching out an alternative currency in action, that (I hope not too naively) imagines a different kind of economy inhabited by new forms of economic and social production.■

#### Notes

- 1 See [www.sunshinecable.com/~eisehan/woergl.htm](http://www.sunshinecable.com/~eisehan/woergl.htm), accessed March 14, 2010.
- 2 To be precise about the term democracy, I use it in the sense that is advocated by Chantal Mouffe, and characterized by agonistic forms of conflict where oppositional subject positions vie for hegemony.
- 3 David Graeber. "Debt: The First Five-Thousand Years" *Mute*, Vol. 2 #12, June 2009, p. 68
- 4 David Graeber. "Debt: The First Five-Thousand Years" *Mute*, Vol. 2 #12, June 2009, p. 65
- 5 The political legitimacy of the state is derived from the ostensibly appropriate use of its monopoly on violence.
- 6 The infinite availability of money would negate its value.
- 7 Poverty meaning the exclusion from a network of value, where value is not initially created from labour, but the speculative investment in labour through wages.
- 8 e.g. Since August 15, 1971, the US dollar could be considered commodity money when President Richard Nixon unilaterally cancelled

the convertibility of the US dollar to gold.

- 9 It should go without saying that alternative currencies do not necessarily preclude the need for voluntarism and charity for those who cannot for whatever reason work.
- 10 While "network of trust" seems to be the commonly used phrase in discussions about alternative currencies, it might be (before the network approaches a certain degree of complexity) more appropriate to model such a system in a way that can express the metrics of a "hierarchy of trust," rather than a diffused polyvalent network of nodes. i.e. Elaine has made more satisfactory transactions with Jerry than with George. Thus, George is more likely to be marginalised until the network is substantial enough that his trust metrics find a level of equivalence among a sub-network. Conversely, extreme trust hierarchy imbalances might present as contradictory to the ideals of empowerment with alternative currencies. Through the positive feed-back loop of trust, those who possess more can continue to increase their acquisition of it, while those with less continue to struggle for recognition.
- 11 Online: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crédito](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crédito), accessed March 17, 2010
- 12 The *Crédito* which became the standard currency of the exchange network, was pegged to the Argentine peso, which was at that time, pegged to the US dollar.
- 13 Paul decided to enter politics the same day the US dollar became a commodity. He later remarked that "After that day, all money would be political money rather than money of real value..." (Online: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron\\_paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_paul), accessed: March 16, 2010, my emphasis)
- 14 The Cascadia Bioregion roughly defined, encompasses parts of the Alaskan Panhandle, British Columbia, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, northern California and western Montana.
- 15 "Bioregions are geographic areas having common characteristics of soil, watershed, climate, native plants and animals... A bioregion refers to both the geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place." (See [cascadia-bioregion.tripod.com](http://cascadia-bioregion.tripod.com), accessed: March 16, 2010) Although Cascadians strive for independent nationhood, they reject the chauvinism of nationalism, and instead advocate "bioregionalism" as a political form.
- 16 Originally minted in Florence in the mid- 13th century. By the 14th century, 150 European states and local authorities issued their own variations.
- 17 Ron Paul and Liberty dollars claims that the Treasury Department's monopoly on issuing fiat currency is unconstitutional. They argue that the constitution does not authorize the government to create legal tender (money backed by force of law). They also claim that these tokens of exchange are protected under the first amendment which protects freedom of speech – implying the discursivity of currency, and hence it's politicality.
- 18 See [www.hchq.biz/currency\\_chap1.html](http://www.hchq.biz/currency_chap1.html), accessed March 17, 2010.
- 19 Its founder was indicted by a federal grand jury with several counts of violating the United States criminal code, including conspiracy, mail fraud, and "...one count of uttering, passing, and attempting to utter and pass, silver coins in resemblance of genuine U.S. coins in denominations of five dollars or greater..." (See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty\\_dollar#Federal\\_Government\\_response](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_dollar#Federal_Government_response), accessed March 17, 2010)

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## Flickr's of Possibility Imaginary Property

### ■ DATA

*Metahaven talks "metadata" with Kim de Groot as she maps opportunities for change in institutional approaches to the contemporary image economy.*

*Metahaven*

What does the concept of "imaginary property" mean?

*Kim de Groot*

First of all I should say that "imaginary property" is a term coined by Florian Schneider. It is not so much a concept, but more of a condition of the image economy. It starts from the transformation of the image from a static object into a performative, indexable, and infrastructural object. YouTube videos, or Google Image Search results, are emblematic of this transformation. Every part of the page in which a YouTube video is presented to you, shows the extent to which it is a tool of management. The URL, embed code and user channel with text comments, video responses and related videos are effectively competing with the video itself over which is to be "read" first. While playing the video, YouTube's interface allows and stimulates you to look at similar or "related" videos. A 'Statistics and Data' section shows the amount of views, comments and links as a popularity index. It is interesting to see how attention is categorised into different kinds of metadata. Clearly, metadata is central to the image economy. It generates value for the objects that it is attached to. Every kind of metadata, from exif data to tags, is a way to valourise an image. The expansion of metadata seems to indicate that the image economy runs on images that do not represent, but rather manage reality. The organisational character of images as traffickers of metadata is largely invisible. An exception to this rule is "the annotated Flickr photograph". A remarkable transformation at flickr.com occurs via the placing of comments on top of the image: added as a visual layer of text balloons. The image turns into a map – a diagrammatic collection of comments linked to the image. It is a map of comments, yet at the same time a map of relations between people, images and their cameras. They are organigrams: visualising the organisational structure, the image architecture of data, as well as the social relations between Flickr users.

*MH*

What is the impact of these network dynamics?

*KdG*

These developments make concrete, in a novel way, what it means to "look at" an image on the Internet. What fascinates me about this is that the image turns into a slice of (social) network production. What you see is a hardworking group of Flickr Pro users inviting others to become members of their 'Cream of the Crop', 'Nikon Digital', 'Cool

Outdoor Pics' or 'AMaZING' pools. People invest their time in writing the invitation-to-a-pool comment:

*ScurvyMouse says:*

*This is great! Personally I think it's the net that makes the shot. It helps create that nothingness in the middle and highlights the feeling of inactivity. Think this would be good for the 'negative space' group.<sup>1</sup>*

The kind of investment differs, from "calling a photo a favourite" to setting up a pool and starting a photo community. Still, all that happens in and around the image implies work. In my 3D models I aim to show internal hierarchies within the image, by looking at its "popular spots". I try to design the image as a unit of production, and reproduction. Images are permanently (re)produced according to the growing amount of users and tags added to it. Comment sections and other metadata categories start to integrate with the image itself. The production and distribution of the image is no longer a preface to the end result, it is part of the image. Metadata is of course one of the foundational mechanism behind this transformation.

*MH*

You have applied the concept of metadata to an actual drawing in the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. How did you deal with the physicality of the artwork?

*KdG*

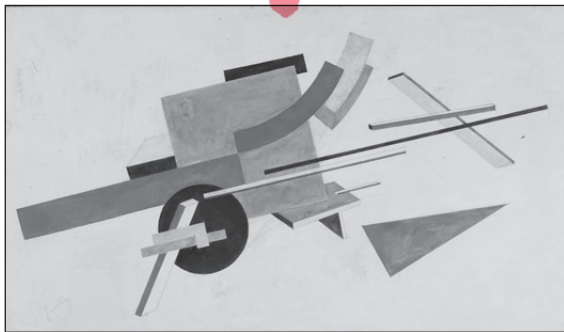
Intrigued by the organisational character of metadata, I was wondering how it could be layered over existing image economies, or managerial models that involve images. One of these models is that of the museum and one of the image management models I'm working with is restoration. I have been working particularly with digital photographs of a drawing by El Lissitzky in the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. This drawing presents an architectural concept.

In restoration, artworks, images of artworks, and the role of the restorer are positioned according to a fixed hierarchy. A digital photograph helps the restorer to update and improve an art piece, so it might once again resemble its original state. The photograph is a tool or resource for the work of art. Technically the photograph is the painting's informational parallel: it contains information about its transformation in time. A photograph of a painting could be considered part of the metadata of that painting. What I find fascinating about (detailed) photographs of artworks





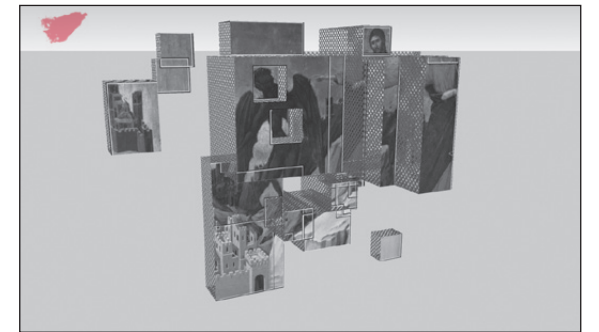
▲ Imaginary property: a visualisation of the noise (decay) of the lower left corner of the El Lissitzky gouache.



▲ El Lissitzky, *Proun. Street Celebration Design*, (detail)1921, gouache on paper, photo collage. Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.



▲ Image Modules: representing the productivity around networked images such as ranking, tagging and commenting.



– the ones that restorers use to zoom in on an artwork – is that it presents a disappearing object. Through these photos I understood that at every other moment of decay, the painting produces another image of itself. By reversing the work of the restorer, I tried to turn the photograph into another Lissitzky. The question is not only whether this is a copy but also what kind of copy. What does it produce for the museum, what is its value? I think it is a kind of copy that museums should consider as a way to enter the image production cycle around their collection. Instead of being afraid of a copy being a lesser duplicate, its operational qualities should be considered.

**MH**

In an image economy based on the dissolution of digital files, does it make sense to maintain this artificial binary between original and derivative as the basis of a property relation?

**KdG**

No. It makes no sense to maintain it. It does make sense however, to redefine the relation. Imaginary property acknowledges social and technological aspects as possible editorial and critical points of entry into relations such as that of the copy and the original. When applying the concept of metadata, as a socio-technological structuring device, to an artwork or to a collection, the result is a rearrangement of existing relations. The concept of the copy is limiting from an economical perspective because it devalorises the original. According to classical economics, the relationship between original and copy is one between an essence and a derivative. From the perspective of metadata, I claim that the distinction between original and copy is redundant since they are inextricably linked. Isn't metadata another representation of the image it relates to? Instead creating

When applying the concept of metadata to an artwork, the result is a rearrangement of relations.

new images or originals, the focus in the image economy is more on the management, presentation and distribution of copies. My advice to museums would be to benefit from the copy as an operational image.

**MH**

What is an operational image?

**KdG**

Museums should think about how art exists as an image, and not only how it should be presented as art. The term “application” means to put things into operation. The image of art holds the potential to do this. Corporate art collectors acknowledge this potential or at least make use of it by using art as a visual brand. What is the potential of the image of art for a museum? I think that considering the artwork as an operational image may allow the museum to design new dynamics around the actual work. The museum could produce series of derivative images, themselves based on a kind of information and metadata that only the museum possesses. An in-house copy culture would make it possible for a museum to connect itself to certain image production cycles outside of its walls.

**MH**

Like which?

**KdG**

The production cycle of art book publishing for example. It is from the museum shop that visitors actually take a piece of the museum home with them, either as books, postcards or keychains. Art historical information about artworks can be found on Wikipedia, but what about a book on the social history of an artwork, describing its popularity index based on its exhibition record? Exhibition material has the possibility to go beyond general descriptions, taking on the status of intermediary between artwork and viewer. More fundamentally, the art image as an operational image implies a complete reconsideration of the online representation of the museum. A museum's website is a powerful tool and starting point for “a copy” that could attract a different crowd than the one that regularly visits the museum. Besides that, a museum's website allows for experimentation with the display of artworks. On this question of online representation, I'm investigating various ways of displaying artworks using a zoom or three-dimensional views that allow artworks to be shown from both front and back: views that are usually impossible within the museum setting. ■

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Museum of American Art, Berlin is an educational institution dedicated to assembling, preserving and exhibiting memories primarily on modern American art shown in Europe during the Cold War. The museum's permanent exhibition is in Berlin (Frankfurter Allee 91).

Claire Pentecost is an artist and writer, engaging a variety of media to interrogate the imaginative and

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# The Copyist – A Play Van Abbe Journal

## *Distribution*

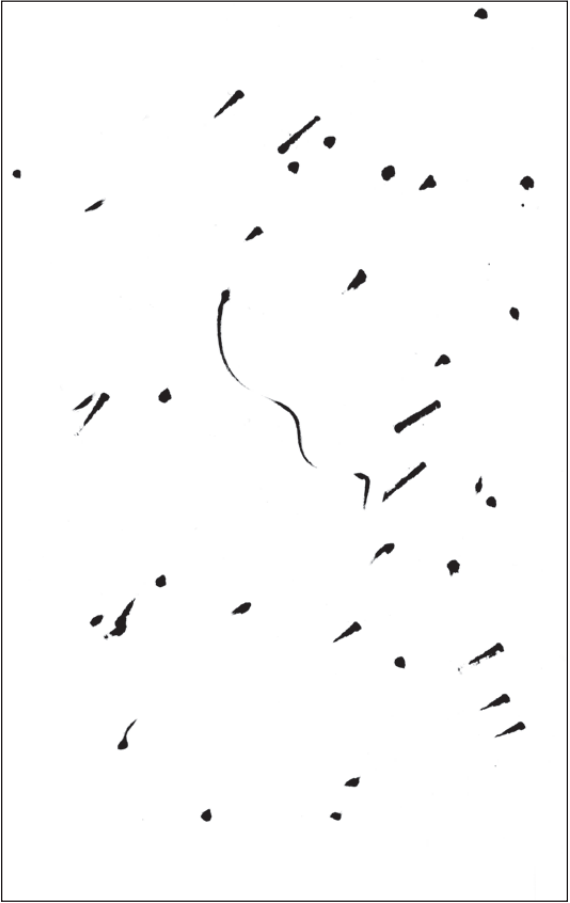
### ■ AIRPLAY

You can pick up a copy of The Copyist at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven from April to September, 2010. However, in keeping with “typical” international magazine methods of distribution, The Copyist will be circulated in a number of other ways. Aside from being sent via mail, the journal will also be hand-delivered by staff members of the museum to the following far-flung/close-to-home cities.

Amsterdam	April	Ljubljana	March
Amsterdam	June	London	April
Amsterdam	March	London	April
Amsterdam	March	London	April
Antwerp	August	London	March
Antwerp	May	London	May
Ardenne	April	Los Angeles	July
Arnhem	May		
		Maastricht	March
Barcelona	June	Maastricht	May
Beirut	April	Milan	April
Beirut	April	Minneapolis	July
Berlin	June	Murcia	June
Berlin	June		
Berlin	June	New York	May
Berlin	May		
Bern	March	Paris	August
Bratislava	April	Paris	June
Brussels	April		
Brussels	May	Ramallah	April
		Rotterdam	July
Cairo	July	Rotterdam	March
Cologne	April	Rotterdam	May
's-Hertogenbosch	March	San Francisco	July
		Schinnen	April
Edinburgh	May	Shanghai	April
Eindhoven	August	Shanghai	March
Enschede	March	Shanghai	March
Enschede	March	Shanghai	May
		Shanghai	May
Frankfurt	March	Shanghai	May
		Shanghai	May
Gdansk	May		
		To be confirmed	July
Hamburg	June	To be confirmed	June
		To be confirmed	May
Lille	August	To be confirmed	August
Liverpool	April		
Liverpool	April	Utrecht	August
Ljubljana	May	Utrecht	May

vanabbemuseum

■ “Neoliberal patterns” (uneven distribution).





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