Free! The Copyist #1: “Value” vanabblemuseum
The 18-month programme \textit{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. \textit{Play Van Abbe} is subdivided into four parts, each with its own theme.

Part 1, \textit{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 \textit{The Game and the Players} in three exhibitions: \textit{Repetition: Summer Display 1983, Strange and Close} and \textit{Rien ne va plus}. Part 1 of \textit{Play Van Abbe} closed in March 2010 with the project, \textit{If I Can't Dance... Edition III} – The second part of \textit{Play Van Abbe}, called \textit{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? \textit{Time Machines} includes the exhibitions, \textit{Museum Modules} and \textit{In-between Minimalisms} (10/04 - 12/09/2010), as well as \textit{To the Margin and Back} (10/04 - 16/08/2010).
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 plummeted 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 rubrics. 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. That would be a disaster. Backshall says he’s sure that were to happen, his clients could spend millions on the wrong, worthless insurance. Investors can’t tell whether the people selling the swaps — known as counterparties — will have the money to honor their promises. Backshall says between 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 & Co. rescue Bear Stearns from bankruptcy — removing his clients’ fear. Sellers of credit-default protection to pay on CDS 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 risks, 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 on March 17 was motivated, in part, by a desire to keep one swap market — the CDS — from burning down. A bigger TARP, says Joseph Mason, a former U.S. Treasury department economist who’s now chair of the banking department at Louisiana State University-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 deal pledged $29 billion to JPMorgan to cover the bank’s 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 ascertain 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 burn up 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, then 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 act 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, are not regulated. 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. Some See the Logic The market has grown in part because swaps are often seen as a way to hedge funds and other risk takers, says Joseph Pickel, the executive officer of the International Swaps and Derivatives Association. “Whether you’re a hedge fund, bank or any other institution, you’re increasingly seeing the logic of using these instruments,” Pickel says, adding he doesn’t worry about counterparty risk because banks
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.

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

Play Van Abbe.
An old man with a hearing aid stands with his back to a low wall, juggling a profusion of coins lie scattered on the ground, as if devoid of any value. A bespectacled man in a wool coat is watering a row of beans in the sun. His name is Karl Polanyi, and he reflects also see how the phantasmatic juggler operates in one of the world’s most prolific gar-

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 far 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 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

The Politics of Perception Art and the World Economy
Brian Holmes & Claire Pentecost

The Politics of Perception

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

The middle [for 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 working classes had no organ to sense the dangers invested 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 professionalisation of existence including housing and arts, as well as the innumerable forms of private and public life that do not affect profits.

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The Copyist – 5 – Wrapper

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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 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, and whispered by the gossips; 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.

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 wool coat is watering a row of beans in the sun. His name is Karl Polanyi, and he reflects

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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
Hayek believed that human productivity was most effectively coordinated by the market mechanism, recognizing 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 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.” 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 on their way 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.”

About 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 “col- lapse of capital,” another collapse of capital. It took a statistical analysis of the price movements of some inglorious number-crunching quant invented a meta-commodity called the “col- lapse of capital,” another collapse of capital. It took a statistical analysis of the price movements of derivative contract whose derision and scope is determined by a statistical analysis of the behaviour of underlying assets, which in this case are not just the ability of borrowers to pay their loans. What these meta-commodities did was allow banks to sell to distant investors the revenue expected but not yet received from home mortgage loans, so that the bank which initially led the lending got its capital back from thin air, and could immediately go out looking for more borrowers on the ground. To make the sky set in the distance, the exchanges where they were settled or futures and options 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 risks that were allocated to a single investor. Some of the most of the land around the earth.

The brilliance of the math and its perfect correspondence with the laws of financial nature offered just one detail, which was that this circular, self-reinforcing system entirely transformed the markets it was supposed to regulate and stabilize. Prices rose from the ground like tongues of fire until they reached trembling heights, cut off 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 emptying, but foreseen also was the possibility of a financial crisis, of a financial crisis, of a financial crisis...

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 most visible, 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 or less spurious and the elements of the aesthetic derive from the librarian and not yet 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

**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?**
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 and choices 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, first, at 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), retracts the rise and fall of the gold standard, local servitude to 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 fundamental movements of human existence – labour, or the health of our bodies; land, or the cyclical recurring growth of the natural world; and the humane 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 and atrocities of 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 are reshaped by the media bombardment of manipulative messages. The grip of the law of demand and supply is a reminder of the circular, self-reinforcing processes of capitalistic accumulation. It is remarkable that since the present round of computerised and networked financial innovation began in the mid-1970s, the market for these ever-crunching quants and the formulas they employ are designed largely from the theoretical, reinventing the economists’ claim to be describing an 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 society and economy as 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 form, scale, and time, and not only as the reduction to 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 existing value-forms, which is invested with a superhuman accuracy of judgment, critics and institutions too often validate only when they have already validated. In this scenario the arts become like our counterpart the agricultural 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, escap- ing broad fields, opening up possibilities, and entering to come home to live 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 natural wealth, the demoralisation of the nation, the destruction of the political and moral life of a people.” 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 drivers 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 as of legitimacy. This is 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 Bienial. The question is what to do with these new emergences?

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 be reconstructed by existing value-forms, it must be created along with philosophical concepts and practices that are resilient enough to preserve their in- termediary status between norms and functions. State institutions – not to mention corporate systems – 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, visionary 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?

The Copyist – 9 – Wrapper
visions, like images themselves, are also common phenomena. They are the bearers of thinking: the radical imagination. Castoriadis defines it as “the capacity to posit that will shift further toward a tactile dimension. affects, clearer concepts and more generous actions in reality. Castoriadis, we'll close with an attempt to answer this essay’s recurrent questions. They signal 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 blindness. Blindness is inherent 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 intense and more poignant experiment in perception: one hand touching someone else's, my hand touching yours. It is this common experience that one discovers other worlds.

The decisive turn of phenomenology shows that expression — and along with it, the vast material of spoken and written language — is an irreducible part of perception. Consequently, the upsurge of the new and the encounter with the other can only be perceived if we stand outside the actually perceived shared framework of words, ideas, artworks, urban forms etc. ourselves 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-affetting movement that changes the very nature of the sensory, while spilling over into language, gesture and affects to others who also perceive, reflect and evaluate. This sense in way is made. Overflowing from each body in the world, the reciprocal relation of perception and expression gives rise to cultural experience: cross-referencing artifacts of diverse desires, 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 on different areas of the right and left sides of the brain. We have yet to imagine just how 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 practitioners 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. Perception is not only critique of phenomenology and specificity 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 model of perception, “all of philosophy is knocked out of order.” 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 an urgent argument for the gaze 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.” 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 refuse to open up the human potential to see what is not there, to express the 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 as society to forge its radical imagination and invent institutions through collective, self-reflective, and deliberate activity. And I call politics the lucid activity whose object is the institution of an autonomous society.”

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 naive 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 codification into laws and definitions of reality can all be played out again in concentrated symbolic forms, which have the ambiguity and internal tension.

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.

The 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, everyone’s desire to make something that they can touch, express and act on can also be a place to sharpen new symbolic weapons, or to shift the terms of old arguments. Instead of instilling preprogrammed behaviors in a manipulative way, it allows for self-conceal experimentation with the means for perception.

**Notes**


6. The concept of an economic hybrid between China and the USA was introduced in 2007 by Niall Ferguson who, examining a better long-term forecast, considered this new investment environment sustainable. See *“Chimerica” and the Global Asset Market Boom,* *International Finance* 101/5 (December 2007).


12. For example, the agreement by which China and the USA was introduced as a leading country, China has been a launching pad for product-behaviorists, see Paula Antonelli et al., *Design and the Ethic Mind,* exhibition catalog (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008). Available at the website: www.moma.org/interatives/exhibitions/2008/ethicmind.


Months before my ninth birthday, Yugoslavia won First Prize at the Eurovision Song Contest. It was 1980, and I still remember the anchor Oliver Mlakar 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,’ 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 political aspects of influence. Unable to comply with the requirements, Télé Liban was banned from participating in Eurovision. Neither could Télé Liban guarantee that their colour system, switching from SECAM to the more widespread PAL standard, which was used by all Western European countries except France.6 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 Fadila 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 UV 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. The 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 525-line standard used in France, developed by René Barthélémy. 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 525-line standard until 1984 when the last transmitter was closed down. This coincided with the presidency of François Mitterrand, who implemented the 525-line broadcast standard in 1948. France stuck to the 525-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).7 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 1956.8 The idea came from Marcel Bezençon, the Swiss president of the EBU, and was modelled after the Sanremo Music Festival.9 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.10 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.11 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 Fadila 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 UV 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. 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,12 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,13 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 area are within the boundaries of European Broadcastings 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 1989.

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 website 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’14 it is impossible to extract politics from the contest.

The Copyist – 13 – Wrapper
that would end the dictatorship of Salazar. When the 27th test held in Zagreb in 1990 where three entries (Norway, Morocco, and Georgia) were rejected by the debuting participant in the contest that year. Austria re- Turkey invaded Cyprus and the fact that Turkey was a out as a sign of protest. Greece withdrew from the 20th entries. There were often cases when countries would pull

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 Spain under Franco in 1963, and Georgia's entry was rejected by 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. After years of lobbying, Armenia (together with Azerbaijan and Georgia) became eligible to participate in the competition in 2005, when the European Broadcasting Union jurisdiction. 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 song, showing that sometimes not even controversy can be created without words.

The music and lyrics of nation branding…

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.
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 Memoire) 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.


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 40º East of Greenwich, and its southern border the parallel 30º North. Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and the former USSR countries in the Caucasus region are part of this airspace.


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.


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.
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 interfere with its given goal. In doing this, the company becomes an autonomous entity in some ways, fulfilling a classical post-war demand for it to own all the shares, thus never allowing other objectives to substitute its daily homilies in the form of the stock market and business reports.

Paradoxical because this work is about the entities which go to make up the 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 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 interdependencies between the rest of the things and people in the world.

Maria 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 intact for eternity. To achieve this, the company requires to take on a legal, national existence. In a concern fully visualised in the almost-endless official documentation that the company needs it at all, 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 interfere with its given goal. In doing this, the company becomes an autonomous entity in some ways, fulfilling a classical post-war demand for it to own all the shares, thus never allowing other objectives to substitute its daily homilies in the form of the stock market and business reports.

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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 and its 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.1

A public limited company is a production and trading undertaking. It aims 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 assigned and its attributes rewritten, so that is to say, the form and content are to be determined by the ways that differ from those usually practised 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-economy: circulation of money and accumulation of capital or be used to create added value. All the company’s assets become the property of 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 constitutes a separate part of the capital, its ownership status remains unchanged. 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.1

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 and at the same time this eliminated the disavantage between the income from the capital invested for long-term investment, on the one hand, and its need for mobility, on the other.

Joint-stock company

The joint-stock company is the legal form which enables capital to be raised through the market. The first stock market was established at the city of Brugges (1460). It was followed by Antwerp in 1460. The colonisation of large parts of Asia, Africa, and South America played a crucial role in the development of financial markets. For example, the two great shipping companies based in Amsterdam, the Dutch East India Company, and the British East India Company (1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1600), are the first stock companies in the world.

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Markets

The German Law on Public Limited Companies is constantly being amended and adapted to the needs of corporations. For example, theSocialist/Green coalition in Germany wants to increase public programming and protect its independence. Another example is the governmental structure of the Hungarian public broadcasting system. In order to safeguard public programming and protect its independence, three public foundations and single-member public 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 Socialism and Democracy in Italy has been a public limited company since 1950. The liberal party of the United States was transformed into a public limited company by its union so that it could operate more independently with the support of its shareholders.

Corporate responsibility

The history of business is one of the reduction of individual power 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 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, financial 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.

The law is eternal. One of the most enduring success- es on this front was achieved by companies in 1886, when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in Santa Clara County vs. South- ern 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. 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

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Self-determination

Public limited companies are also limited to counter the effects of privatisation and to free themselves of the whims of financially powerful companies. In 1997 the German dockworkers’ association CULMV (Compagnia Unica dei Lavoratori Mera Vare) 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 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 1950. Roosevelt’s New Deal, the United States has been ruled by an alliance of corporations and the state.

Money, commodity

The value of money mirrors the relationships of society, such as unemployment, inflation, and deflation.1. 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 (liquidiating) capital

"It is to do with controlling the money, and the money not controlling us," says Jimmy Caity of the band KLF (Kopyright Liberation Front). In August 1994 Bill Drummond and Jimmy Caity burned a million pounds. The document film made at the time, Watch the K Foun- dation Burn a Million Quid, toured England for several months a year later. The screenings, with Drummond and Caity present, provoked both acts of violence and great freedom, which resulted from the monstrous display, lasting over an hour, of the banknotes being set aflame.

Public nature / accessibility of a work

What makes a work public, accessible, open to appropriation? How is it exhibited in a public space, when it is reproduced, when it has entered a canon? How does a work enter which canon? When it is exhibited in a public space, when it is reproduced, when it has entered a canon? How does a work enter which canon? Based on the economic value of a work congruent with its aesthetic and art-historical values?

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

A work of art is seen in terms of its ability to ac- cumulate monetary value and its reproductive form. When a work is purchased – when it becomes property – it can be reproduced, resold, or consumed. Since it has been bought, all effort is focused on increasing its value. If a work cannot be possessed (in material terms), how can the accumulation of value be assessed? 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?

The Copyist – 21 – Core

Maria Eichhorn

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gradual stages of public versus non-public/private or public/collective museums? And is this change necessary for the reproduction of capitalist society, its division of labor, and exploitation processes every day?

In 1995, the Foundation established the KLF awarded a prize to " xpath="https://www.example.com/quote" xmlns:sec="http://example.com/namespace" xmlns:xs="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema"
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Pieter Heymen 1983 & Diana Franssen 2010

**Text content:**

Fuchs'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'.

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 1990) – was 'in the light of van ... Leerung, ‘Diem in goede expositie van famuseum', Museum in Motion (1983).

Pieter Heymen's critique of the original exhibition by curator and former director of the Van Abbemuseum, Rudi Fuchs.

**Notes:**


**Conclusions:**

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 other exhibition materials, it is up to the visitor to consider whether Fuchs's ahistorical module still has enough possibilities or whether ‘the times are a-changing’ indeed.

Climate Controlled? Steven ten Thije

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 and coherent 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 subjectivity, reality, as it is framed, to the unity of idea and its development, and to the formal rules of evolution – upward and forward. The walls and rooms of the museum were like the acclimatized greenhouses in which the species of art could be conserved; paintings would flourish in the walls, sculptures would blossom on the walls, and pot-plant positions start to change?

The walls and rooms of the museum were like the acclimatized greenhouses in which the species of art could be conserved; paintings would flourish on the walls, sculptures would blossom on the walls, and pot-plant positions start to change?

But what when the neat categories and pot plant positions start to change?

Climate Controlled?

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Climate Controlled?
Chito Delat and Method: Practicing Dialectic
Dmitry Vilensky

MUSEUM
In a series of reflective paragraphs Dmitry Vilensky – member of the activist art collective, Chito Delat – takes stock of contemporary artistic praxes.

Misunderstood Things
The most misunderstood thing of Chito 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 formal and radical content, anarchistic spontaneity and organisational discipline, heroism and asceticism, etc.

It is a matter of finding the right proportions. It is, as we once again forced to solve the old problems of composition while also not forgetting that the most valuable component of any artistic creation is our own conscious and sublimated subjugation and contradiction.

As Master Bertolt taught us, our contra-dictions should be resolved not in the work of art, but in real life.

We should play the idiot and simply declare this one plus one.

By constantly asking ourselves this question, we can resolve various working situations and understand them if it works something and certainly if it is not.

On Compositions
Politically engaged artists inevitably face the question of how to unpin the knots in their compositions. It primarily arises when they have to decide whether to take money from one or another, or participate in one project or another.

There are several readymade decisions to which politics is not linked. Some artists knowingly made this decision that it is impossible to stay pure in a surreal world and so they calmly 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 them.

The conversation about the balance between profit and integrity is based on finding this balance in fact in the principal element of art-making. Without this, the art is not art, it is the same as any other commodity or declaration. The cult of spontaneity, reactivity, and tact – the rejection of readymade rules – is the only means of escape.

As we thus should add that this reply is not transformable. It has no way to do with us, and to do with to how the conditions of people’s lives can and must change.

On Financing
Master Jean-Luc unexpectedly spoke out in favor of “in-dollor financing” for authentic films o Hollywood-style budgets.

At first glance this idea offence like mockery. Upon moment’s reflection, however, we realize that the master was not promoting the total absence of financing. He made no mention of the source of this financing.

On the Boundaries of the Disciplines
It is too little to postulate that collaborating with culture – the music, art, literature – is a good thing or on some order of the day. Tactics, however, is something less to take into account. The mobilizing tactics and strategy we can achieve at the moment.

However it is a good thing to try one’s hand at writing meaningful things, and it is a good thing to use our ears.

On the Totality of Capital, or Playing the Idiot
Today it is the rage to say that there is nothing original in the arts and that big business and market relations are total, even if someone or something escapes this logic, then, that this is in any way negates it. This is a trait of moderately progressive consciousness: the elusiveness of leftist theoress, and the capitalias have no real objections to their re-thethese

Shall we shiver and then 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 say that every 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?

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

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

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

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 dominance of private property and the episteme interests of individuals – is the most vital question.

The theory of the weakest link proved its utility in the past. It can prove workable again! On the one hand, it is an efficient method of experiments in the development of technology and new social forms. On the other, we can see clearly the period of necessity in the First World, past for the slave labor of the rest of the world to a situation in which even oppressors are in the First World were embourgeois. Their class consciousness, even in the most pragmatic sense, is a necessity.

In the west, even the most non and out punk is bourgeois to a certain extent.

The question of the First World, however, looks just as hopeless. Since the emergence of cognitive capitalism, the world’s developed countries has only grown. Detecting new emancipatory possibilities in the First World, we must recognize the fact that it is precisely here that forms of collective consciousness have been preserved.

Art should pay close attention to the entire experience of life and new forms. This is a logical conclusion, however, that in the First World the thing, the environment of the entire system of power and political participation.

And of course we have only ourselves to blame for the fact that we have not realized our potential.

On Universtiy
A universal method will probably be applied to a multitude of particular cases.

On World
Everything we know about the Great Teacher wrote in a manifesto about the world of work he would be so bold as to talk about world art today? Of course this would sound totalizing and homogenic.

Statements of this sort will always appear suspicious. It is just for this reason that we should try to speak of real things.

On Leaders
Even in the most horizontally democratic organisation the police can fairly quickly determine who they should be.

We should consider organisational models in which only those who can have no need an leader, but only a few with whom each of us can relate this notion without any trouble.

That the leader seeks to maintain his special position is clear.

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

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

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

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An Oblique Angle
Arnout Rigter

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, Arnoud 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, 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 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 marketing 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.

Notes:

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

An Oblique Angle
Arnout Rigter

A work by Tino Sehgal, This is Exchange, was recently active in the space of the Van Abbemuseum as part of Play Van Abbe Part 1.
You never actually own a Daniel Buren. You merely look after it for the next generation.

Play Van Abbe.
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 snatch 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 history. There has to be an inspiration, even if it’s revision, the inspiration to resist, an edifice of some kind. No puns without BBC documentaries, no counter-knowledge without pompous voices-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 we’ve reached 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 it makes both things, 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, Ectoplasm.”

“Solecism.”

“Solipsism.”

“The nature of the medium. We are told that working class girls became clairvoyants to get out of the factory, but no 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 ‘aliens’ and they must have tussled for professional accreditation with spiritualists. Now, they are anything that is out of your hands and beyond your control. They glitter in mid-air behind her. They 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.

“Why is this I get fed up when the discussion turns to the utopian potentials of science and suspicion of new pseudo-sciences? There has to be an inspiration, even if it’s revision, 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 breathtakingly in your sies.”

“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 transcendvalisation of all values and also a separatist thing. The one that has to be kept 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.”

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

“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’s not 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 power resides there. 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. They were 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.”

“I have operated… I’ve 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 get us into the factory in the first place. They glitter in mid-air behind her beneath the artificial sunbeam, presenting itself to her view in the half-moon of hope.”

These reflections prompted them to exit the frame, and hover uncertainly just out of sight. A hand that’s where they are to this day. 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 but 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.

“The Copyist” – 35 – Wrapper
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.


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 slogan “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.1, 5 and 10 Schillings.

In the reversal of modern capitalism, 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 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.2 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.

The Copyist – 37 – Wrapper
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 socialize. 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 it’s 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 “imposition”. Suddenly, an inside of the network becomes legitimate 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 realize that money is not a neutral medium that is the inevitable outcome of rationalized exchange systems, but one who’s indebtedness coerced 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 an 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. What characterized this condition, and what proponents of alternative currencies argue is the fundamental flaw of contemporary money, is that scarcity inevitability leads to coercion. A brief examination of the ancient origins of our current money system gives 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 the taxed subject who’s debt is to the state, corresponds to the threat of poverty – a disciplinary mechanism driving economic productivity. Instead, what is needed is a more 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 defaults. In fact it could be said that the system maintains its kinesis because its continuous production of defaults give substance to the threat of poverty – a disciplinary mechanism driving economic productivity.

Although unlikely, it would be interesting to see big-box chain stores participating directly in the local economy, by it through allowing a certain percentage of a purchase being payable in local currency, or only certain items. This would create value and coalesce towards corporate community works/charity. Or perhaps some local employees would agree to be paid partially in local currency (which is not unprecedented).
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 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 inappropriate employed as currency to manage more common, everyday economic exchange situations. The question remains as to how alternative currencies are brought into and kept in everyday economic exchange situations. The question revolves around how alternative currencies are brought into and kept in circulation, and whether or not these currencies are effective for managing more common, everyday economic exchange situations.

The long-term cohesion of an alternative currency system could however have very much to do with the ability 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, issued by the Treasury Department in 2007, is an example of a targeted currency system. Designed by former 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. For example, local symbols, personalities, and landscapes are often depicted on alternative coin and paper currencies. They affirm a local or regional identity in as the illustrated landscapes of the currency issued by the secessionist Cascadia Bioregion. The depilation of the United States dollar by Ron Paul and the Liberty coin by Ron Paul makes an appeal to the ideals of the American constitution, implicitly protecting its usurpation by the Federal Reserve and Treasury Department. The Liberty dollar at one point circulated over 820 million in local networks across the United States, becoming as one writer claims “...America’s second most popular currency.” However, in an echoing of the fate of the world currency, the Liberty dollar attracted hostile attention and has been shut down. What we might deduce 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 discrete 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 economy alternative currencies figure a form of direct economic democracy characterised by the agnostic conflict of standards. While in Chaintal 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 use of alternative economy and diversity of them will gradually actualize a more democratic economy.

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

Notes
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 over positional subject positions vie for hegemony.
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 implicate real 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 afford 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 “hierarchy of trust,” rather than a diffused polygonal network of nodes. i.e. Claims have made more satisfactory transactions with Jerry than with George. Thus, George is more likely to be marginalised as the network is subjected to the hegemony of a level of equivalence among all network actors. Conversely, external hierarchy imbalances might prevent contradictory to the ideals of empowerment with alternative currencies. Through the positive feedback loop of trust, those possessors more can continue to increase their acquisition of it, while those with less continuous to struggle for evaporation.
12. The Crediti 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 start policies 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, accessed: March 16, 2010, my emphasis).
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...” (Online: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_paul, accessed: March 16, 2010) Although Cascadians strive for independent nationhood, they reject the chairmanship of nationalism, and instead advocate “biogeopoliticism” 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 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 claims of excess power are protected under the first amendment which protects freedom of speech — implying the dissurity of currency, and hence its politics.
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 false coins in resemblance of genuine U.S. coins in denominations of five dollars or greater.” (See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_dollars_and_Federal_Government_response, accessed March 17, 2010)
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Flickrs 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 value/ise 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 traffic/ers 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 organisational diagrams: 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?

Metahaven

An interestingly layered image economy suggests the need for a new approach to the management of multimedia. While the image is the main carrier of information, the metadata is often invisible. In a new economy, the image is no longer a preface to the end result, it is part of the middle and highlights the feeling of inactivity. What fascinates me about this is that the image turns into a slice of (social) network production. What you see is a hardwork/ing 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:

ScuRyMouse says:

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. Comments 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 mechanisms behind this transformation.

MH

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

Metahaven

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 Abbe museum. The drawing presents an architectural concept. Y
Imaginary property: a visualisation of the noise (decay) of the lower left corner of the El Lissitzky gouache.


Image Modules: representing the productivity around networked images such as ranking, tagging and commenting.
the ones that restorers use to zoom into 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 Lisstvak. 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 status of intermediary between artwork and viewer. More specifically, 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.

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 for itself, 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 art 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 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.
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.

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Metahaven

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