

anti-fascist ★ avant garde ★ autonomous ★ locally situated

NEWSLETTER

The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest | Issue 11 | 2020

Project Description

In a time of rising fascism, how do autonomous, critical, creative and activist practices tend to their common yet particular cosmopolitical situation outside of the established forms and politics of parties and cultural institutions that through general and particular efforts, fight the fascist creep?

Are you in a pre-existing reading/discussion group, an activist or art collective, OR do you need a reason to start one? If so, join us in a year-long interrogation of extra-institutional, avant garde practice that stands decidedly outside of but in some affirmative relation to progressive or radical parties and cultural institutions.

Over the year, you will investigate questions related to autonomous anti-fascist and/or avant garde practice- whatever is most appropriate to your community, context or ongoing inquiries- through activity, in reading groups, in open discussions... however.

As a contribution to our 11th issue, you will be invited to collaboratively produce your own 1, 2 or 4-page A4 newsletter and to distribute it within your community as a part your active practice. We will have \$5 grants for you to apply to (a simple email) in order to assist you in paying for photocopies.

Cont. on inside cover

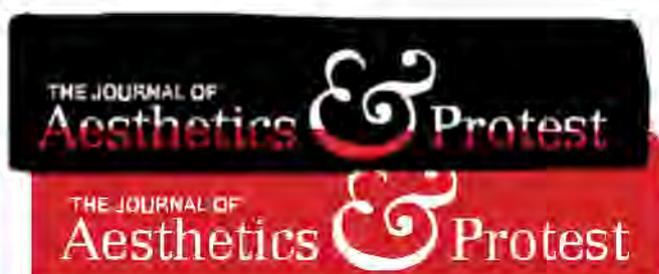
What Is Inside

This issue contains newsletters from these collectives:

- ★ @.ac (Lancashire)
- ★ Antifascist Culture (Athens)
- ★ Never Again/Anti-Fascist Year (Warsaw)
- ★ Around the Table, The Field (London)
- ★ Black Book (Hong Kong)
- ★ Casual School Collective (Canberra)
- ★ Center for Enchantment (Albany)
- ★ Critical Practice (Los Angeles)
- ★ DSA Ecosocialist WG (Santa Cruz)
- ★ Evening Class (London)
- ★ Five Years (London)
- ★ La Foresta/Evening Class (Rovereto)
- ★ Pro Art Gallery and Common (Oakland)
- ★ RIVAL (Thunder Bay)
- ★ Terra Critica (Utrecht)
- ★ We, TBD (Los Angeles)
- ★ Woodbine (Ridgewood)
- ★ Museum Adjacent (Torrance)
- ★ Zizi de Vitruve (Strasbourg)

In Addition

- ★ Nick Thoburn on the newsletters as communist object.
- ★ Out of the Woods Collective on eco-fascism.
- ★ Hammam Aldouri on the apolitical nature of the liberal ideal of art's collective truth-telling voice.
- ★ Tools for Action-an interview on an anti-fascist art project.



For your local newsletter, you will be your own editorial collective. Nevertheless, you are welcome to dialog with us and other participating groups about the project and the nature of the investigation.

At the end of the year, a compendium of the local newsletters will comprise the bulk of our journal's 11th issue.

NOTES

1. We are interested in reading your eventual collaborative contributions for both content-based and poetic reasons- to appreciate how you might voice these relations and for what you have to say.

2. Our understanding of autonomy is that it is a fiction; we are not looking for fundamentalist takes on autonomy, but rather on critical relation to cultural and political power. Submissions from institutions will be considered.

3. Submissions need not be in English.

RATIONALE

We hope to spark locally situated investigations on what it means to purposefully practice outside but in some indeterminate affinity to the somewhat progressive or radical political and cultural institutions whose profiles have risen over the last few years. Groups like the DSA, Podemos and Plan C. are examples of formal political structures that now actually seem to be attempting to meaningfully responding to issues this journal has extra-institutionally concerned itself with.

In this moment when party politics can be justified in their existential fight against the right and its biopolitical means of control and killing the planet, this issue seeks to support the ongoing ways of being autonomous to and organised outside of but in some relation to hopeful formal politics.

Particularly, but not exclusively, we are interested in questions that culturally think through left politics towards some beyond. For just as this project sits beside functionalized political organization, it also sits critically beside the functionalization of culture. Therefore, through autonomy, we are interested in how culture that seems to be outside of institutions acts to build other ways of being, and not just through the representations of "the political" that good museums and galleries can do. In this way, this is a cultural question as much as it is a political one.



Social media demonstrate how our social spheres have been utilized for profit's ends. This media and the cultural industries show how the appearance of cultural significance can be translated into a variety of ways for others to profit gain. Social media is a reflective mirage for radical theory and images to appear with no actual political cohesion besides affective affinity.

With your help, this issue hopes to reclaim the gap between the radical imaginary built on actual social capacity, and formal politics. We acknowledge that the culture industries and global corporations' have functionalized some of the rhetorical, aesthetic and political content of this space that was until recently a matter of left cultural work for the liberal side of their neo-liberal ends. Our motivation here is not to discuss cooption, but rather to reinvigorate a more nuanced and socially rich texture beside our own progressive institutions.

Locally, cultural institutions and political meet-ups are where we find fellow travelers; institutions they may fund you, "like" you, connect you to wider discourse and the field

Cont. on inside back cover

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editorial

Corona, Fascism, Climate Break-Down. Headlines all, and very real crises felt everywhere— things whose concerns work over situations at every scale of possible experience. We are interested in many things in regard to them, including how their nasty effects demand that we put our home affairs in order. Capacities for solidarity, meaningful mutual aid and actual justice emerge from the most intimate of places - that is, from between people and between people and other meaningful things.

This issue's aim was to facilitate such work in intimate places; to do so, this issue serves primarily as a compilation of autonomously produced and locally distributed newsletters aimed at situating non-fascist thought and/or avant garde cultural activity. We begin working on it in late 2018 and are completing it in June 2020.

This editorial departure creatively manifests our collective's critical frustration with the hegemonic state of normative political affairs that much of the creative and critical left participates in. So much art and politics orients towards ways of climb up the scales of power and mediation. Our frustration is not based on questions of motivation to do so. Rather, it reflects our understanding that despite serious critical and creative work occurring from the center to the far left, liberatory and cosmopolitically open politics advance at a different pace than professional development. While as mediatically present as ever, the left seemed to be on the governing retreat, while institutions and parties seemed to expand. While there are so many good critical ideas and creative practices produced through parties, think tanks, academic and cultural institutions, their efforts seemed to do little more than produce the grease that just keeps the wheels spinning. *Hammam Aldouri's essay does an excellent job of skewering the art-world liberalism this issue responds to.*

The recent massive uprisings sparked by the extrajudicial killings of Black men and wonton state disregard for common life demonstrate for us the space for a more richly creative politic that the sort of activity that this issue's situated focus aspires to fill.

It should be mentioned, for honesty's sake, that this frustration is possibly bound to the fact that our journal has no real formal institutional ties. So our analysis is that for left desire to be more than just a bunch of good ideas, fun and pretty pictures, we have to seriously work to become meaningful and useful and sensible to a complex society rather than just for leftist (academic, museum, political, curatorial, media-based) forces of distribution.

Overall, our submission call demonstrates the issue's two theoretical anchors; new municipalist or small "d" democratic praxis and de-colonial thought. Some of the 19 newsletters reproduced within are from projects that began independent of our submission call. When submitted newsletters were authored as responses to our call (reprinted on the issue's cover), we trusted the author/editors to manage their own work's content, that they would take their newsletters in the direction they saw fit. All we asked was that contributions be; 1) collectively edited to make sure each project was more than one person's ambition 2) locally distributed in hopes that a situation would drive content beside whatever ambition 3) and oriented along avant-garde or anti-fascist ends. *Nick Thoburn's essay on the newsletter form does a better job than we could in analyzing the contributions towards these and other critical ends.*

This issue's open call for collectively edited/locally distributed newsletters (reproduced on the issue's interior and exterior covers) was entitled "Culture beside itself." We asked for collectively edited, somehow-situated work so that individual ambition might be checked by both the actual realities of a context and non-virtual human relations. Our main theoretical impulse was to think about what culturally could be done beside the impulse to make things that could easily connect institutionally. Somehow outside but somehow not in ignorance of what power does; that is what we meant by "Culture beside itself." "Culture beside itself" is a subtle joke; funny in ways equal to the contradictions inherent to art's supposed autonomy and the real love that militant anti-fascist black blocks and affiliated property destruction protect. We joyfully wondered about what it is that we do together when no one is looking.

Meaningful relationality is built across apparent difference rather than by simply accounting for metrics that facilitate distribution. As some of our newsletters discuss, fascism functions despite all its explicit nonsense because it systematically insists on its right to dominate under any terms. A culture beside itself, though, takes pause and feels out any demands and insistence to make sure that what is relationally being asked actually *vibes*.

A culture and solidarity that can *vibe* is a winning politics. culturally, meaningfully, and politically.

Newsletter descriptions and page number

Five Years (London) p.31
Five Years is an artists' organisation and project space, comprising a fluctuating membership (currently 18 of us contribute to the programming and administration) and based in London. Over the course of its 22 year existing Five Years has presented more than 250 exhibitions and events at 3 primary venues and has involved 35 members, functioning without individual directorship or regular funding. More information is provided in the introduction to the newsletter and via the embedded link to our website.

Since we moved to Archway, we established a series of collaborative rapports with the local library which is named as Archway Library. We have organised two events so far workshops, displays and performances. Our next series in to which the workshop on fascism/anti-fascism reading group will be held coinciding with the Islington Festival of Storytelling.

collective @ .ac (Lancashire) p.35
We are producing newsletters on the two sides of an A4 sheet of paper to distribute on the picket line at the University of Central Lancashire addressing key issues of casualization and precarious working conditions, but also graphically addressing the creative potential of strike action as a space of and democratic becoming.

Evening Class (London) p.39
The DCW newsletter was distributed at various DCW (Design and Cultural Workers Union) events, and by members in their workplaces. They were also handed out on the picket line and at events during the 14 day UCU Strike in March this year.

DSA Ecosocialist WG (Santa Cruz) p.41
- Laurie Palmer, Martabel Wasserman and T. J. Demos material circulated through DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) channels in Santa Cruz and beyond.

Critical Practice Notes (Los Angeles) p.45
Critical Practice Notes is a mailed newsletter consisting of interviews and reflection on critical practices mailed to a list of 150 subscribers.

The Center for Enchantment (Albany) p.49
The Center stands beside an institution called Grand Street Community Arts in Albany, NY, located in old St. Anthony's Church in Albany, NY.

A first draft of our newsletter was distributed at a community breakfast at GSCA on February 23, 2020. A revised edition that removed mention of in-person events was wheat-pasted as a poster on the side of Grand Street Community Arts on May 2, 2020.

Anti-fascist Culture (Athens, Thessaloniki & beyond) ... p.51
We took the name Antifascist Culture to mark our stance and opted for member anonymity to ensure that whatever we did would not become 'cultural capital'. We wanted to register collective resistance in the cultural field in advance of the fascist effect. Anti-fascism would be low-fi political education: a means to stand against dominant ideology in the circumstances faced in Greece.

This newsletter follows the group's first piece of collective writing, done in 2019- (eds.)

Museum Adjacent (Los Angeles California) p.55
-Formal writing authors- Larissa Nickel and Leslie Foster.
Content contributions from Museum Adjacent collective including text and images.

Newsletter was distributed via pdf to Museum Adjacent (MA) members, and friends/alumni of the Torrance Art Museum FORUM program. It was intended to be printed and distributed internationally at now postponed MA events and exhibitions/ interactions with other collectives.

We TBD (Los Angeles) p.59
-Von Curtis, Olga Koumoundouros, Francesca Lalane, Kristy Lovich, Ofelia Marquez, Jennifer Moon

The Newsletter hasn't been distributed yet due to Covid-19 sheltering in place orders. The plan was for me to print out at LA County DPH (Department of Public Health) office using their photocopier. But DPH pivoted quickly to address public health issues. Leadership was called in, copiers were in use more than usual and all staff except for leadership was asked to work from home, this included my position. I should have gone to a copy center and paid, but my mind was on coping with impact of disease since schools were closed, then my Dad got sick and died. The community centers and art venues where we'd planned to distribute the newsletter remain closed. We intended this newsletter to be read in hand and have not looked into online platforms to distribute. We welcome any suggestions on how to proceed.

Around the Table/The Field at New Cross (London) p.63
- We are a disparate and dispersed group of readers and activists connected through The Field, a social centre in London, and an interest in the politics of working collectively.

We aim to distribute hardcopies of this publication in various locations such as social centres in the UK and the US.

La Foresta (Rovereto IT), **Evening Class** (London) p.67
 “The newsletter was printed on a Risograph and distributed in Italy and Germany, simply at events we went to or to people we met.” (note from La Foresta)
 “The La Foresta newsletter was distributed from their space in Rovereto, and informally by Evening Class to friends and collaborators in London (at the ASP5 book fair and the HURRA HURRA festival in Halle Germany).” (note from Evening Class)

Never Again/Anti-Fascist Year (Warsaw) p.69
 (Anti-fascist Year + Art Against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries and Internationalism After the End of Globalization, Edited by Marsha Bradfield and Keep it Complex, with support of Kuba Szreder. Designed by Keep it Complex.)

The newsletter was produced after the Never Again conference, Kuba Szreder solicited contributions to the newsletter you are now reading. This working group was initially conceived as meta space to develop a mission statement for the Anti-Fascist Year but was eclipsed on the day by more pressing urgencies; namely the Crisis in the Castle.”

Never Again was an interdisciplinary conference of two parts - Art Against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries on October 24th, 2019, and Internationalism After the End of Globalization on October 25th and 26th, 2019. This event took its name from the concurrent exhibition Never Again: Art against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries, which was organised in cooperation within the EU programme Our Many Europes and L’internationale coalition of European museums, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War.

The Crisis in the Castle relates to the right-wing curatorial take-over of the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle (CCA) (-eds.)

ReadingRoom (Utrecht) p.73
 - Texts were collectively written, designers include Yo-E Ryou, Pinar Türer, Birgit M. Kaiser.

Include here is one of four newsletter digitally shared with the growing number of (former and current) participants of ReadingRoom and with the friends of Casco Art Institute.

The Re-Imagining Value Action Lab/ RiVAL p.77
 (Thunder Bay, Canada)
 - Our team includes Max Haiven, (Canada Research Chair in Culture, Media and So-cial Justice at Lakehead University), Cassie Thornton (a participatory and community artist), Sam Martin-Bird (Indigenous Relationships Supervisor at the TBPL), Robyn Medicine (Indigenous Liaison at the TBPL), Adar Charleton (post-doctoral fellow at the University of Manitoba), Matthew Benoit (graduate student at LU) and

Liz Ward (graduate student at LU)

This brochure was distributed at meetings with stakeholders in the project, in Thunder Bay. The project is a collaboration with The Thunder Bay Public Library. (RiVAL is a workshop for the radical imagination, social justice and decolonization based at Lakehead University and active around the world.)

The Casual School Collective (Canberra) p.79
 - Currently TCSC is Ruby Rossiter (R.R), Michelle IJtsma (MijT) and Zora Pang

We are either current or alumni of the Australian National University School of Art and Design, but that is only our beginnings. We are about to expand the collective beyond our current institutional borders. We are all practicing artists and/or curators. The collective was born out of a desire to do something more concrete in our respective communities about the ever confining crunch of neoliberalism.

Black Book Assembly p.83
 (Hong Kong, Wuhan, and elsewhere)

Because of being unable to print in Wuhan as initially planned, we had the inadvertent opportunity to print in Ankara, but the breakout of the virus in the West around that time slowed the process of getting the finished print run back to East Asia, so we initially began distributing the digital version, which has also been printed in small batches by friends and comrades in Seoul, Yogyakarta and Guangzhou. This month we have also started sending hard copies to info shops and spaces around Hong Kong, Tokyo and Taipei.

Woodbine (Ridgewood Queens, New York) p.87
 The newsletter has been distributed in Ridgewood, Queens, at our food pantry, and door-to-door in the neighborhood.

Pro Arts Gallery & Commons (Oakland) p.91
 - Pro Arts COMMONS is a multi-use space for the expanded field of art, debate, experimentation, and collaboration.

Pro Arts’ newsletter has been distributed from their gallery space located on Frank Ogawa/Oscar Grant Plaza in Oakland California.

Zizi de Vitruve (Strasbourg) p.95
 -Cynthia Montier & les ouvriers du chantier Kellermann, Anonymous construction site workers

The newsletter was printed by Cynthia Montier in 150 exemplars in February 2020 and was distributed from hand to hand on various occasions since then. It was meant to be clandestinely diffused in 500 copies at the opening of Primark shopping mall in Strasbourg the 16th April 2020—that has been postponed because of the quarantine period in France.

Culture Beside Itself: some thoughts

Newsletters: "Beside and Outside Institutions"

The autonomy of "beside and outside institutions" that this issue investigates exists in relation to things we and our contributors know... that regardless of what institution facilitate in our expressions, our potential and desires exceed all this.

Suggested Newsletter Template:



This logo was on the lower right hand corner of the newsletter template we sent to respondents to our submission call. The teemplate suggested a two-column newsletter topped by a page personalized header.

We told participating collectives that they could utilize, ignore or detourn the logo.

Project Timeline:

We began working on this issue near the end of 2018, and released the submission call in Spring 2019. For a variety of reasons, For a variety of reasons, but primarily because we had no need to rush it, we continued accepting submissions until the Spring of 2020. To work outside of any funder's needs is to work on one's own timeline against life's other contingencies.

Editorial Research:

We utilized and suggested to contributors the following reading list: Society Against the State by Pierre Clastres, The Undercommons by Fred Moten & Stefano Harney, The Wisdom to Make Worlds by Stephen Shukaitis, A Billion Black Anthropocenes by Kathryn Yusoff, Use, Knowledge, Art and History by Charles Esche & Manuel Borja-Villel, the Third Text issue on Anti-Fascism, edited by Angela Demittrakaki and Harry Weeks, and Optimism of the Will, an anti-fascist report back organized by Gregory Shollette for the Field Journal.

Further editorial work included communicating with contacts in Hungary, Brazil, the Philippines, Turkey; and also within racialized communitiies organizing and creating within the contexts dominated by authoritarian leadership. Despite efforts, we did not receive submissions from these countries. **Nevertheless this research helped us understand the risk and commitment required to articulate, over time, political and cultural modes that run strongly counter to dominant and weaponized state forces.**



What we mean by "Culture beside itself":

We see a contradiction in the utilization of the word "culture".

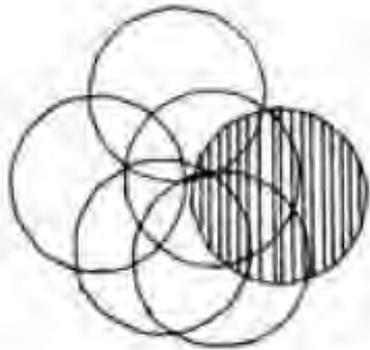
We recognize culture as an instuting force: it organizes relations logistically by prioritizing certain voices and modes of communication at other explicit focuses' and expressions' expense.

Conversely, culture can be understood as the honest expressions of people.

At the embrace of this contradiction is the situation of "culture beside itself."

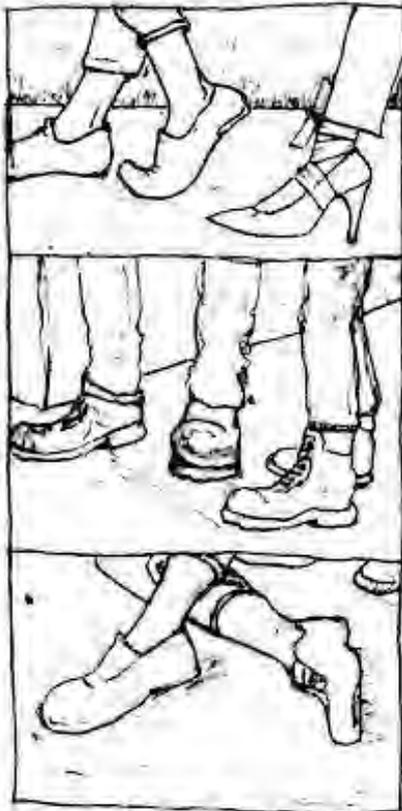
Newsletters, as cultural and political expression:

If "cultural" things are comprehended as unique objects- singular paintings, dances, books, newsletter- then we wonder how those unique expressions exist as if they had the autonomy that Western thought gives to individual (male, white) humans. We wanted to listen to printed words as though they might vary or fluctuate as though they had their own own being.



culture, expression
in itself.

To be situated locally is to relate at a particular scale. Yet the local is but a poetic description; qualifying context, beings and things someone considers to at a be meaningfully scale. For this



issue, we allowed collectives to define their 'local' as the scale at which they vibrated. We were interested in hearing

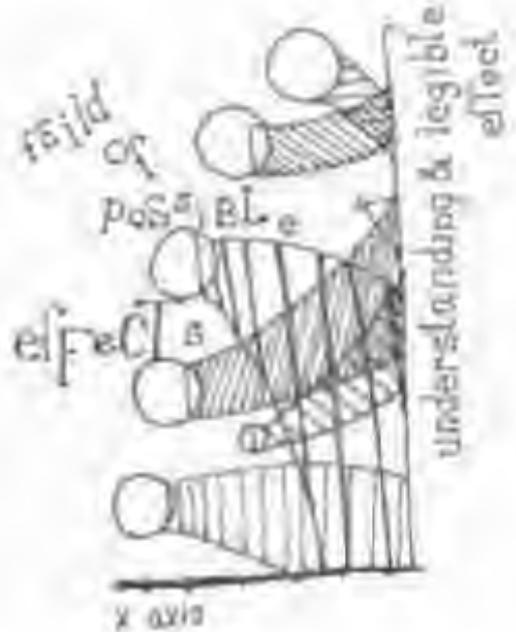
practices that resonate in context; for the needs of the context in which practices were situated.

Collectivity and site relate for several reasons-it is between people and other things that any site's meaningfulness can be worked through- in practice or discourse. Without collectivity, there is only individual will that may or may not have progressive import. While collectivity is not equivalent with meaningful discourse, we assume that it serves as a check on individual ambition. Rather, within collectivity, if one benefits, so do the rest.

On Newsletters in site and place

We know that the variation of cultural things, how one day a song might be pleasant but the next day it might be a call to arms, is dependent to the wider changes in context.

But if the practice of concerted and conscious cultural work is to be taken seriously, it insists that considered work does have its own effects on the



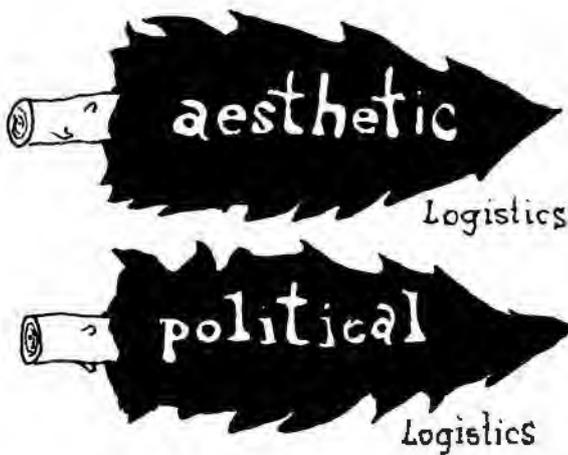
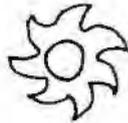
things it relates to.

The critical problem that this issue of the Journal of Aesthetics & Protest hopes to address relates to how sustained and intelligent and considered practice is or is not supported in relation to the very specific and highly individualized contexts that we all live within.

For us, a newsletter represents the sus

tained efforts of a people within a place to maintain a focused and yet also almost mundane relation to both the community and their habitus. With this issue, we wanted to support weird but meaningful political and cultural activity over time.

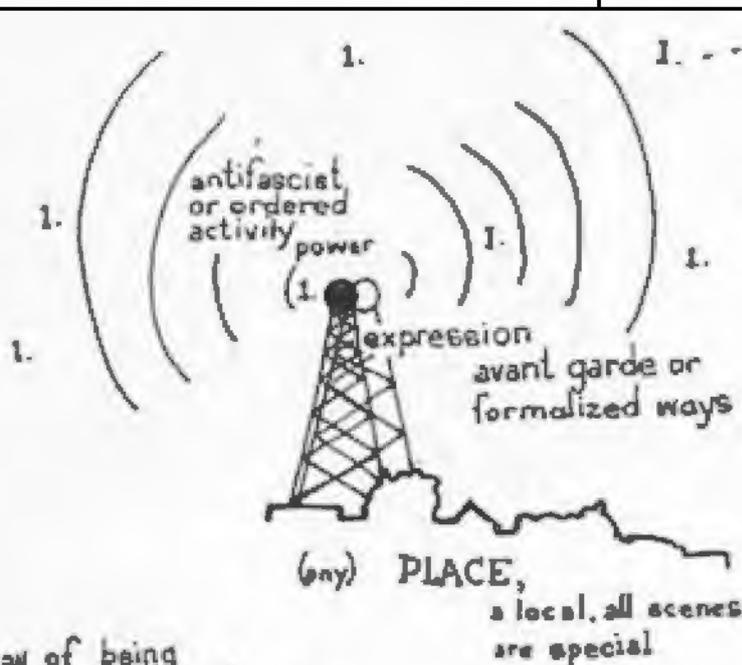
Non-fascist or avant garde practice varyingly pushes against power's logistics.



Social constellations that inform their own common life with critical and creative practice can more organically articulate resistance to any violent state cultural and economic system:



Practice and habit-informed critical and creative sociality intertwined with the day's necessities finds relational resonance that exceeds state policing. It organizes for itself, in relation to more than spectacular external institutionality. As this issue's Out of the Woods and Tools for Action discuss, such practices develop from and can develop towards innately radical ways of being different; because they find no compulsion to explain to authority who and why they are.



The perspective of the abstract "universal" reader on particular action. What is 1. their interests that afford particular perspectives?

- 1. Way of being beside or against logistical & ordered force. (see newsletters)
- 1. Possible articulations of "autonomy." (see newsletters)
All are full of meaning, meaningful.

Autonomous Collectivity:

This project facilitates collective self-organizations of meaning and capacities to act at some scale. Newsletters express unique yet generalizable approaches to the page; expressing historical, emotional, educational, documentary and organizational concerns.

On Newsletters & Politics: An interview with Nick Thoburn

Editors: Thanks for agreeing to do this interview. Our desire for this issue was two-fold: to destabilize and interrogate the nature of more universal discourses and universality's relation to contexts, and also to inspire and facilitate a blossoming of locally situated radical writing and publishing.

On that topic of inspiring and supporting, locally situated writing that connects with immediate ecologies/economies, this issue has submissions like that from Strasbourg that invites construction workers to deface the walls of particular construction site. Other newsletters engage in other ways of flagging the local (e.g. the Albany-based project), while others engage in local appearances of globalized discourses. How might you consider the varying things of focus that are shuttled around in these newsletters- such as concrete situations (eg. the protest picket with the @ ac newsletter) or the seemingly global discourse that The Field and Terra Critica situationally engage with?

Nick: Many thanks for the invitation to reflect on these newsletters and questions of political publishing. Regarding your aim for the issue, emancipatory projects are compelled to produce synthetic analysis at global scales, as has been made all too apparent by recent events. As we speak, I'm in COVID-19 lockdown, balancing homeschooling with work while seeking adequate political responses and following streams of dynamic analysis of the biopolitical economy of the virus – in relation to industrial animal agriculture, climate catastrophe, habitat depletion, epidemiology, racializing necropolitics, monopoly tech, mutual aid, and so on. We need to act at global scales too, and what these newsletters suggest, I think, is that part of this critical thinking and acting will come through a weave of global conditions through particular projects. A newsletter might seem so slight in comparison to the magnitude of change that is required – it is! But it's the kind of publishing form where this weave can be effective, to be combined with all sorts of different forms that operate in other ways. Reading the newsletters I totted up mentions of other media forms and technologies – radio, webpages, USBs, QR codes, mobile phones, live-streams, dazibao, archives, slogans, films, etc. – through which the newsletters are constructing media ecologies and practices, flush with particular struggles, groups, and knots of exploitation and oppression.

Editors: The other goal of this issue was to interrogate the nature of more universal discourse and its relation to contexts and practitioners who labor somehow in relation to those discourses; for critical ends enlightened by general

anarchist practice, and beside autonomist Marxist theory on the nature of instituting powers. We are aware of the global and political challenges that we face in terms of rising fascism and authoritarianism in the face of climate change and now the Corona Virus, and the ongoing problems that capitalism and patriarchy institute. Beside these awarenesses, we are not so quick to discard what institutions affirmatively do. Nevertheless, we continue with a deeper critique of said instituting forces via afropessimist and decolonial thought – and wonder about the general nature of a journal's relation to wider projects. We wonder how discursive poetics serve to destabilise or positively connect or utilize institutional reach, how language has a logistical nature.

Nick: The critique that Afropessimism and decolonial thought level at emancipatory projects is necessarily registered at institutional scales and in the full range of political forms, as you say. This includes publishing form. To take an example, I've written recently about the wrenching effect on the book form of the critique of "empathy" that is developed by Saidiya Hartman and Frank B. Wilderson. Institutions and books, conditioned from within and without by racializing structures, have a strong tendency to pursue a solution to racism through the construction of empathetic engagement across racializing divides. But empathy, as Wilderson puts it in his *Incognegro*, is a liberal terrain of encounter, "the scale of abstraction [brought] back down to the level most comfortable for White people: the individual and the uncontextualized realm of fair play." At this level, empathetic resolution obscures the structural difference of racial social orders, the level at which resolution would need to be achieved to be meaningful. The empathetic encounter, then, must be persistently troubled, in favour of a wrenching structural critique that leaves institutions and publishing forms without resolution, provoked to the fraught task of problematizing their own structural relationship to racial violence, and reconfiguring the terms and practices of solidarity accordingly.

Regarding the newsletters in this journal issue, some of their formal features stand out as felicitous for engaging with racial and colonial violence: the newsletter form as occasion for a groping and self-critical relation to institutional form, against the assumption of institutional innocence or secure identity; the casting of fascism as a problem of the psyche, the individual, and the group as much as of the wider social field; the swerve away from the racializing narrative infrastructure of progress that undergirds quint-essentially modern publishing forms like the manifesto. In more concrete terms, one can understand the newsletter of the Re-Imagining Value Action Lab as a terrain of problematization, a publishing component in the working out of transformative engagement with colonialism, structural racism, and genocide, as experienced by Indigenous Anishinaabe people in, what is currently, Canada. The newsletter is driven not so much by a group or a political subject but by a problem, that of "rematriation" – not repatriation's metaphoric righting of a past wrong but the forcing of new futures through reclaiming stolen lands. And it sets out

criteria and means of association and critical evaluation by which this political problem can be effectively pursued.

Editors: This issue's conceptualization relates to how you discuss pamphlets as communist objects... contextual, situated, the object as "comrade" and "coworker." Can you describe a bit how you understand printed and/or digital matter as communist objects?

Nick: Let me sketch some context for the concept of the "communist object," drawing from my book, *Anti-Book: On the Art and Politics of Radical Publishing*. My concern has been to tease out criteria for a communism of publishing, a communism that broadens attention from the content of publishing to its wider materiality. By materiality here, I mean the open-ended mesh of publishing forms, processes, and relations – writing, editing, design, distribution, media objects and platforms, meanings, readings, sensations – all of which bear the economies of production and consumption that govern the publishing field. In this field, publishing by communist or emancipatory ventures is traversed by crisis. I make this point not as a lament, though, for crisis is its necessary *condition of existence*. Communist publishing emerges from social conditions – of racialization, gender, class, and manifold other oppressions – that are fundamentally hostile. And such publishing succeeds only insofar as it interrogates and undermines these conditions – it can have no happy accommodation with capitalist society.

This is true of the content of communist publishing ventures – interrogation of social crisis is the substance of their critical ideas, their leading edge, rightly so. We know this. What is less often considered is that social crisis also conditions the materiality of such publishing. The fashioning of a publishing venture out of hostile social conditions colours the mode of writing and collaboration, the distribution and archiving, the forms of readership and social effects, the visual design and graphic style, the (anti-)economic models, the artifactual and sensory forms, and so forth. This is what gives such ventures their specific qualities and allure – often curious, uneven, jarring, or weird. Sometimes these qualities exist without much notice or self-reflection on the part of publishers or readers; occasionally publishers seek to disavow or disguise them by, say, adopting commercial styles of visual design. But other times they become the direct object of intervention, where publishing ventures interrogate and experiment with their own materiality – foregrounding their crisis-ridden conditions, straining to construct communist forms, processes, and relations within and against the publishing field. And this is where my interest lies, with the materiality of communist or emancipatory publishing as an object of attention, reflexive practice, and politics in its own right.

This is the context within which I developed the concept of the communist object, specifically as a means to understand the political materiality of the pamphlet form (where the pamphlet is a non-periodical printed publication, typically between 5 and 48 pages, and roughly A5 format size). I wouldn't want to impose a hard distinction between

the pamphlet and other publishing forms, such as the book, magazine, blog, newsletter, zine, chapbook, leaflet, tweet, communiqué, newspaper, etc. Yet we understand a list like this because we have an intuitive sense that each of these publishing forms tends to coalesce around a specific combination of qualities and affordances that is more or less particular to it. My sense when researching these publishing forms, and their experimental development by particular publishing ventures, is that a communist materiality of publishing benefits from close attention to the specificities of form, and from developing concepts that are germane to each – even if these concepts can, one hopes, wander off into other domains of application. For example, in *Anti-Book*, to explore the magazine form (specifically, *Mute* magazine's immersive and self-critical hybrid of numerous platforms) I fashion the concept of "diagrammatic publishing." Or, to understand the material form of the book and its modes of authority and passion, I make use of Deleuze and Guattari's typology of the "root book" and "rhizome book."

But regarding the concept of the communist object, one of my sources is an enticing comment by Marx, that "Private property," as it abstracts from the qualities of objects to turn them into value-bearing commodities, "alienates the individuality not only of people but also of things." The inference, and it's a beautiful idea, is that communism is the emancipation of objects as much as it is of people, that the emancipation of humanity from subjection to private property will not be achieved without the simultaneous liberation of objects from the same regime. Walter Benjamin picks this up, and insists that what Marx is getting at here is not, as Marxists often think, the release of an object's "use value" from its corraling by commodity exchange, because "use" as we know it is occupied and conditioned to a great degree by the requirements of capitalist accumulation. Rather, as Benjamin puts it, the communist approach to the object "entails the liberation of things from the drudgery of being useful." A communist object, then, is something that pulls away from and disrupts the capitalist values of use and exchange. As such, it has a certain fetish quality, a fetishism of the anti-commodity: it disrupts regimes of value and derails the isolated human subject that is fashioned within these regimes.

So, my suggestion is that we can detect this mode of the object, the communist object, in the material qualities of self-published pamphlets, if we suspend their "use," their dissemination of textual content, and allow instead other material qualities to come forward. I stress that this is a mode of the object existent within capitalism, pushing against commodity values in a fledgling, groping fashion. It opens routes and poses problems that have pertinence for thinking beyond capitalism – for "the complete emancipation of all human senses and attributes," as Marx puts it – but of course the shape of socio-material life in communism remains a vast unknown.

To get an impression of the pamphlet as communist object, it's helpful to contrast it to the political magazine. Political

journals and magazines have had a preeminent role in the history of revolutionary and avant-garde politics. Think, for example, of how the journals *La Révolution surréaliste*, *Internationale situationniste*, and *Quaderni rossi* are something like the mobile ground upon which Surrealism, the Situationists, and Italian Operaismo came into being through time – key sites and means by which these currents and movements honed their ideas and aesthetic styles, established group coherence, and gained purchase on the social imaginary. Of course, that is necessary for any revolutionary movement, and yet in the correlation between movement and published medium, the magazine reveals itself to be just that little bit too obedient, ordered and contained by the requirements of a movement.

Small-press pamphlets, by contrast, tend to be much less correlated with social movements, allowing them a more indeterminate, exploratory, and critical character. True of their textual content, this also manifests in their material form. They're occasional or one-off publications, with uneven infrastructures of distribution at best, loosened from movement-consolidating and marketing imperatives, and encountered by readers as much by chance as intent. As such, small-press pamphlets are self-enclosed and independent objects, or "monads," that circulate as charged potential, potential that unfolds in encounters that generate their own spatiotemporal consistency. There are numerous aspects to this monad quality of the pamphlet form, some of which I can list here: the physical vulnerability of the pamphlet, which generates intimate and self-instituting modes of association; the "barbaric asceticism" of its pared-down form, in Adorno's phrase, a "strategic nonsynchronous" relation to the united front of new media and capital; its ephemerality as bearer of the ruptural time of revolution; its disregard for "popularity," that value par excellence of social media and commodity circulation; and its awkward relation to work and work abolition, produced as flight from the dictatorship of work while revealing the impossibility of such flight under social conditions of capitalism.

Editors: How do you distinguish the idea of a concept from it joining into a printed (digital and the virtual) object, and also from the wider network of discourse and the milieu of ideas to which that object tends to?

Nick: I'd like to take your question in terms of the relation between political ideas and the practice of political publishing, for it's one that has occupied me a good deal. When writers and publishing ventures turn reflexive attention to their publications, there's a common mistake of seeking in their publishing forms and practices a direct manifestation of their ideas. It sounds initially like the right move to make, a marriage of content and form, but it can end up losing the specific qualities and effects of publishing materiality by subordinating them to the ideas, leaving the materiality of publishing to become merely the confirmation of ideas and not something with qualities and effects of its own. This approach tends to work with a rather limited understanding and palette of publishing materiality – the simple assertion of the "tactile" value of print over digital platforms, for

example, or leaving all the reflexive work to certain paper stock, covers, or typography and page layout. In consequence, materiality ends up playing the role of a cute or clunky illustration, lacking anything like the nuance and complexity of the ideas it carries.

If, on the other hand, publishing ventures foreground and interrogate the open-ended mesh of publishing forms, process, and relations, then publishing materiality becomes an arena of critical practice in its own right, no longer corralled by its textual content. I don't mean to say that the ideas become irrelevant, not at all. An emancipatory publishing venture is typically, and rightly, driven by the critical ideas germane to its knots of social crisis and intervention. But if it becomes self-reflexive about its publishing materiality beyond clichéd manifestations, then the relation between its ideas and wider materiality takes shape, as I understand it, as a baggy fit. It's an approach I develop from Rosalind Krauss's wonderful formulation that certain artworks take form as "self-differing mediums." As a self-differing medium, an artwork produces recursive loops between its aesthetic aims and a selection of the materialities that comprise its medium, such that the medium is itself transformed in and as the work. In this recursive relation, neither aesthetic aim nor medium is the leading party.

In the domain of publishing, this baggy fit between idea and material form is sometimes quite tight – for example, when a prison-abolition journal includes authorship models that favor texts by prisoners, and adopts a distribution structure premised on prisoners receiving hard copies for free. Other times the fit between ideas and published form is much looser – the same publication might choose to break with corporate platforms to run on open-source software. In this latter example, the loose, baggy association between content and publishing form doesn't necessarily make the form less significant to the specific qualities of the journal. Indeed, one might find that the use of open source induces critical ideas of its own, ideas that filter into the journal's content, regarding the racializing dimensions of corporate publishing, the limitations of Open Source scenes or easily assumed technical fixes to social problems. Now we see that publishing materiality can generate its own critical ideas and become a domain of political intervention in its own right – and we should remember here that publishing bears and fuels capitalist accumulation, and its racializing and gendering modalities, as much as does audiovisual or social media, making it a far from negligible point of focus for revolutionary critique and practice.

Finally on this question of the relation between ideas and publishing form, sometimes publishing materialities have critical and expressive effects in their own right, "mute redundancies," as Guattari characterizes them, that take shape in visual, sensory, temporal, organizational, and technological dimensions against the linguistic "overcoding" of the text that they carry.

Editors: We wonder how you might distinguish a newsletter from a pamphlet. Picking up a point you made earlier,

in your *Communist Object* essay, you describe a pamphlet thusly: “As a monad — a dense and self-enclosed world — the pamphlet circulates as a charged potential, a potential that unfolds in encounters that generate their own spatiotemporal consistency.” Our issue’s submission call was for newsletters rather than pamphlets, because we were interested in the institution that a newsletter suggests and the time-based commitment the newsletter seems to contain. But we were also interested in the monad-like nature of what you ascribe to pamphlets, in how they relate to specific practice and context. How would you flesh out these distinctions?

Nick: I agree that the publishing form of the newsletter is closely associated with the formation and endurance of institutions or groups. Certainly, many of the groups that responded to your call for submissions appear to have been encouraged by this form to take their newsletters as means of institutional development. I read in them statements of institutional purpose; sketches of the historical emergence of groups; reports on recent activities; day-to-day institutional announcements, plans, and news. There is an intimate, particular quality to these features. It’s an intimacy which is internal to institutional practice but that also points outward to the external reader, who is snagged by the affect of intimacy, drawn in to engage. It was interesting to me too that such form-typical features of institutional formation are often combined in these newsletters with self-reflexive analysis of a group’s institutional form, a groping, testing movement, where an institution’s successes and failures, limits, and possibilities are brought into the open — again, for purposes internal to the group but also for outsiders to encounter and engage with.

In this self-reflexive quality, the newsletter works in a rather different fashion to another publishing form that political and avant-garde groups have historically reached for, the manifesto, whose performative structure relies on the exterior presentation of a strong and confident group subjectivity, hiding away the cracks, discords, and instabilities of group existence. True, the manifesto form can develop through deconstructive or reflexive procedures of its own, as is a tendency in feminist manifestos — the brilliant, wrenching examples of Valerie Solanas’s *SCUM Manifesto* and Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s *Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition “CARE,”* for instance. But if your call had been for manifestos rather than newsletters, I suspect that reflexive questions of form, design, and institutional practice would not have been pursued in so enticing a fashion as they have been here.

There is also reflection in these newsletters on the different scales, layering, and interpenetration of groups. The sketches of group practice in the newsletter by the Casual School Collective includes involvement, for example, with the institution of a psychiatric hospital, when a personal reading project on a ward, necessarily public, opened out into a collective conversation about neoliberal systems between both patients and nurses, and which continued after the group member left the hospital. Or the Fragments

for an antifascist newsletter, by the artists’ organization Five Years, pursues the psycho-affective dimensions of fascism as they operate at the scales of the group and the individual, and in various social formations, including a bus journey — while reflexively turning this research back upon their group practice itself.

Another newsletter, by @.ac, casts the problem of institution as one of disruption, giving itself over as a vehicle for the 14-day strike by UK university workers in early 2020. The strike features here both as the disruption of the university — today, a quintessential neoliberal institution — and as the fashioning of its own kind of critical institution. It’s an institution-in-disruption that the newsletter posits with a beguiling economy — just two sentences, serving as both slogans and models: “INDUSTRIAL ACTION IS THE ONLY ART PRACTICE;” “THE PICKET LINE IS THE TRUE SPACE OF PEDAGOGY.”

One newsletter, by Black Book, casts the institution into a crucial problem of our time, that of global solidarity, linking newsletter-like information about the 2019-20 uprising in Hong Kong and the Wuhan COVID-19 lockdown with critical reflection on solidarity across struggles in Haiti, Ecuador, Sudan, Chile, Lebanon, and Honduras. The Black Book newsletter also shows how the newsletter form is adept at holding together the functions of institutional news and abstract, critical analysis.

You ask about the “monad” quality of the newsletter, where a monad is a particular selection or contraction of the world that is at the same time wholly singular, a self-enclosed vessel ready to burst open. I discuss this above with regard to the pamphlet form as communist object, but I wonder if a better figure for the newsletter form, given its institutional associations, might be what Guattari calls a “third object.” This concept was developed at the clinic La Borde, established by Jean Oury, where Guattari was based. It was part of the clinic’s “institutional psychiatry,” where a key institutional role was taken by the collective production and self-publication of journals. These journals served as means of assembling diverse elements — semiotic, affective, imaginary, practical, organizational, technological — in an entity that was at once product and catalyst of institutional practice, self-reflection, and therapy. As Gary Genosko puts it, here “the institution is in part a product of a journal’s collective elaboration and refinement over time.” If we approach the form of the newsletter from the perspective of a “third object,” it is a product of the multiple voices and practices that compose it, but it takes on a life of its own, not determined by any one person or even by the institution. It reacts back upon the institution to become a cause — drawing out or inducing associations, affects, ideas, and critical orientations from the group.

Editors: So we wonder how the seriality suggested by a newsletter might distinguish itself from a journal. In terms of making plans OR exploring ongoing issues. What are the qualitative differences — are they only differences in scale and ambition? How might the newsletters of this issue

swerve differently in relation to all that might be philosophically knowable/expressible through direct experience rather than the entire knowledge set of this or any other conceptual journal?

Nick: Both journals and newsletters are serial forms, typically indicated by the convention of numbering each issue, but I think you're right that their mode of seriality differs. The seriality of a journal, especially if it becomes an established commercial entity, is indexed to the linear progression and command of time, capitalism as time. The complexities and swerves of social experience are thus subsumed into "the steady onward clocking of homogenous, empty time," as Benedict Anderson writes of the temporality of the daily newspaper. The seriality of a newsletter, on the other hand, is loosened from the conditioning constraint of homogenous time, and is instead indexed to group-determined practices, which have their own temporality, a temporality of swells, lulls, crises, and rushes. Each issue results from these complex conditions, or is cast forward in time to induce emergent practices or events. Seriality here is something like a promise or desire that there is more to come, a socio-psychic investment in the endurance and development of the institution, but where there are no guarantees, least of all a guarantee provided by the march of linear time.

As you point out, journals carry an accumulated knowledge set, in a stack of back issues, which is less a feature of the newsletter, indexed and oriented to practice. This can be a deadening, conservative weight for journals. But if the archive of a journal is treated in inventive and critical ways, lightening and loosening it up, it can also take a radical form. I've approached this problem in terms of Henri Bergson's notion of the "zone of indetermination," in considering the way that *Mute* magazine reactualized its back-issue archive – their two fold strategy of collating a dense, refractory anthology of text, stripped of all design features, and a tag-access digital archive.

For Bergson, unlike simple forms of life that react to perception with immediate action, in complex nervous systems a pause or "rift" – a "zone of indetermination" – is inserted between perception and reaction, as perception forces a recall of memory, of past perceptions, which combine with the current perception to modulate action. Thought and action hence no longer react automatically to stimulation, so reproducing the past, but combine with these past perceptions so as to act differently, to open up new dimensions in the future. I hope it's not an overly metaphorical reading of this formulation to suggest that a political journal can operate in much the same way. The journal is a forum, a zone of indetermination, where perception of the world is channeled through political memory – memory of the contributing author, of the reader, of the magazine's archive – in writing that critically shapes that perception and wrenches it from the narrow frameworks and automatic responses of the immediate present. In this way, the magazine's politicizing content and archive can carry and impart a polytemporality, and one with an orientation toward the

new. It is a temporality that operates in the midst of, and in opposition to, the flattened temporal structure of contemporary capitalism, with its obsession with immediacy and the "now" – a structure that, for all its apparent modernity, actually impedes the truly new, for it isolates the present from the resources necessary to open it to anything other than a reproduction of the same.

Editors: In your essay "Twitter, Book, Riot: Post-Digital Publishing against Race," you point towards the non-commodity nature of the small-press book *The 2015 Baltimore Uprising: A Teen Epistolary*. In our submission call, we were interested in submissions that wrestled with the commodity form; though with the fact that the submissions would engage in wider digital and paper distribution we understood that their wrestling might also make their situated discourse translatable across difference in utilitarian ways. We understood that to be an contradictory task- concurrently accepting and rejecting terms for their creation. Nevertheless, in that the notion of an autonomous aesthetic avant garde might be a useful fiction, we thought too that this might be a worthwhile fiction to ask localities to somehow explore.

Nick: The article you mention considers the techniques by which an extraordinary small-press book, *The 2015 Baltimore Uprising: A Teen Epistolary*, carries an uprising against police murder and anti-Black racism into its material forms. These techniques wreck the conventional forms of the political book. They wreak havoc on the book form's tendency to impose uplifting narratives and world-consolidating routes to redress; its reader-consolidating effects of empathy; its clean and untroubled visual clarity; its efforts to contain and corral radical events by an author or publisher external to their tumult; and, as you say, its commodity forms. Part of the commodity form of a book is its generic appeal to the reader. As Adorno put it, the book as commodity "sidles up to the reader." Through marketing mechanisms and format and design features, commodity books come to exist not for themselves in their expressive uniqueness, but "for something other" in their generality, units of exchange always "ready to serve the customer." It is of course difficult to maintain that a political book should repel the reader, should ward-off the possibility of expansive circulation. But Adorno poses here an important question. If our political books function as obedient commodities, and their forms of production and consumption reproduce capitalist ways of being, is it enough that their textual content is radical, or is that content just the juicy piece of meat that distracts us from their commodity effects?

Editors: To varying degrees, our issue's contributors' visual and expressed poetics demonstrate this wrestling to us, through either stream of consciousness or note-like writing or a flow of graphic design. Do you recognize other strategies?

Nick: The way these newsletters have explored the visual and graphic capacities of this form and its page space is especially appealing. We don't usually pay enough attention

to how meaning and sensation are constructed out of the graphic arrangement of page and screen, the arrangement of text, lines, images, spaces – what Johanna Drucker calls the “diagrammatic” quality of writing. But your invitation to produce a newsletter, distinct from another form, has prompted engagement with the diagrammatic features of the page. Many of these newsletters have utilized a conventional newsletter format – a title block across the top, followed by two-column text – but in a way that feels fresh rather than retro, visually validating this newsletter format for our times. In others, the invitation of this form to convey information about the group’s project has produced an overload of words, crammed in with tiny typeface, leaving the reader with a sense of urgency, of intense engagement with a problem – such as the newsletter by Five Years, or, more so, the newsletter by the Field, *Around the Table: Reflections on Collective Working*.

@.ac’s newsletter on the UK university strike is particularly appealing for how it constructs meaning and affect from the visual qualities of text. Two pages comprise a run of two different slogans in caps (the slogans I quoted earlier), where repetition and the solid text blocks forcefully impress their meaning upon the reader. And the other two pages over-write a management email – in one, the email is subject to a devastating peer review, with hand-written script unpicking its claims and subtexts, while in the other, the email is reduced to a collection of clichés by blocking out most of the text, in a manner reminiscent of Tom Phillips’s *A Humument*.

Most enticingly, some of the newsletters have sought to model their group’s organizational forms and practices through the use of visual diagrams. Diagrams are rare enough in political publishing that it’s worth reflecting on what they actually are. A diagram can be defined as a schematic ordering of lines, images, and words that seeks to describe, model, and provoke dynamic relationships. Gilles Châtelet, in his book *Figuring Space*, argues that they are particularly suited to experimental projects that break with the certainties of self-identity and proceed instead through problematics, blind spots, and fogs – a groping process that I imagine many of the groups who submitted newsletters to you would recognize. For Châtelet, diagrams share features with the form of metaphor. Both work to describe, evoke, and encourage relations – they “leap out” to figure space – but metaphors risk becoming clichés, with passifying effect, as they dissolve the “cold” technical specificity of a particular operation with the “warm confusion” of relations of resemblance. Diagrams, on the other hand, with their modest plotting and sketching – as they struggle in uncertainty to grasp elusive relations and make connections across disparate realms – are extended or prolonged through contact with the world that they map. True, diagrams still arrest movement, abstracting a figure from the complexity of socio-material relations, but they do so in a manner that remains open to those relations, soliciting their “virtual” potential to take other forms.

plotting the specificities of newsletter form, I would want to hold on to the range of features that we’ve discussed – weaves of the global and local, confrontation with structural oppressions, institutional self-critique, groping problematization, third objects, self-differing media, practice-indexed seriality. But I’m tempted to understand these as potential features or tendencies in a form that is diagrammatic above all – the newsletter as diagram.

Two of the newsletters take an especially pronounced diagrammatic form, The newsletter by We, TBD is entirely comprised of a diagram. A winding line with branches connects project activities running over four pages, constituting a dynamic association of meeting and planning, spatial construction and design, facilitation of children’s play and poetry readings, physical labor, intra-group emotions and tensions, the fraught constraints of social structures. And it ends with a dense, root or tuber of text about racializing micro-aggressions in other contexts, a text that, in its root-like relation to the diagram’s line, also perhaps inflects what has gone before, partially reversing the flow of the line. There’s a small but important diagrammatic touch here: the title of the newsletter/diagram, the group’s name, is diminished in font-size relative to the titles of the group activities, thus emphasizing process over group identity.

Another newsletter takes the unusual form of being the work of two distinct groups, and uses diagrams as means of introduction. *La Foresta* and *Evening Class* ask each other a series of questions, including a most beautiful one: “Can you make a drawing of your organizational form?” *La Foresta*’s response combines a readily readable hand-drawn sketch of institutions, funding bodies, networks, and their project space, with a curious expanse of geometric lines, lending it a tectonic mood. The diagram takes over the newsletter’s whole front page, pressing readers into a diagrammatic experience without the prior guidance of even a title.



Center for Enchantment newsletter posted on a boarded-up building in Albany New York.

If part of what we’ve been doing in this conversation is

Tools for Action artist collective, an interview on the event of their Signals 3.0 event in Dresden

We interviewed the artist collective *Tools for Action* to get a sense of their **subtle, nonfascist, kinda' political spectacles** that occur on nationalist holidays. Their 2019 action in Dresden Germany was the performance at hand.

Tools for Action is an artist group and collaborative platform to open the way for experimentation and poetic forms of engagement. They develop open source tools for collective leverage, catalyzing self-organization through skill-sharing and participatory making processes. Their practice oscillates between performance and protest, searching for new forms of public assembly and lines of flight in the face of oppression, exploitation and surveillance.

Editors: You have been working on this project on and off for a year, building off of your past Berlin remembrance project. Can you talk about this?

Artúr: In Summer 2018 we were approached by Kulturprojekte Berlin (a subsidiary company of the state of Berlin, which develops, coordinates and promotes cultural projects in the city) to do the opening performance of “100 Years of Revolution, Berlin 1918 | 19”. This was an honor, and also remarkable that they asked a foreign artist group to commemorate the German November Revolution. We came up with light sculptures that you can carry on your back, harking back to the General Strikes that led to the proclamation of the Republics in Germany.

This was one line of thought. Next to this, we were also interested in developing new tools and a new visual vocabulary for future assemblies. These lights help enable collective communication, putting the spotlight on the individual within a collective. It allows a form of collective intelligence within the crowd, to have this interaction between the individual and the crowd, to find a new form of agency. To experiment and practice this form of agency.

At the same time, the light also had a very personal motivation and background story. Tommi, maybe you can speak about that?

Tomás: Well, OK. Lights have always been my fascination. How lights affect the individual and also the city. I was always asking myself, “why don’t we have amazing lights in the city, ones that we can enjoy. Or if you are really sad, you can go in and have an experience and it will change your day?” Why not? We can do crazy things like this in the city.

Since I’ve been collaborating with Artúr, one of our big

wishes has been to do something with lights. I lost someone who was almost my sister, she was my light. So we started to do this project about memory, and the way I remembered her. To light a candle all night, all day. I asked Artúr if I could design the piece, shaping the form, and he said, “yes, we’ll do it together”. So this became the lights blinking, its moment-ness. It’s really specific blink... a certain amount of time and then it disappears again. I think it also strongly relates to what history means, that it’s also pulsating as a light. Sometimes, it too disappears.

I learned as a child that memories are like flashes. You catch it or you lose it. That is why we chose to do this on the 9th of November. The red color has a lot of connotations. I found it important to have this kind of intimacy or atmosphere coming from these red lights in the city.

Shailoh: So, what you’re saying is, there’s a whole aesthetic layer in the project coming from commemorating your friend. How do you relate this personal commemoration to a larger commemoration?

Tomás: Both are ways to cast a light, a way to find something. They point towards remembering your own history, and what you want from the world. In your personal history, you cover something of the global history.

I think it is our goal to illuminate things that are hidden. The histories are there, but at any moment they can disappear. They are just covered. This relates to the political history in my country of Colombia, where memory is a big issue.

Editors: I’m curious how this process unfolded in this city; this process of rolling out this project here. How you found space here, and also diving into the currents of this place? What specific strands were you shedding light on here in Dresden?

Artúr: One important experience in Berlin was to experience the many taboos: in schools where we did workshops, the kids said, “are you crazy? You’re not going to walk with these lights in the streets.” You have to remember, it’s somehow also referencing the dark history of the way the National Socialists were also marching the streets with torches.

This very important moment, the proclamation of the Republic happened on the 9th of November. However, 20 years later the November Pogroms, or in national-socialist terms, the “Kristallnacht” took place. Hitler and the National Socialists wanted to erase the memory of this communist and democratic November Revolution.

So the Berlin authorities decided that we should do this commemoration on the 11th of November. Because the Pogrom Night is more important in German Memory Culture.

I find this curious because the founding moment get under-represented in German Memory Culture. In a time of rising right-wing populism, actually, the 9th of November should be the night when we remember these movements,

recalling the groups that wanted something democratic, something different.

The spark for the Revolution were actually the sailors, German military that decided not fulfill the suicide pact at the end of World War I. So the National Socialist hate against the November Revolution could be also against the disobedience within their own military. I find that interesting, how a founding moment of German democracy was rooted in disobedience. By commemorating the November 9, 1918, we also resist how the National Socialists want us to commemorate history.

That was a motivation for us to continue with this project here in Dresden, a city of polarization, where the Nazi emergency was declared 5 days ago.

Shailoh: You are talking about the dates and time that have certain resonances throughout history, because they are either remembered or have been suppressed. We are also talking about different places. How can different places and times resonate?

Artúr: In Berlin, for our performances, we were promised by the city that we would be allowed to walk through the main historical sites in the city center: Brandenburg Gate, where the revolution happened, and down Unter den Linden. We even had flyers already printed with Brandenburg Gate as our meeting point. But through an absurdist play of bureaucracy, our action radius and visibility was increasingly minimized. At the end, the entire procession had to stay on the sidewalk.

Shailoh: Why was that forbidden?

Artúr: Because the torch marches, such as January 1933 when Hitler took power, also went through the Brandenburg Gate, and our performance would have strong associations with these representations of fascist power. But also, uncertainty and unclarity from the authorities, regarding what to do regarding ambiguous projects like ours- "what is this about? How do you explain it to the public?"

So they chose to hide us by letting us walk on the pavement on Saint Martin's Day. And we were, not allowed to walk in the streets. We could have resisted and walked on the street anyhow, but instead we chose to reveal the absurdity of the situation. The most important place we visited was Bebelplatz, where in 1933 the book-burnings took place - in order to light it up. I myself was hesitant at first, I was unsure how to deal with these sites of memory Is it a sacred place? Tommi helped me overcome my hesitancy.

Editors: What I find so fascinating is your (Artúr's) seemingly straight-forward political-strategy-based thinking, and Tommi's more personally-oriented thought. Obviously collaborations are a site where each collaborator's individual voice is strengthened by the support and in relation to their collaborator...Your collaboration deals with things that are very public - things that seem to be very common knowl-

edge, but also things that hit very intimately- which is in a way the play between what is officially and formally remembered and what is actually felt. This project intends to reweave the political and emotional in some new and strange way. I want to know where those lines of politics and emotions cross- from 1918 to today, the 1940s, in the 1950's... a long time ago!

Tomás: I see the personal and the historical meeting in the body. The people who join us, carrying our lights, share with us. It is the way, too, that I as a foreigner, can also have an approach to this history. It's something I've been reading or have been told about. It's something that allows me to meet the people who are here, and have experienced these histories and have connections. For example, here in Dresden we met Johanna Kalex, an anarchist who organized forbidden protests during the DDR. It's not the same as if we were there, but she can tell us what it was like to be in the DDR and be in the opposition. There is the personal issue of Johanna that gets worked into and through this project.

Artúr: If you want to think about how we translate all this from the past until today, you have to think about how we debated for a long time what words we should use. So, for example, we decided to say that we are sending a signal here in on the Königsufer, in the heart of Dresden. With this sign, in this temporary moment of coming together, we wanted to create a monument of remembrance that leads us to remember the past through these actions. The challenge is the temporary nature of the 'we' that is composed at this moment, and how to create a really inclusive temporary we and how difficult that actually is, as we are practicing it on the streets. When I think back to my intentions of why I wanted to do this in Dresden - the heart of right wing movements in Germany - my hopes were to create a temporary monument of resistance. And what is the resistance? It's actually the moment of coming together, of occupying space. It's actually that simple.

Tomás: Being in this place, on that day, with these different bodies, is already political. It is before the sign. Abdu from Libya, me, the girl from Iran, Johanna Kalex and many others, just taking place in the city, in this way, in this place. This place is significant because the Nazi's used it as a marching place. We are there, with red lights, consciously appropriating their aesthetics. At first, I wondered if it was okay to do it here, and then I realized it's necessary to do it here.

Artúr: It's necessary to do it.

Tomás: To not allow the fascism, to not give them the city. Just because they used it doesn't mean you can't use it. Before them, someone else used it. It's not just their city. History doesn't stop with them.

Shailoh: It's reclaiming history.

Tomás: Perhaps it's not the right word, but, in a way, the Nazi's 'colonized' the space and memory and we let them do it. So removing this idea that it is only for fascists, and re-using the space, recovering it. That is powerful. And that is what is important too, as Kunst.

Artúr: Here in Dresden, with this art project in the form of a cultural event about inclusivity, we will force the authorities to take a position. Because the Nazi History of the Königsufer, and how it's PEGIDA's favorite place in the city. The stairs are built in National Socialist times, and it's really designed for parades and assemblies. We re-appropriate this place, and force it so that the authorities must decide whether or not to allow us this place. However, this tactic did not even work in Dresden, as they said, "we don't have a formal commission to evaluate what space you use, but you cannot use the stairs."

Shailoh: What's the reason they give?

Artúr: They say that if we allow you to use the stairs, then we must allow other groups to use them, etc... But it's weird, because PEGIDA is all the time there. There is a documentary about PEGIDA, where the opening scene is them singing Christmas songs on these stairs. They also held rallies here. So you notice that the city's public space is already appropriated by right-wing groups. In reality, the city is nervous about what the response might be.

So today, our intention is that at the end, we come together at the stairs, we will make a big "we" sign. A reference to '89, "Wir sind das Volk" (we are the people), asking who are "we" now in 2019.

Shailoh: So we talk about anti-fascism as such. What I find very interesting about working with Tools for Action, is that there is a strategy of appropriation and mimicry, in terms of places and aesthetics, and assemblies. Reclaiming space, but done with a certain gentleness and care, which is not reactionary. It's a different affective domain. It's out of love and radical inclusivity.

I was wondering about the concerns about the mood and tone of our assemblies - how is it different from the fascist marches?

Artúr: Or an anti-fascist march, a black block, for example?

Editors: This is also a question of aesthetics; how did you take care to get a different affect, a different Stimmung?

Artúr: What I notice and appreciate about Tommi's sensitivity is a radical inclusivity. Basically, when we did the Montag's Café workshops - a space usually given to shared meals between refugees and others living in Dresden, we did it to make connections with foreigners, newly arrived people, and also to talk about difficult things in German history, to have the ability to include these immigrants, to let them know that we are interested in their take on history. It is their history too. And they were interested to participate..

Tomás: It is also different because of the process we have. We build a different connection with these people. Sharing food. Give them a voice. We didn't have a full action plan, we didn't say, "we want to do that, that, that and that." We said, "we want to test some ideas, and if you want to do something, please share your ideas with us. And take into account what we want to do." So everyone can identify, find their place, and collaborate. It's not that the artist says, "I am not interested in what you have to say." Rather, participants feel, "I am part of this."

Going into the abstract forms that we bring, with the lights and backpacks. That helps, too.

You can project into it. You can laugh about it, humor is really important when you are doing these sort of things. Humor takes what you are doing into a very different aesthetic area.

In difference to many other radical projects, it's important that we are not doing a manifestation against something, rather, we are getting together and trying to make something. I don't know what, but we are not here yelling, "Fuck This". Because I believe that this is not the way. We on the left have done this for years and years and years and this has not moved anything.

I say this, also, regarding the political situation in my country, Colombia. We did this project in Bogotá, to try to give these kinds of tools to another kind of fight, but one with solidarity to this. It was working really well because it was something different, and it was more affective. It is not everyone screaming in the streets, but rather, building communities, ideas and relations where things can shift.

Artúr: When we were in this gallery space, we were preparing for a walk through the city with David Adam, an artist with personal memories of the city. He was a photographer here in '89 during the period when the wall came down. He was photographing the occupation at the Dresden train station. He was talking before we left, when suddenly this woman in a wheelchair came in. We gave her soup. She was a bit irritated by all these lights, these objects. "What is this, what is this?" She had such a strong response to these objects, I was not sure how to involve her,

That is, until Tomás found a way to include her: he put the object in the back of her wheelchair. And then suddenly, everything changed. She was happy. And she was this lightning bug with a fast-forward wheelchair zooming through the city. Ever since then, we have been in touch. This is what I mean by radical inclusivity. She has very different political views, but she is very reflective about exclusionary mechanisms. She votes AFD. She goes to PEGIDA, and still, she is also very happy in our space. Why? She was just so happy to be a part of the group.

The objects, the group feeling. The light, it gives you some intimacy. They claim space. They give a sense of agency.

Editors: Getting back to the performance, the moment, the event. I'm thinking about this as a lively project and what goes on in a lively project, what makes it a lively project.

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Artur talks about “the sign”, Tommi responds very differently, saying, “no, not the sign. It’s about the being.” So I’m thinking about the political moment. You put a light on something you don’t want to talk about, that the state has somehow hidden- literally and figuratively. It’s an ambiguous moment that you put a light on, with and without words so that it stays ambiguous but also becomes very clear. I’m wondering about what is uncovered, and that moment of the event- what is the role of what escapes from the event and what escapes afterwards from it, in terms of what is just flashed upon. This, in terms of politics and the street.

There’s the political moment. I’m trying to talk about the fact that we need another form of politics, and everyone knows that and it’s a part of the everyday life and common sense of the street and the fact that the event and the way that it is held formally, and differently in the informal are mediated. Both Artur and Tommi have sensing and feeling ways into the object and performance, both approaching politics different ways, and construct the magic of the event and the possibility of meaningful things to occur and escape and continue or be freed from there.

Artúr: For politics to be performed, the body needs to be present. We are creating extra bodies with these inflatables. I don’t see a contrast between my and Tommi’s approaches. They are complimentary. Our politics are on a physical level, claiming space.

Shailoh: I also see our work as a probe, a test. We make things reveal themselves. We make the law reveal itself. We make what is hidden in people’s desires for new, or different or unspoken and yet unknown politics come to the surface- or better we probe below.

Artúr: We have the even strategy, the coming together and the reclaiming of the public space. And we create a memory of resistance, but also the intervention as the way of dealing with power relations in certain situations. And as a way of experimental knowledge production.

As a long-term policy of Tools for Action, it has been good to see how public space is regulated, to see the rights to assembly, to see the underlying experience and practice of it. The first moment when this became really important to us was the protest at the Paris 2015 Climate Conference. A state of emergency had been declared, one that overlapped with the timing for the conference, and protest was forbidden. This happened so quickly. Knowing that the right to assembly is always under tension, it’s always under threat.

Tomás: Think about it in Chile, where today (2019) there is a State of Emergency, but people don’t care about it anymore. You know, it is such a situation that the state has militarized but the people are ignoring it and they don’t want to go home. They continue in the streets fighting for their rights.

Shailoh: And in Lebanon as well.

Editors: So, then, in your work, but also in all these actually live protest assemblies- we are talking about assembly towards what? Shailoh was asking about the aesthetic character of the tools you are probing with. If we can suggest that maybe your assemblages are suggesting a probe that raises care and the common- what is the assembly towards? It’s a question of politics I’m asking- if this is an anti-fascist artwork that is suggesting another way of being political, what is the characteristics for the politics you hope to help bring into being? One constituted by memory and feelings- what is this assembly towards?

Tomás: I never thought to do something anti-fascist, I need to say. My ideas also need to include someone from the right- if they want to participate, they are allowed to. We are going to give them the space to talk about it, but without aggression. All the institutions we work with were speechless when I mentioned this, “What!” But I was like you are talking about integration- but I hate that word because when you integrate, something is excluded- likely that thing that has held back the ability to come together. You have to integrate into what has been established. But with inclusion, you cannot avoid that. You can start to shift things with inclusion. It’s like what happened when we were talking with Johanna Kalex and she told us about when she was talking to a neo-Nazi for two hours and he started to shift, because she was able to say, “hello, this is not this way.”

At this point, we cannot speak. We wanted to make this project that is not in the Kunsthaus, not in Hellerau, not even in the Montagscafe, we wanted to create a space to reach that other possibility. If you are AFD, like Regina in the wheelchair- we can still meet and talk to you and reach some possibility.

It was nice to have her telling about the AFD, and Abdul from Syria, me Nina from Iran. It’s nice, and nobody gets annoyed. And then she came and heard the talk about transgendered people from Bogota, and she was like, “hhhh!” but then we talked about it, and I think that is the idea.

A couple came and said, “I was born in ’38. And I heard about and lived through ’45” and the firebombing of Dresden. And without them, we would have not this or any other personal information.

Shailoh: I see it as though we are claiming space without completely owning it. Assembly can be understood as a place where time shrinks, a space for encounters, space for discourse. Space for being dissonant in different ways with our bodies. Usually, we have taboo spaces, spaces where you have to constrain yourself you are not allowed to hear, where we aren’t allowed to come together in our social dissonance. But by insisting on inclusion, you expand space itself. There’s room for difference, but it’s a different thing than saying you can only say this, and you can only say this. So for me, from a research perspective, I am interested in looking at how the process and the event can spark that

sort of imagination and desire in people to be inspired in people to think beyond the presence and simple facts of our bodies. It brings in ambiguity, complexity, something that is non-representational, but still brings people together. It creates the possibility of doing something that's slightly adjacent to what's there. By doing that, it expands. It's something that can also be practiced on a daily basis, and I hope it's kind of infectious.

Artúr: Yesterday, when we did our live test of the performance, is a very good example. We were standing around in a circle, and some guys from the outside were disturbing the performers, but also playing with us. There was one girl with us who wanted them to move because she almost got an elbow in her face, saying "they are sexist. They are chasing the girls." But actually, they started then to become part of the group after some back-and-forth. It was interesting, because we did a word-association play and this girl said, "resistance against fascism." I don't know, the practice of inclusivity is very different in practice than in theory. And this is a new thing that I am trying to practice. But what is it, this anti-fascist strategy is the unsettling of identity through art, the unfixing of identity. Unsettling is a continuous thing, you need to continue in practice.

Shailoh: You need to repeat, it's a practice. All these prac-

tices can only be brought back into the present when they are practiced.

Artúr: You were talking about the street. You can feel it, but you can't quite see it. The street talks about the reality. Nowadays, when there is new migration to Germany, the street starts to be a kind of meeting or common place. In a protest, you cannot have this feeling of the street, with this kind of time to make and become in gentle ways. You cannot touch in this way, you don't have this time of communication...

Editors: I have one other question, and it relates to violence in the street- violence is a part of the street. People have to give themselves into the performance because of some greater political goal but the space we have defined as a space of radical inclusivity comes at a cost of violence. What is happening in Chile, for example, is also a space of violence, and that girl did experience some violence. But I'm curious, about the radical probe as a violent probe into the machine of the state, too- we are going to ask you these questions that you don't want to answer because they make you look dumb, they make you look compliant to racist forces, so, in what ways is this project not only a request for a radical inclusivity, but also a demand for radical inclusivity. We don't have to use the word violent, but it is



Dresden 9th of November 2019, Signals 3.0, Tools for Action and Tomás Espinosa Photo by Luca Girardini
At evening's end, participants and member Tools for Action took to the Königsufer steps, where the city said they could not tread even though the right wing Pegida always mounts them. Tools for Action spelled out "Wir", or 'we'. This is in reference to the contested "Wir sind das Volk"- 'we are the people!' slogan arguing over the legacy of the post-socialist democratic transition.

forcefully projecting itself.

This woman, yesterday, this woman felt violated a little bit... and then she capitulated to a larger political performance. The act of making this opening is encountering violence nevertheless. I'm interested in how this project encounters and excerpts force.

Shailoh: By being together with these objects, they serve as a bumper to protect us from the violence. When you attack these objects, they exhale. They are buffers.

And being there, our assertion is a negotiation. Being there, as a participant or a viewer, there's no fixed script. It's not an army or a war. If someone doesn't feel safe, we can protect each other, we can step aside, step out. There is no force that is keeping us in any way, as such.

Tomás: The objects are a de-escalating thing. And the people feel secure, because you have a light. It is not an act for resisting, I don't see the performance not as a way of resisting or insisting, rather, but one of asking. And that is important.

I don't think Chile is resisting anymore. They are now asking. It's interesting to think: why does asking turn violent? Because of repression, because of fear. A movement about asking is a movement in a time, in the city, with a body, within a community.

Note:

Signals 3.0 was Tomás and Artúr's last collaboration for now. In February 2020, a documentation of Signals 3.0 was shown in Kunsthaus Dresden at the exhibition Requiem about memory cultures in the context of the bombing of Dresden 75 years ago. Shailoh and Artúr now collaborate under the governance of a newly formed non-profit foundation in the Netherlands. Currently they are working on an updated series of modular inflatable light- and sound sculptures that improve the 'stacking function' aspect. The sculptures can be used to build architectural formations (bridges, domes, shelters, floats on water) and allow the experimentation with new forms of assemblies. Key concepts in their thinking are scale, emergence and intersectionality.

An Interview with Out of the Woods

We wanted to speak with Out of the Woods because of their close engagement with debates around the particular dangers of ecofascism, as well as the potential of locally-oriented networks of care and anti-fascist resistance. Our conversation occurred right as their new book *Hope Against Hope: Writings on Ecological Crisis* (New York: Common Notions, 2020) was being published, and therefore draws heavily on ideas explored within the book.

Out of the Woods is a transnational political research and theory collective, a loose grouping of decolonial, small-c communist, antiracist queer-feminist thinkers working together to think through the problem of ecological crisis. One of the many reasons we were interested in talking to them regards the how central the concept of the local is to this issue's consideration. Therefore, we thought it was necessary to address this concept in relation to fascism.

Editors: Can you start by sharing a bit about the Out of the Woods collective? When did you start writing together, and what are your central concerns?

Out of the Woods: Thanks so much for having us! Out of the Woods began around 2014 through an online conversation concerning the relationship between capitalism and climate change. We wanted to think more precisely about the specific and myriad ways in which exploitation, domination, privatization, and exhaustion are at the core of the climate crisis, and what that meant for a libertarian-communist or an otherwise transformative, organized response emerging from the global proletariat. This involved historical political economic explorations, delving into and summarizing the writings of key thinkers for each other and for others, and reading a lot of scientific reports. Through our conversations surrounding historic and theoretical texts, we also began developing our own concepts to better apprehend ecological crisis. Putting these concepts to work allows us to analyze political responses to intergovernmental negotiations, political events, and climate disasters, an important question being how seemingly disconnected events and groups might come together and mutually reinforce revolutionary struggle. Since that time a lot of new folks have joined, others have moved on to other things. Our thought has also shifted quite a lot over time – we stumbled around a bit searching for a conversation that didn't exist yet. Some of our members are anonymous, for good and obvious reasons. So our orientations and concepts aren't built through a shared identity or set of experiences, or meeting and working in person, but thinking through the problematic of ecological crisis. That said, putting together this book (*Hope Against Hope: Writings on Ecological Crisis*) has meant a few of us will be partial representatives of the text.

We are especially interested in amplifying the ways in which Black, Indigenous, queer, and migrant thinkers and movements around the world have been at the forefront of that transformative struggle within, against, and beyond the ecological crisis precipitated by the nexus of capitalism, raciality, and coloniality.

Editors: JOAAP is particularly interested in the way in which you address the risks and manifestations of fascism and ecofascism in your work. How do you as a collective define these two terms, within our contemporary context? Do you feel that the components and contours of fascism and ecofascism are changing?

Out of the Woods: I suppose I think of fascism as the consolidation of authoritarian power through popular ethno-nationalism, the latter (as numerous thinkers from Aimé Césaire to Cedric Robinson to Denise Ferreira da Silva have argued) are formed through the mutual imbrication of racial capitalism and global colonial and settler colonial empires. It's really important to be precise about the sorts of reactionary, ecologically tinged movements that are currently being fomented around the world – from the U.S. where I live, to Brazil, Australia, India, the Philippines, etc. But for us, it's most important not so much to get caught up in thinking there's some precise threshold one crosses at which the designation of "fascism" becomes super meaningful – hence our use of terms like "reactionary," "protofascist," or "völkisch". To that end, we try to think about some of the different tendencies that already exist in that world structure of capitalist/colonial crisis that precipitate, encourage, and reward the formation of reactionary individuals and movements – many of them interior to the moral economies of everyday racial capitalism.

I think that contrary to some, I might not necessarily draw much of a boundary between fascism and ecofascism. There are many ways in which certain attachments to place, feelings of nostalgia for a nature that is pure and has since been despoiled, etc., are parts of fascist ideology. Some on the Left really think we shouldn't even use the word "ecofascism" because doing so might give the impression that actual ecological systems could be protected through a fascist form of politics. Of course we would all agree this is impossible! Much like "green capitalism," ecofascism can only ever be an ideology that fails to resolve the contradictions of ecological crisis, because it will forever be unable to understand that the crisis stems in part from the racial and national systems it takes to be "natural"! However, that failure makes an ecologically aware fascism all the more insidious, because crisis continues to be blamed on the exterior threat (Jews, migrants, queers, Muslims, etc.). For me, then, "ecofascism" helps us understand what is currently a rather marginal – but could be a potentially meaningful – reactionary right which uses ecological crisis to justify actions of extreme violence, necropolitics, racial cleansing, etc.

Editors: In your essay, "The Future is Kids' Stuff," you problematize the way in which a better future is often prioritized over a better present. This also makes me think of the

longstanding issue of children being used as justification for fascist, racist, and at times environmentally unjust policies and actions. These actions are often intended to ensure a future world for some children, but arguably not a just one. How can we challenge this pattern, as well as what you call "reproductive futurisms" to foreground the importance of not simply a future, but a just one? Furthermore, how can we challenge the "fascism of the baby's face,"¹ to collectively build "utopia now"?

Out of the Woods: We should be really explicit that what is at stake in this oikonomic situation is the reproduction of the heteronormative white family structure. So the problem isn't just whether one prioritizes the future or the present (and whose future or present), but rather that securing the present is done in and through the name or image of the child – a future. There's a kind of temporal torsion going on here: in situations of perceived crisis as I described above, the image of the white child becomes a way for reactionary thought to create a nostalgia for the future! I wonder how we would write that essay differently in the world after the Greta Thunberg moment, in which a young political activist's refusal to allow things to go on as "normal" has quickly and predictably become the symbol of choice for "doing something" about climate change. What absolutely cannot be admitted about Greta, or any other child refusal, is actually hearing young people speak when they indict contemporary dithering and demand a livable future – especially if the implication is the end of planetary racial capitalism! Instead, the child is only allowed to function as a symbol that authorizes states and capital to go about their business, as if to say, "oh, isn't this precious, the children are right, this is So Important, we really should do something." There's no contradiction having Greta speak at Davos, for example, because the content of her speech can only be heard to be authorizing already existing power. This patronizing discourse results in a severe cognitive dissonance for a lot of us (here speaking a bit personally as someone involved in youth organizing in the past). In the book we write that part of the problem is that such a move "denies agency to children, rendering them mere vehicles for our political desires."²

Where things get really tough is that certain segments of the Left, especially the "Green Left," are comfortable working with such a "reproductive futurism," in which "the child" is the metonym for the world that must be saved. A classic example we discuss in the book is Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*, in which the author is torn between an expansive, regenerative "kinship of the infertile" on the one hand, and a question she leaves somewhat hanging: question "Is it even possible to be a real environmentalist if you didn't have kids?" The latter is meant to be posed against the Malthusian anti-natalist tradition in western environmentalism, which erroneously argued that the principle problem of resource exhaustion is tied to population growth and thus that ecological solutions must limit that number (often through coercive means). The inverse counterpoint of anti-natalism, however, shares a certain premise: that reproduction and children are the primary sym-

bolic means through which crisis and redemption must be posed. This a use of “the child” as a framing symbol, where its meaning is derived from a classically familial set, secures the propriety of a kind of bourgeois scientifically-informed environmentalism to speak of and for the future.

We think that this isn’t just an abstract question – it’s a real problem for movements! Hinging everything on “the child” is a severely limiting framework. It precludes building queer forms of kinship beyond the heteronormative family, marginalizes Indigenous youth leaders like the Lakota runners who really sparked the blockade of DAPL, and unnecessarily steers us away from the capacious forms of relationality and care we will need to survive and flourish amidst increasing and cascading crises. These include the practices of mutual aid, care, and survival pending revolution that we call “disaster communism,” which could include cyborg agroecology, communist energy distribution administration, communal kitchens and food provisioning, and non-family-based social centers, creches, and abortion clinics.³ Our goal isn’t necessarily to define precisely what utopia will be built or how, as of course it’ll work differently in different places; it’s instead to suggest that holding on to the nuclear heteronormative structure serves as a blockage to constructing “utopia now!”

Editors: In *Hope Against Hope*, you discuss a Glasgow Council initiative that matched Glaswegians with asylum seekers. You write about how when the UK government attempted to remove some of them, Glaswegians adamantly resisted the deportation of their new neighbors.⁴ What other examples of successful mobilizations based on kinship and community might we look toward as models?

Out of the Woods: In our book we really try to at least speak to a few of these situations where the power of the carceral and border imperialist state is actually actively precluded by the desires of people to be in solidarity. Personally, I’ve been really interested in trying to learn more about, for example, the ways in which Mutual Aid centers in Puerto Rico that grew exponentially after Hurricane Maria fostered not only a kind of “community” but transformative social relations centered around queer and transfeminist utopias. From what I understand, the organizing work that No More Deaths has been doing really seeks to hold together and transform our understanding of commonality. The pipeline blockade at Standing Rock was something similar, at least for a lot of us, insofar as a cohesive “community” was something that was not entirely possible or perhaps even desirable, at least not without some intensely painful transformations of settler subjects. So, we always want to note that power relations don’t disappear in any of these situations.

Editors: One of the most egregious examples of the ways in which fascism, or at least far right populism, is appropriating narratives of ecological sustainability is in the recent *Future Energy, Water, Industry and Education Park* (FEWIEP) proposal. This document proposes a border wall that consists of a combination of solar panels, natural gas

pipelines, wind turbines, surveillance drones, and educational facilities.⁵ It seems to me that one of the dangers of this proposal is the way in which it seeks to ostensibly unite environmental and border concerns in a way that distracts from issues of consent – not to mention its questionable environmental impact. What do you think of this proposed project?

Out of the Woods: On the one hand, the FEWIEP proposal is just so totally perverse – It almost has the air of something that an evil villain in a low-budget 70’s thriller would imagine, or the content of a “this is the future liberals want” meme. Placed in the contextual history of U.S. environmentalism, it’s not so exceptional. Some environmentalist ideologies have long considered what we’d recognize (after Harsha Walia) as border imperialism to be a central pillar of their politics. What’s maybe a bit different is that the FEWIEP is an infrastructure plan, not just a xenophobic rhetorical move. Much as a more avowed “eco”-fascism inevitably fails, so too would this project. Extensive border developments like this are ecological disasters – they exacerbate flash flooding, prevent animal migrations, and destroy desert landscapes. They do this not because their walls and roads are just “poorly designed” material infrastructure, which one could then just design in a more “sustainable” way. Rather, we’d suggest that borders are social relations incapable of sustaining caretaking relations among people. I can’t help but think that for the Tohono O’odham and other Native nations, a border imperialism in the form of imposed solar panels and wind farms isn’t much different than the current wall, which actively and consciously produces ecological destruction.

Editors: Can you say more about your idea of anti-fascist infrastructures? Could these anti-fascist infrastructures be extended into the explicitly ecological realm?⁶ In other words, are there also anti-ecofascist infrastructures? If so, what might these infrastructures look like?

Out of the Woods: To follow on from the last question, what we’re trying to get at in thinking about infrastructures is that actual material spaces, flows, and technologies are at stake in confronting ecological crisis and fascism alike. So, something like anti-fascist infrastructures can and do form through communications and media networks, though obviously the “platforms” that facilitate those communications are not innocent. But caretaking infrastructures (following Kim TallBear), or infrastructures of solidarity, require both new forms of relating to each other, but also new forms of relating to other species and the earth itself. So, yes! I think what is at stake in these kinds of infrastructures must be not a simplistic negation of fascism on their terrain (e.g., Twitter), but instead the co-creation of platform spaces that can pry and hold open generous and careful forms of relations across difference. In North America where I live, this means not simply acknowledging, but developing shared capacity to rematriate or ex-appropriate land to Indigenous nations – in short, “land back”! Land, in its expansive sense, serves as a necessary infrastructure of social relationships.⁷ But again, this will look differently in different places.

Editors: You cite a quote by Deleuze and Guattari, that excellently sums up one of the most concerning elements of fascism: “ ‘what makes fascism dangerous is its molecular or micropolitical power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism.’ ”⁸ It is relatively easy to identify the ways in which fascism becomes diffuse – or enacted by many instead of one. However, it is more difficult to identify these patterns in ecofascism. Would you say ecofascism exists in places where it cannot immediately be seen? If so, where?

Out of the Woods: I think forms of reactionary thinking are imbued in all kinds of assumptions about nature and ecology, to the point that they are almost banal! I mean, let’s take “the tragedy of the commons,” for example. We and numerous others have written on the only-thinly-veiled reactionary assumptions and eugenic ends Garrett Hardin intended with that essay. Obviously, it has been proven to be empirically incorrect as well. Yet the tragedy of the commons remains something of an “ecological common sense” – it is taught uncritically in intro-level science and economics courses alike.

I think this is what D&G are getting at by saying there’s a “diffuse” element here; state-centric theories of fascism seem to downplay the role of the desires that state fascism actualizes, desires that are ambient in liberal capitalist social relations. Today, we might ask a different question of the tragedy of the commons than we ask in *Hope Against Hope*: why does the tragedy continue to hold such purchase for self-described environmentalists (along with those scientists and economists)? Institutional explanations can only get you so far; I think that behind the popularity of the tragedy of the commons is a racial, capitalist desire to actually see the tragedy of the commons play out – this is a different argument about neo-Malthusian theories like Hardin’s that Angela Mitropoulos makes in her piece “Lifeboat Capitalism.” The catastrophism of the tragedy is welcomed, in an almost eschatological manner. This should sit uncomfortably next to the popularity of certain kinds of apocalyptic fantasies today. And I think that certain parts of the Left participate in what Jodi Dean calls “anthropocenic enjoyment” as well, not just accelerationists, but also those who would sit by as the world burns with a sort of smug “I told you so.”⁹

Let me give an example of the diffuse desires of ecofascism. In 2017, I attended a public lecture by science writer Elizabeth Kolbert just after the publication of her essay collection *The Sixth Extinction*, in which several hundred were in the audience. And the Q&A, of course, immediately jumps to the question of “what should be done” because the book essentially refuses to grapple with that. Of course, there are some of your standard liberal responses that you’d expect. Then someone stands up, and perhaps a little bit sheepishly says something like “well, we’re not talking about the elephant in the room. It’s clear from your book that overpopulation is a huge problem! We have to address this!” At the mention of the word overpopulation, there was an audible murmur throughout the room; I distinctly remember someone behind me actually going “yes!” as the

word was mentioned. As they finished asking, the crowd actually applauded! It doesn’t matter so much that Kolbert had a judicious if not satisfying response, but rather that it was clear (she may have even stated this) that she gets this question a lot. These were mostly liberal Midwesterners, many but not all of them white, and aren’t a bunch of out-and-out fascists. But you can see how the diffuseness of the neo-Malthusian assumption has already primed them for authorizing certain kinds of punitive state actions.

I’ll just say one other thing quickly, to circle back to the question of anti-fascist infrastructure: this anecdote, and the broader theory of fascism here, demonstrates that it is not enough to simply disprove Malthus; instead, the racial structures of desire actually have to be transformed at a different level of the social psyche.

Editors: *In Hope Against Hope*, you discuss the videos taken by New Yorkers who could not afford to leave during Hurricane Sandy. These videos feature white people leaving the city in droves prior to the storm.¹⁰ This visual culture of white privilege and differential access to safety could be contrasted with images of the work of Occupy Sandy, during the storm’s aftermath. In these images, one can see a visual culture of mutual aid, rather than of privilege and desertion. What role do you think making these more hopeful responses visible might have in figuring more just nows and futures?¹¹ In other words, could visibility/representation of mutual aid be a tool of building solidarity? (I ask this specifically because of the central role visual culture has in bolstering harmful structures of racialized violence – environmental and otherwise)

Out of the Woods: This is a great question, and I’m not sure I’m necessarily the best to answer it since I am personally terrible at aesthetics – I’d rather wash dishes than paint a sign. But I will say this: I think that solidarity and healing doesn’t just happen automatically, it also has to be given meaning through the collective concepts and phrases that make the most sense. Obviously one of the ways we make solidarity meaningful is through telling ourselves stories – art, media, history – about when and how it actually worked. I don’t think we should oversell the importance of visual culture, but at the same time it is indispensable. The theory of the world we must rebuild is in those phrases and images – solidarity not charity; we the people must help each other; no ban on stolen land; Mni Wiconi; que es el pueblo que va salvar el pueblo. The more we can keep working on these names and slogans, the better. I dream of a demo or march where we no longer have to chant “this is what democracy looks like!”

Editors: You also discuss the notion of abolitionist care, in relation to the work of immigrant advocacy organization No More Deaths. How does the culture of mutual aid link with the notion of abolitionist care?¹²

Out of the Woods: China Medel’s articulation of an abolitionist care is truly beautiful, and I highly encourage everyone to read their essay along with Scott Warren’s

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– both in SAQ – for better situated understandings of this concept in the work of No More Deaths. What I strongly identified with in that essay is this: Medel says that care in the borderlands isn't just care work for the migrants who have faced weaponized environments, which entail horrendous physical and psychological violence. Care here is also for each other – It exists in “excess practices of care that emerge between aid workers and the camp itself.”¹³ This includes all forms of quotidian relations built in and through these camps – staying hydrated, cooking together, sharing a quiet moment under the stars or around a campfire. I think there's a lot of healing and repair that isn't always centralized when we think about revolutionary struggle as The End Goal. Abolitionist care centralizes that which must be dismantled, changed, and built; we really have to reckon with how to dismantle certain forms of white subjectivity, which is a painful process. Blockades and occupations around the world are one common site where such abolitionist care can be fostered, and readers might identify with their own experiences in some ways.

Editors: I see some potentially generative connections between your work and Kyle Whyte's article, “Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises.”¹⁴ In the piece, Whyte highlights several often-overlooked issues in apocalyptic discourse. For instance, he notes that ostensible allies of Indigenous peoples sometimes “deny that they are actually living in what their ancestors would have seen as fantasy times.”¹⁵ This issue can be linked to the way in which ecofascists often blame racialized peoples for contributing to environmental crises, rather than accepting that their (the ecofascists') ancestors contributed significantly to creating this ecologically unstable world. In other words, in both cases there is a lack of acceptance of responsibility, first by ostensible allies to Indigenous peoples, then by ecofascists seeking to avoid apocalypse. Perhaps these two issues can be considered alongside each other. What do you think?

Out of the Woods: Exactly. Kyle Whyte's work has been indispensable for thinking through what we call in the book “disaster as condition” – specifically, as tied to the afterlives of slavery and settler colonialism as a structure. Kyle helpfully summarizes the argument like this: “When people feel something is really urgent, or crisis-oriented, they tend to forget about their relationships with others. In fact, most phases of colonialism are ones where the colonizing society is freaked out about a crisis.”¹⁶ He and numerous other Indigenous and Black thinkers seek to displace the sense of “disaster as event”: those who would diagnose ecological crisis as a relatively recent occurrence, an assumption tied to a settler subject position whose specific way of life and understanding of futurity is felt to be threatened. Now, I've heard a couple different reactions to this. On the one hand, if we understand “disaster as condition” tied to irreversible events like slavery and settler colonialism, it's easy to fall into deeper despair and burnout. But I don't think this is a very common response, actually. When we understand “disaster as condition”, it means we have to be in it for the

long haul. There is no single technology, no revolutionary moment (and certainly no election) that is going to fix it for us. Instead, we have to do it carefully and do it right: that's the responsibility to relations with others that we're hoping to remember, rather than forget.

Editors: In your forthcoming book, you explain the phrase “hope against hope”: “Hope is our word for the grave but positive emotion which collectively emerges within the disastrous present, pushes against it, and expands beyond it. With Ernst Bloch, we insist that this hope is not expectation, nor even optimism. Rather, it is always against itself; warding off its tendency to become a fetish, sundered from solidarity and struggle.”¹⁷ Can you say a bit more about the political potential of this notion of “hope against hope,” specifically in relation to the risk of ecofascism?

Out of the Woods: It's so easy to fall into platitudes about hope: it designates a better world, a utopia, the kind of Obama-esque rhetoric that papers over the maintenance of the status quo. Hope against hope is about that long haul I just mentioned – the constant churning and regeneration of active and responsible relationships in the present. Bloch helps us understand how the everyday anticipatory hopes can become active and creative in order to actually bring about that more just world. Something like hope against hope might work against the detached and ambient politics of crisis, fear, and apocalypse endemic to fascism, and towards instead fostering ever-increasing moments of abolitionist care.

Endnotes

- 1 Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope: Writings on Ecological Crisis* (New York: Common Notions, 2020), 150, citing Edelman, No Future, 75.
- 2 Ibid, 152.
- 3 Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, 141-159. M.E. O'Brien, “Communizing Care” *Pinko* 1, 46-61.
- 4 Ibid, 59.
- 5 Luciano Castillo et al, “Future Energy, Water, Industry and Education Park (FEWIEP): A Secure and Permanent USMexico Border Solution,” 2019: https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2019/Q1/USMexico-Border-Proposal_WHITEPAPER-2019.pdf.
- 6 Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope*, 68-9.
- 7 See, for example, Winona LaDuke and Deborah Cowen, “Beyond Wiindigo Infrastructure,” 2020 *South Atlantic Quarterly* 119 (2): 243–268.
- 8 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 215, cited in Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope*, 85.
- 9 Jodi Dean “The Anamorphic Politics of Climate Change” 2016 *e-flux* #69 <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/69/60586/the-anamorphic-politics-of-climate-change/>

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10 Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope*, 38.

11 Amber Hickey, Ed., *A Guidebook of Alternative Nows* (Los Angeles and Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest Press, 2a012).

12 Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope*, 25.

13 China Medel, "Abolitionist Care in the Militarized Borderlands," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2017, Vol 116 (4): 880.

14 Kyle P. Whyte, "Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2018, Vol. 1(1–2) 224–242.

15 Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope*, 236.

16 Quoted in Out of the Woods, *Hope Against Hope*, 3.

17 Ibid, 12.

Progress as Regress. Critical Reflections on an Open Letter to LA MOCA

Hamam Aldouri

Introduction

Over the course of the last few years, open letters have become a significantly more visible tactic deployed in the interrogation of the social, political and ethical responsibilities of art institutions. Yvonne Rainer's 2011 letter to Jeffrey Deitch—then director of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art—to protest the exploitation of young performers during a Marina Abramović performance designed for a fund raiser gala at the institution, and Hannah Black's demand for the destruction of Dana Schutz's painting of Emmett Till in his coffin at the 2017 Whitney Biennial immediately come to mind as two recent examples.¹

This essay takes as its point of departure David Joselit's editorial introduction in *October* to the publishing of an open letter to LA MOCA demanding the resignation of Steven Mnuchin from the board of the museum in 2016. Joselit noted that the open letter, published in conjunction with a highly truncated version of Andrea Fraser's "Trusteeship in the Age of Trump" and Fraser and Eric Golo Stone's "The Case of Steven Mnuchin," was an expression of the periodical's new commitment to "publishing historical and contemporary documents related to cultural activism aimed at creating spaces of progressive resistance to threats of authoritarianism and plutocracy."²

By publishing the open letter to MOCA in a periodical, *October* offers readers an opportunity to reconsider the document in greater detail. The consideration of the document set out below begins by suspending the editorial description of its political status. Against Joselit's direct appeal to "progressive resistance," I ask: what is the politics at work in the letter? How does it function? Can it be accurately described as "progressive resistance" to a specific political configuration? Through a close reading of three passages from the letter, I will answer these questions by exposing what I take to be the concealed political and theoretical presuppositions at work in it.

There are three ideological presuppositions in operation, yet dissimulated, within the document: (1) a neo-Hegelian presupposition of the unity of actuality and reason ("the rational is real"), a principle that functions as a telos of political engagement to be defended against any violation; (2) the mystification of real historico-political problems by way of the isolation of political tactics from the mediation of capitalist social form; and (3) the neutralization and reification of the difference of the "other" as subject under attack.

An analysis of these three points will reveal the letter's secret conception of political action in three respective ways: (1) politics is reduced to a tactical instrument that

reminds the state of any transgression it may suffer at the hands of private interests; (2) political action is an isolated tactic that, due to its separation from the forces that render it possible, ideologically miscomprehends real issues; and (3) politics is recomposed as an ethical imperative to protect the other in such a way that it robs the latter of any historical agency or connection with broader socio-political projects of emancipation, those that are structurally defined by the supersession of cultural, racial or sexual differentiation.

1 *The Rational is the Real*

On December 1, 2016, an open letter was sent to the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art demanding that Steven Mnuchin step down from his position as board member due to his role within the administration of the then president-elect Donald Trump. The letter was part of a series of actions—online petitions and leafleting outside the museum—that aimed to mount pressure on MOCA to act according to the demands of the arts community. As we know, the Secretary of the Treasury did resign, thus demonstrating, in some direct sense, the political power of activism in the arena of art and culture.

My concern here is not with the empirically demonstrable effects of the open letter. What I will attend to is the hidden political and theoretical presuppositions at work in the letter. By “presuppositions” I mean those assumptions that are uncritically taken for granted as conditions upon which theories and practices are based. The first presupposition of the open letter is what I refer to as the neo-Hegelian principle of the unity of actuality and rationality as manifested in the modern state. This assumption is expressed in the opening reflection on the historical particularity of the Trump presidency:

Today, our national arts community is being challenged. Indeed, it is facing a dire threat. President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly attacked the freedom of speech on which artistic expression depends.³

As a threat to the freedom of speech—that sacred human right on which American liberal democracy prides itself—Trump threatens the very existence of art since the latter is politically conditioned on the right to express oneself free of censorship. Reading this opening claim, I am immediately reminded of the political and philosophical development of the young Karl Marx in 1842—that is, as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*.⁴ I will take a short detour through Marx’s youthful journalist writings and then return to the open letter to LA MOCA.

Marx had a difficult time securing an academic position in Prussia after completing his doctoral studies. This was in large part down to the accession of Friedrich Wilhelm IV to the throne in 1840. Expressing an antipathy for all things Hegelian (Marx’s dissertation was a historical recoding of the problem of post-Hegelian thought by an analysis of the formation of post-Aristotelean thought), the

new King effectively mandated the censorship of philosophical journals aligning themselves with the philosophy of Hegel as well as evicting certain Hegelian professors from university posts. In some sense, then, Marx’s turn to journalism was imposed upon him by the state and its censorship of ideas.

With this in mind, it is unsurprising that the first article concerns precisely that issue: state censorship. The basic political problem of “Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication of the Proceedings of the Assembly of the Estates”—and in some sense, the totality of the writings published in the *Rheinische Zeitung*—is how to defend the universality of the modern state against its transgression by private property interests of the few.⁵ Consequently, Marx essentially adheres to the general principle of the Hegelian concept of the state—namely, that with the modern Prussian state, the opposition of public and private interests of civil society are superseded by a higher order reconciliation, a reconciliation that holds private property relations in tact as a necessary dimension of the spiritual ideality of the state.⁶

Following Hegel, Marx was, in 1842, a radical liberal who perceived that the political function of a free press was to *remind* the subjects of the state that they were part of its political substance. Without a free press, people would no longer recognize themselves in the state; they would thus be converted into “a rabble of private individuals.”⁷ More precisely, the press is tasked with forging a connection between the individual and the state at a higher order of intellectual abstraction. Through this link, the free press transforms “material struggles into intellectual struggles and idealizes their crude material form.”⁸

The state censorship of the press openly contradicts the spiritual connection between individual and state, a connection that constitutes the form of modern civil society in its most idealized articulation. It is the goal of a free press to show the state its transgressions—in this instance, when it protects the rights of one constituency at the cost of the alienation of another’s. Marx’s youthful contentions can be mobilized usefully in relation to the political declarations of the open letter to MOCA: Mnuchin must step down as an officer of the board of the art institution since he personifies an administration that, like the Prussian state, openly contradicts the very ideal essence on which political life is formally determined, cultivated and reproduced.

Interestingly, the authors and signatories immediately underscore journalism as the first victim of Trump’s pathological desire to suspend the freedom of speech:

[Trump] has vilified journalism, even encouraging supporters to attack journalists physically. He has ranted against the cast of *Hamilton* for speaking out from the stage, while remaining silent on neo-Nazis celebrating his election win. He has threatened to jail people who desecrate the American flag, demonstrating either ignorance or disregard of the US Con-

stitution and Supreme Court.⁹

The “freedom of speech” that conditions artistic expression finds a powerful instantiation in the freedom of the press. The latter is understood, in the context of the letter, as the right of free political expression (thespians “speaking out from the stage,” and athletes “who desecrate the American flag”). Generalized to the level of the freedom of political expression, journalism here is posited as a political tactic that, like Marx’s youthful idealism, reminds the state of its essential status—it is a spiritual totality that does not contravene universal, natural human rights by private interests. In other words, the idealist conception of the state—as the rational made real—is uncritically mapped onto journalism as a political tactic.¹⁰

According to the authors and signatories, Trump is a temporary “error” in the substantial unfolding of the ideal modern state. His presidency, we are led to believe, is an irrational glitch in an otherwise rational order. What the authors in 2016, and Marx in 1842, did *not* underscore is the manner in which the modern state as such—its spiritual ideality—is animated by a constitutive contradiction between its ideality (the reconciliation of public and private interests in state legislation and through state institutions) and its real material existence (the everyday conflicts of private property relations produced by these very relations).

The authors and signatories of the open letter seem to positively affirm the state of American liberal democracy as the historical manifestation of the instatement of reason in everyday life (there is a Fukuyamist character to the political ideology at work in the document). The consequence of this affirmation of the state as the protector of liberal civil society evades the deeper political problem of the structure of the social realities and forces—the *content*—that render the political *form* of the modern state possible. This is what Marx began to comprehend in 1843.

2 The Mystification of Reality

If the politics of Marx’s 1842 writings for the *Rheinische Zeitung* were grounded on the problem of how to redeem the state from its temporary alienation of human rights (freedom of speech) by the impositions of the private sphere (state censorship), then the turn to “true democracy” in his 1843 “Contribution to a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” consists of a reconfiguration of politics on the basis of its mediation by social life.¹¹ Politics is no longer an isolated human activity that takes place under the auspices of an idealized state. Rather, the politics of “true democracy” is the total transformation of the forces that produce society in a given order at a specific time—that is, the forces that constitute the private property relations of civil society.¹² It is for this reason the state “disappears” with true democracy.¹³

The socialization of politics in 1843 is premised on a critique of the division of the social sphere from the political one in the modern state, a separation embodied unconsciously by the valorization of journalism as a discrete—or, we can now

say, private—political activity. True democracy is the supersession of the immanent contradictions that constitute the modern state understood, now, as the abstract, false unity of private property relations that actually determine the struggles and asymmetries of social life under its conditions. Marx began to have some sense of this when he critically interrogated the basic philosophical presupposition of his 1842 journalism, namely, the neo-Hegelian affirmation of the modern state as unity of actuality and rationality. In other words, with the immanent self-critique of his radical liberalism, Marx started to comprehend politics as a mediated social practice, not an autonomous tactic that forces the state to correct itself by revealing the latter’s infringements.

The authors and signatories of the open letter to MOCA, however, do not take the step toward an immanent critique of the presuppositions of what they uncritically and immediately understand by political action and intervention. This means, above all else, that politics can only be posited as an isolated, private tactic that, and this is crucial, reflects the equally private interests of a particular constituency—thus, only producing and reproducing an illusory sense of the connection of individuals to the state. This restriction of politics to tactics is grave: it results in the representation of *real* historico-political problems in *mystified* form.

With the context of the open letter, this mystification of reality operates in two distinctive, yet interrelated, ways: first, by the absence of any identification of the productive and mediating function of the fundamental processes of the capitalist mode of production in its contemporary iteration—generalized monopoly capital—within the context of art institutions; and second, by the misleading historicization of Trump’s presidency as an exceptional rupture within the substance of the unfolding of American liberal democracy—as if the former comprised a mere anomaly in the history of the latter. These two mystifications can be discerned in the following passage from the open letter:

[Trump] has disparaged and denigrated women, immigrants, people of color, and the differently abled, and has shown intolerance of difference of all kinds. He has consistently identified the Other (*sic*) as threatening, promising mass deportation, faith-based registries, and walls around our country. The policies advocated by Donald Trump and his supporters not only are antithetical to what the Museum of Contemporary Art represents, but also directly threaten cultural producers and the very existence of free expression—which the museum was founded to support and on which the museum itself depends.¹⁴

The list of ills that define Trump’s private political pathology—the misogyny, xenophobia, etc.—are, interestingly, a mirror reflection of the positive function of MOCA. As we are told in the letter’s opening declaration, the museum “has presented groundbreaking exhibitions of art that explore and challenge racism, sexism, heterosexism, xenophobia and nationalism.”¹⁵ Accordingly, MOCA can be said to

operate identically to an idealized notion of journalism: its political function is to remind the state of its essence, viz. its responsibility of protecting the rights of individuals from coercive private interests. In other words, its political function is grounded on the assumption that politics is a particular tactic caught within an assumed set of determinate social conditions. This reduction of politics to desocialized gesture is reinforced by the absence of any reference to *class* (and, concomitantly, exploitation, uneven development, formal and real subsumption, expanded reproduction, violent accumulation, etc.) within the chain of pathological signifiers listed in the letter.¹⁶

Why is it that when it comes to both a positive description of the strength of an art institution and the pathology of Trump, the authors remain silent on the social forces that govern the brutal unevenness of life within a fully globalized context—that is to say, a life comprehensively determined by the extensive and intensive processes of capitalist expansionism and accumulation under the conditions of generalized finance monopoly capital? The forgetting of political economy as a constitutive feature of political life in the disclosure of the crisis of art and culture in a Trump presidency is significant. It offers us insight into the ideological presupposition of the open letter: a mystifying post-ideological de-politicization of the economy.¹⁷

An upshot of the de-politicization of the economy is the reduction of politics to the level of social antagonism between an abstractly collectivized social subject (one that is usually registered by the pronouns “we/our”) and the singling out of particular individuals (Trump, Mnuchin, etc.). This reduction of politics to a scene of direct conflict of distinct social groups further mystifies the problem of political action under the conditions of the capitalist mode of production. What becomes mystified is the sense in which figures such as Trump or Mnuchin (or the Koch brothers) are themselves governed by a system that is hard to reduce to the level of particular concrete individuals. Marx made note of this systematic determination of individuals in one of his most famous passages from the *Communist Manifesto* as well as in the concept of *Träger* (personification) in *Capital*.¹⁸

Historical agents governed by the capitalist mode of production are personifications of complex social relations and forces. They are not autonomous individuals who are defined by pre-capitalist ethical codes or systems of thought. Their comportment is capitalist. Although analyses of these dimensions of Marx’s thought far exceed the scope of this essay, they do offer us a challenge to grasping the great difficulty of any future of socio-political action under the conditions of capital: how to re-socialize socio-political movements that *de-personalize* politics—that is to say, how to recognize the trans-individuating power of capital in *both* the dominators and the dominated.

Another corollary to the isolation of specific individuals within the realm of politics is its tendency to falsely historicize a particular moment, raising it to the level of an exceptional point in the historical fabric of social life. In the case

of the open letter and the accompanying texts by Fraser and Stone, Trump is historicized in such a way. The clearest display of this historical exceptionalism is expressed in the slogan “in the age of Trump,” a catchword that not only constitutes the title of one of Fraser’s text, but one that has circulated profusely in the literature on Trump’s presidency.¹⁹

This historicization of Trump—as constituting nothing less than the opening up of an epoch or era—is problematic in the sense that it extracts Trump from the broader historical processes of American politics under the conditions of generalized monopoly capital. In some sense, the liberal misrecognition of the exceptionalism of Trump contains a theological logic of miraculous revelation: Trump’s presidency was born from nothing and appeared from nowhere or, at least, from outside of the politico-economic processes that mediate American liberal democracy.

Recognizing the function of ideological mystification does not mean, of course, that Trump’s violations of the substance of everyday political discourse, as well as his retrograde policies, do not constitute real political problems, ones that must be faced and challenged. Grasping ideological mystification means that we cannot adequately face those problems if we liberate them from the general processes that render the transgressions and regressions possible. In other words, mystification is not annihilation of reality; it is the representation of reality in estranged form. This sense brings us to the final presupposition of the open letter: the neutralization of the notion of difference.

3 The Neutralization of Difference

In this section, I leave the continuous reference to Marx and consider the open letter’s sociological presentation of “difference” as “the Other” by way of an analysis of Jacques Derrida’s exposition of the ethical framing of *différance* as a tertiological movement that renders both possible and impossible what the French philosopher refers to as “hospitality”—the ethical process of the welcoming of the “monster” that reconfigures the logic of acculturation. The first thing to note in the identification of difference as other in the open letter is the strange presentation of “other” in its majuscule linguistic form: the other is capitalized, it is presented with a big “O.”²⁰ English speakers familiar with “French Theory”²¹ will immediately register two possible references: Jacques Lacan’s notion of the “big Other” or Emmanuel Levinas’s phenomenological description of ethics as openness to the “Other.”²² Although the latter is not named, it is his conception of ethical subjectivity—albeit in a somewhat diluted form—that the letter is partly referring to. It is diluted because what we have in the letter is another that is not absolutely transcendental, or wholly “otherwise” as Levinas puts it, but is, rather, one represented through a series of given sociological forms: women, the differently abled, immigrants, etc. Trump’s transgressions are apprehended as an inhospitality to recognizable “difference of any kinds,” an inhospitality organized by way of the political category of “intolerance.”

It is ironic that difference is, within the open letter, an *index* for an immediately socially recognizable victim, an identity that is identical to itself (and open only to intersectional combinations that paradoxically reinforce the ossification of identity by way of a form of sociological bricolage). Within the work of a thinker such as Derrida, who develops a new conception of difference, difference was understood as a dangerous and destabilizing surplus (Derrida spoke often of the “dislocating” force of differentiation).²³ It functioned as an immanent force to any system of conceptualization, reason, or logic, albeit as a constitutively repressed dimension.

This means, for Derrida, that systems of identity thinking are always already self-deconstructing—they contain within themselves the very force of their undoing. This self-deconstructing is one way to understand his ethics of hospitality. In an interview from 1990, Derrida presents the structure of hospitality in terms of an openness to the danger of differentiation, to the force of the other. But what is referred to as other here is a tertological element that is always bursting from out of its internment by reason, taxonomy and systematic knowledge that calculates experience cut off from the negativity of the incalculable, the unknowable and that which cannot be systematically appropriated—in short, everything that can be understood in terms of the *monster*. The sense of the monster, and its concomitant signifiers—the incalculable, the event, the *arrivant*, the future, etc.—is crystallized in the following tortuous, and somewhat garrulous, passage:

A monster is a species for which we do not yet have a name, which does not mean that the species is abnormal, namely, the composition or hybridization of already known species. Simply, it shows itself [*elle se montre*]*—that is what the monster means—it shows itself in something that is not yet shown[...]*But as soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it, one begins, because of the “as such”—it is a monster *as* monster—to compare it to the norms, to analyze it, consequently to master whatever could be terrifying in this figure of the monster[...]*I think that somewhere...I said...that the future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared, you see, is heralded by species of monsters. A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future it would already be a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow. All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous arrivant, to welcome it, that is, to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also, one must add, to try to domesticate it, that is, to make it part of the household and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture.*²⁴

According to Derrida, hospitality is preparation for the monster at the level of the process of acculturation. The

preparation for the “welcoming” of what is unknown, incalculable, the pure event, is that effort of domestication, of *economization*, by which what is meant by is that organizational ordering and internalizing the destabilizing element into existing customs.²⁵ Ironically, the Trump administration as presented in the open letter can be said to grasp something about the dangerous character of difference as other understood in terms of the unknowable monster. Its cultural protectionism is a guard against the immanent acculturation of the monstrosity of differentiation, a process that transforms both the *arrivant* and the welcoming party that orders its household in preparation. In other words, the domestication of the other means the transformation of the economics of the order in which it became acculturated. Acculturation is not a monolithic, immutable power that swallows up—like the caricatured Hegelian speculative *Aufhebung*—all negativity. It is alive and mutable; it changes through the capture of the monstrous.

All this to say that the other is not a subject to be protected in anticipation of the transgression of ideologically naturalized liberal ideals (“freedom of expression,” “freedom of worship,” etc.). It is an incalculable violent interruption of the order of socio-historical and cultural life. For Derrida, the other is precisely what the open letter describes Trump as identifying: a threat. There are, however, two important distinctions between Trump’s constant invocation of “the Other as threatening” and Derrida’s phenomenological description of the monster: first, the French philosopher develops a concept of hospitality that opens up the question of how to welcome the threat whereas the American president cultivates a politics of protection from the threat; and second, Derrida’s notion of the monster, the other as event, is transcendental in a consistently Kantian sense—it is that which is the constitutive chiasma, the unknowable “X,” that conditions the possibility and impossibility of economization (domestication by the order of reason through rational appropriation).²⁶ The “other,” then, is precisely not the personification of “women, immigrants, people of color, and the differently abled,” as the open letter suggests. It is that *force*—the “X,” the will, the movement of deconstruction, etc.—that cannot be crystallized into particular social identities or forms.

The neutralization of difference-as-other within the letter not only covers over the complexity of the concept of difference within the realm of philosophy, but it, more importantly, hollows the other out of any political and social agency. The other is presented preeminently, and one-dimensionally, as a *victim*, a subject always under attack or, to push the point slightly, an inevitably traumatized subject.²⁷ This radical regulation of the other as a sufferer reduces its activity to the capacity to either passively await an evil done to it or can only construct testimonials to its suffering after it has been victimized. An ethical subject, understood by way of the reification of given sociological forms, has, within the institutionalization of certain streams of French philosophy from the 1960s and on, done little more. Ironically, the other cannot become different. It cannot, most importantly, be an active political-historical subject, one

30 Progress as Regress: Hammam Aldouri
that sees itself as part of the transformation of social life at
a given juncture.

Conclusion

As I have tried to show, the open letter contains within itself three uncritically assumed—thus, wholly ideological—conceptions of political tactics: first, the grounding of politics on a neo-Hegelian idealist conception of the speculative unity of reason and actuality in the historical manifestation of the state of civil society; second, the reduction of journalism to political tactic results in the representation of real historico-political problems—the issues that define the political situation of a given historical moment—in mystified form since what such a conception of politics fails to achieve is the comprehension of the mediating function of the social relations and forces that determine a specific political form; and third, the reification of the other as an essentially depoliticized, non-historical subject—a subject that is destined to suffer and to recall its suffering by testimonies.

Taken together, these three political points operate on the general principle of the absence of any exposition of the socio-historical mediation of the capitalist mode of production within the very mechanisms deployed within the open letter. Consequently, the open letter presents its politics as if it were liberated, at the level of both form and content, from the historical juncture that renders it possible. For precisely this reason, if the document functions as progressive resistance to the authoritarianism and plutocracy of Trump's presidency, as David Joselit unquestioningly posits in his editorial introduction to the open letter, it does so only by way of the mediation of a *regressive acquiescence* to the complex processes of historical capitalism. Thus, progress is achieved by regress. Both are intertwined. This permeation of opposites constitutes the basic dialectical contradiction of documents such as the open letter at given moments within the history of capitalist societies. The corollary of such a dialectical contradiction is unequivocal: the strength of cultural activism, understood by way of the political function of tactics embodied in documents such as the open letter to MOCA, is also its weakness. Without critical reflection on the dialectical interconnection of progress and regress in activism caught under the conditions of capitalist society, one-sided descriptions and analyses of interventions such as the open letter are wholly inadequate

Endnotes.

1 One of the actions by activists that put pressure on the American Museum of Natural History demanding the resignation of David Koch from the board was, of course, an open letter. A central aspect of the pressure was the itinerant cultural activist project The Natural History Museum, spearheaded by the Not an Alternative collective.

2 David Joselit, "Philanthropy and Plutocracy," *October*, 162 (Fall 2017), 31. Fraser's truncated essay, "The Case of Steven Mnuchin," and the open

letter follow the editorial.

3 "Open Letter," 37.

4 For an excellent exposition of the development of Marx's thought in the 1840s, see Michael Löwy, *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2003).

5 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works – Volume 1*, trans. various (New York: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 132-181. Unless specified otherwise, all references to Marx will be abbreviated as 'CW' with the volume number preceding the pagination.

6 This conception of the state finds its most systematic presentation in G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). It is in the preface that we find Hegel's infamous chiasmic principle of the unity of reason and actuality: "Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig."

7 Marx and Engels, *CW* 1, 168.

8 Marx and Engels, *CW* 1, 164-165.

9 "Open Letter," 37.

10. For the young Marx, the US had a special place in the modern struggle over the freedom of journalism: "You find the natural phenomenon of freedom of the press in North America in its purest, natural form." Marx and Engels, *CW* 1, 167.

11. Marx and Engels, *CW* 3, 5-129.

12. For a recent systematic study of Marx's concept of "true democracy," see Alexandros Chrysis, *'True Democracy' as Prelude to Communism: The Marx of Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

13. Marx and Engels, *CW* 3, 30.

14. "Open Letter," 37.

15. "Open Letter," 37.

16. Within the American context, the issue of class struggle has had an uneven theoretical reception in art history and criticism. For conservative idealist aestheticians such as Hilton Kramer, it is denounced as a "mythic phenomenon which lies at the heart of the Marxist conception of history." "T.J. Clark and the Marxist Critique of Modern Painting," *The Triumph of Modernism: The Art World, 1987-2005* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield), 117. Critics such as Benjamin Buchloh, Hal Foster and Craig

Owens have been more sympathetic to the mediating function of class conflict in the constitution of art. They have, however, only ever either paid it lip-service or critiqued its conception within a vulgar economicist Marxism (premised on the separation of base and superstructure). On the latter point, see Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 166-190 (172).

17. One could immediately object to our charge here and draw attention to Andrea Fraser's "Trusteeship in the Age of Trump." In this text, which is published in a highly abbreviated form alongside the open letter, underscores the reality of plutocracy in the context of arts and cultural institutions in the US. Although Fraser's insistence on underlining of certain determinate dimensions of the institutional life of the arts in America is refreshing, her text falls back into misleading mystifications by valorizing categories of classical political economy. Categories such as "wealth" have reappeared in the everyday substance of American political discourse as if they constituted real aspects of a structure and not, as Marx brilliantly demonstrated in his mature writings, a mystifying abstract category that fails to accurately describe or define the concrete dimensions of the capitalist mode of production. Wealth is just an ideological conception of capitalist self-valorization. It names an entity that is assumed to have some kind of substantial quality when in fact it points to an abstract, insubstantial phenomenon. To be sure, this is why wealth appears as the first concept of political economy that Marx deploys—so as to critique—in the very first sentence of Volume One of *Capital*. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy – Volume 1*, trans. B. Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 125. For an exposition of Marx's method within the opening chapter of *Capital*, see Pierre Macherey, "On the Process of the Exposition of Capital (The Work of Concepts)," in Louis Althusser et al. *Reading Capital* (The Complete Edition), trans. B. Brewster and D. Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2015).

18. "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society." (Emphasis mine.) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. S. Moore (London: Penguin, 2002), 222. On *Träger*, see Marx, *Capital*, 92.

19. Just type "in the Age of Trump" into Google. Fraser's choice of words, then, is a symptom of a larger problem of political and historical self-understanding (or lack thereof).

20. See passage above.

21. The institutional consolidation of "French Theory" is explored in François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, trans. J. Fort (Minneapolis MI: Minnesota University Press, 2008). It is worth noting that

the original French title of the work, published in 2003, retains "French Theory" in the English, thus drawing attention to the sense in which it is an Anglo-American invention. Ironically, this intellectual invention has become a brand that has been imported back to France. This point is underlined by Peter Osborne, "Philosophy after Theory: Transdisciplinarity and the New," in Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge (eds.), *Theory After 'Theory'* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 30n1.

22. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

23. On Derrida's most condensed articulation of the movement of *différance*, see Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

24. Jacques Derrida, *Points...Interviews 1974-1994*, trans. various (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 386-387. Derrida develops his notion of hospitality in more detail in *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. R. Bowlby (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

25. On economization, see Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve," *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

26. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A.W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A8-9/B11-13.

27. This contraction of the ethical subject to victim finds a succinct critique in Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. P. Hallward (London and New York: Verso, 2012).

FIVE YEARS///

Fragments for an antifascist
newsletter 22/02/2020

Five Years was founded as an organisation in 1998. From the outset Five Years intention has been to maintain a long-term working context and physical environment guided by principles of organisational co-operation, while supporting the sometimes conflicting drives of creative autonomy, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. To an extent it has functioned as a form of sustained research into whether individual or collective artistic agency, and dissenting perspectives on cultural production, can be supported in an open and non-competitive structure. Functioning without individual directorship or regular funding, operating across zones of marginality and precarity, its continued existence is as much about its ethics as its activities, which have a symbiotic relationship to one another. Five Years defines itself as an artists' organisation rather than an artist-run organisation: its purpose is to facilitate, support and make public its members' projects and by extension the projects of those artists invited by its members to contribute to the programme - the physical gallery space is a shared resource, a tool rather than a showcase. Five Years' intention is not to play a secondary or supportive role to the commercial or established institutional sectors, as a 'springboard' for so-called 'emerging' artists: it has endeavoured to create an environment where investigation and artistic development can be sustained over long periods of time with relative autonomy. We decided to approach the production of this newsletter in an equivalent way - as the starting point for a self-critical framework within which members will gather research and reflection on anti-fascism and the psychology of Fascism itself, what is or makes a subject fascist, from a personal perspective. Foucault's introduction to *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, has been a point of reference to relate to in this enquiry. The material presented here comprises personal narratives alongside a series of critical questions on what it means to self-constitute as a group and collective in relation to the complexities of our era's inescapable neoliberal dynamics. As such, being intrinsically related to the rise of a complex fascism which is overlaid into modes of neoliberal conduct within the Institution, there has been an 'unheimlich' dimension to its emergence, beneath an indistinguishable mask of the familiar. Our contexts in turn have mutated, developing a complicity as a sort of pre-amble for the fascist life to bear fruit. Adorno's administered society becomes encoded in the puritan, fearful awe towards new master figures of power such as the curator, who gets followed with a suspect fervour, becoming the sole executor of paradigms which can't be contested. This necessity, that 'all ought to seem' fair, as in Machiavelli, when it is *not*, stages an appearance of fairness as *simulacra*, which hides extremely cold, power/authority based, and ruthless, self-preserving politics of narcissistic relations.

When I hear Monika talking about her clinical experience, it is not only academic theories of fascism that begin to appear inane; the very idea of producing a critique of them seems equally trivial. In fact, the whole effort would be superfluous if we had a convention for understanding and behaving, a way of listening that sensed the significance of all this for the theoretical pronouncements we deliver from on high: children committed to psychiatric care, who articulate in the language of the "deviant" or the dumb a whole system of disabilities that make up this life and who carry that system about with them in their own helplessly rebellious bodies, expressing it in images that compel any viewer to perceive their sickness as a superior form of innocent wholeness, though their bodies are said to have "broken down." When she tells me of contact, true contact with lightning and rolling thunder, of the production of an intimacy through the feeling and exploration of distances - an intimacy that is not consuming, distance that is not far away - a place where caution is a beautiful word, related to foresight and to a feeling for the reality of a suffering that wishes for change but is caught in impulse and double bind, I think then of the studied or hectic nonchalance of all those (myself included) who are striving to combat fascism here and now, but are blind to the experience of the nonfascist... at this point, the sentence seems to want to continue, "I begin to despair" (but this is the reality of a frozen semantics, not, in the end, of any feeling I might have).*Monika Berger - a child psychologist referred to by Theweleit here in the context of her guidance and input during the writing of the book. Klaus Theweleit (from Male Fantasies Vol 1)*

*My body grew-up with Fascism and Fascists in Franco's Spain: I can say that I am a subject totally familiar with its intrinsic abuse and the specifics of the fascist ethos, merged with a retrograde superstitious relation to Catholic religion and Catholic rule, which was established and implemented via the military class, the police and the school. When I was 12 years old, a priest told me to get out of the church and that I was The Devil. Two years later, after being persecuted and abused by some teachers at my college, I decided to put an end to all that. It was 1974 and I left school forever. In 1977 Franco died, and Foucault wrote an essay about how Franco remained undead. Today many of us in Catalonia suffer, seeing that what many older people had been saying is true: Fascism never left and fascists are out and up and running. For someone who knew so intimately the smell and terror of fascism as a quotidian reality, the evidence of newer forms and shapes (shapeshifters?) of being fascist is terrifying. Nights of pale terror and nightmares of new parades of peoples all screaming and chanting, waking up to the reality that those were actually happening out there on the streets. But not as the uniformed white supremacist, rather those who I have to work with, unleashed before me. It came, and there it was: a mutation between us, as some got swept up by a sort of inner fascism, a hyper narcissism that opened the cracks for all this bestial energy to be awoken. Defamation, anger, cancelling culture without proof, social media viral post-truth and colder relations. At the same time, a passion and gut feeling of fight or flight and speedy desertion of signalled names. People who once had been our friends. Learning how curators in positions of power dare to say out and loud, that I am "crazy", without the least remorse in their discriminatory souls. Is it not the most nazi-fascist way of being, the one that assumes superiority and entitlement? Discrimination on the basis of class, or race, physical and mental ability. How they despise women who suffer from a nervous disposition. I felt as Antoinette/Bertha, from *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, once felt - the hypersensitive, out of place Creole, who suffered the shock of cultures. Then I realised that Adorno and Horkheimer were so right and that Foucault also saw it coming. Hannah Arendt too wrote about the preamble to Nazism starting as just a social mood and small gestures in the bourgeois salons of intellectuals between the culture stars in Berlin or Paris, and perhaps in England this happened too. I feel it and it's happening here between us, here in the realms of the art-world, worst without most of us noticing the shift, the thing.*

No Spain No <https://kv53139.blogspot.com/>



Willie Ross, Linton-Orman dressed in military uniform. Photograph from National Portrait Gallery collection



Microfascisms

This person is of average height but slender build. He possesses a certain angularity of gesture and gait, a performative sharpness modulated by a soft voice and a tendency to look downwards rather than straight ahead. Over the seven or eight weeks in which I sat across from him in a continental philosophy class, he spoke clearly about his wish to rescue fascism from the opprobrium heaped upon it by historical Marxism. If freed from this kind of propaganda, it might be recognised for what it is, allowing for its potential reinstatement into 'respectable' discourse. As popularised by Mussolini, fascism was primarily an economic system he said.

Questions raised about the exact nature of the system failed to elicit much insight. Similarly, while fascism in itself was not responsible for Hitler's actions, who could

say how many people really died in the Holocaust? The evidence simply wasn't there, he argued, and such statistics as existed had to be regarded with scepticism. What methods were used to determine the scale of the Holocaust? How reliable were they? How free of perceptual bias? This man, who presented himself with an old fashioned air of courteousness, of politesse, was a Trump supporter. In him, he saw a personification of the spirit of transgression, a man more than capable of laughing in the face of mere moral righteousness, of harnessing heterogeneous capacities, of evoking ubermensch capabilities... Only he didn't use the last word of course. He didn't really need to. Google this person, and lengthy trails of invective stream out against him, the result of a minor brush with art world notoriety following a seemingly pro fascist public intervention a few years ago. I knew nothing of this at first, but later, reading some of his online posts, I discovered that he claims to be against fascism, to be motivated by little more than the desire to defend free speech, alongside, no doubt, a contrarian desire to provoke the left/liberal tendency to no platform opinions they oppose. At the very least, this man seems to embody an element of what theorist Ana Teixeira Pinto calls the 'fascist curious', a trait held in common with members of the alt-right and Neo-Reactionary movements, whose aestheticised regard for fascist thinking comes coupled, in this case, with an unsettling underplaying of the real world implications of life under a Fascist regime.

Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between macro, or State level fascism, and the psychoaffective domain of microfascisms. These latter are tendencies that lurk largely unacknowledged in all of us, and which, according to Guattari, are scattered everywhere within the social realm. Operating on a personal, collective and mass level, they form an unconscious bedrock of aggression beneath the surface of societies, emerging as regimes of power through modes of reciprocal engagement with the State. They are, they say, what make fascisms so dangerous, since even

professed activists will fail to recognise the enemy within. A couple of other minor encounters may perhaps serve to illustrate these entanglements. About fifteen years ago, a temporary employer invited me to stay for a weekend in a small town outside Paris. A long term Liberal Party activist, she somehow needed me, and any friends I cared to bring along, to make up the numbers at a rally in support of an Iranian opposition party whose name I never discovered. Over the course of several hours, we sat on an open playing field beneath a sweltering sky, watching rows of people standing in formation, singing anthems with fierce conviction, brandishing large green, white and red flags, while it dawned on me slowly that the spectacle I was witnessing might be more than mere spectacle... Later, in the courtyard of our hotel, an elderly man, also British, white haired, made a bee line for me. Instantly, he launched into a monologue about the need for population control, the necessity of cutting down on the breeding potential of intellectually deficient people. Caught off guard, I tried to answer him, but to no real effect. And then it struck me that he'd targeted me for a reason, and that reason was written on my face, in a script he thought he understood, but which, in fact, he could barely begin to decipher.

apparent not in the content of the texts nor in their forms, but through their relations? That is, the necessarily disharmonious ensemble that they constitute. In practice.

9. This discontinuity can be made effective through nonclosure? Opening a search for a more radical way of speaking that is situated outside discourse?

Years later, on a bus heading towards Central London at about twelve o'clock on a midweek afternoon, I sat across the aisle from two men in their thirties. Leaning into each other, they spoke, in loudly aggravated tones about a widely reported incident at a New Year's Eve celebration in Berlin when large numbers of Middle Eastern men, some described as refugees, had

moved stealthily through the crowds for the purpose of sexually harassing local women. The reports had been lurid in their condemnation. The men made their disapproval plain. And then one of them abruptly changed tack, stating clearly - Anders Breivik had the right idea. It took me a moment to register that the person he spoke so highly of was the same far right fanatic, who in 2011, had slaughtered 69 Norwegian young people at a summer camp on the island of Utøya. The man's companion murmured his assent. I swivelled round to gape at them, half willing them to notice me. But they didn't. Nor did they lower their voices. They kept on talking, while the bus, impervious, meandered on its way. So how to go about combatting these fascisms? By examining our own complicity with them? By forming protest groups on or offline? By coming together to analyse texts, stage interventions, make work that embodies a radical spirit of inclusivity? Five Years aims to make a long term project of this task...

Joint Enterprise: A (Possible) Five Years Constitution.



We need to put in words how we are constituted. This thing needs to be written. All (possible) inputs have begun. And so now, if we gather them, we can work upon (them). We are trying to demonstrate what we need to cover. All that we ask is that we all try to give some kind of formulation to this. We are fully aware that these five sections might not be the best way to go about our purpose, but we strongly feel that whatever format you use addresses the following issue of identity, education and community.

- 1) Who are 'we'? / 'How' are 'we' constituted?
Is Five Years a free association of artists, audiences and producers?
- 2) Is Five Years a not-for-profit organisation committed to the maintenance and support of art and artists? Are Five Years' aims to produce a framework whereby the practising and reception of art might be undertaken as a voluntary and autonomous

activity? [Plenty to discuss here?]

3) Is Five Years a not-for-profit organisation committed to the maintenance and support of art and artists? Are Five Years' aims to produce a framework whereby the practising and reception of art might be undertaken as a voluntary and autonomous activity? [Plenty to discuss here?]

4) What is the method of doing (the methodology or ethos)?

Does Five Years operate under the principles of co-operation, equality and solidarity with democratic procedures underlying their decision making?

5) What 'impact' / 'effects' do 'we' aim to produce?

Does Five Years aim to operate as an educational and community minded organisation (with education understood as the emancipatory realisation of potentiality and community understood as the free movement and distribution of singularities)? [Again, plenty to discuss...]

If Five Years were to be supported what is it that would be supported in real terms?

Do 'we' act as a meeting place for ideas, art-works and people, facilitating different and heterogeneous individuals and networks that in turn constitute a number of different communities and publics? 'We' put these themes forward as they emphasise how 'we' understand 'our' organisation to operate within the terms of an artworld, on the experience of many of 'us' as within art institutions as educated/educators and how art as a 'good' is often framed as educational - can 'we' formulate this beyond 'gallery talks'? and finally community - if 'we' are a community of practice - how can this be named? 'We' tentatively ask 'you' to have a stab at responding. Or put together 'your' own version of things. Then 'we' can construct a beginning from this...

Next interventions and projects

*Workshop at Archway Library coinciding with the
Islington Festival of Storytelling*

*An antifascist reading group session in the
library. Saturday 21 March from 2-4pm. Which will
be followed up with an evening film screening in
Five Years space*

Contemporary works

*1. Extract from The New Faces of Fascism: Populism
and the Far Right, Enzo Traverso, Verso, 2019 in
which he discusses his notion of contemporary
post fascism as a counter to traditional versions.*

*2. There is also Lights in the Distance by Daniel
Trilling, Pan McMillan, 2018 - about the Refugee
Crisis and the EU, although this would be better
during the proposed Islington Refugee Week.*

Classic texts:

*3. The Mass Psychology of Fascism, Georges
Bataille*

*4. An extract from Hannah Arendt - The Origins of
Totalitarianism or similar text interventions and
projects*

<http://fiveyears.org.uk/index.html>



Simone Weil in Barcelona as miliciana for the CNT

Binding Principles

Image description: Miss Rotha Lintorn-Orman dressed in British Army uniform. Photograph from National Portrait Gallery collection dated circa 1916.

The background is soft and fuzzy, in contrast to the woman staring directly at the camera. The slightness of her frame is also at odds with the severity of her military garb. Her left wrist holds back a crease of greatcoat fabric, hand resting on hip as if challenging those who would judge her for lacking in femininity. The soft background lends no other clues of where this has been taken. Bournemouth. London. Serbia. No matter. It is her decision to record the fact of her military service at the age of twenty one. An androgynous figure with cropped hair, she looks out from the photograph demanding our attention. The gaze outward is clear and direct, confrontational. I've had looks like this from women in clubs before. Not 'fight me' but 'fuck me'. I'm interested in the macho posturing. Presumably she is mimicking the martial appearance of father and grandfather before her, both old warhorses. Her body language speaks not of gendered lack but of privilege; of upper-middle class entitlement. I have read somewhere that before this coming of age moment her adolescence was committed to the service of the Girl Scouts, a proto-military organization founded by her mother. It is easy to blame our mothers for our troubles. In the Scouts she develops an early predilection for uniforms. Indeed, is rarely seen *not* wearing a uniform thereafter. I'm interested in whether this regalia is *her* identity, *her* politics, a desire to align herself to a collective through costume. An alignment with order, hierarchies, conservative values, service to King and country.



Henri Troppmann goes from his sick-bed in Paris to Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War in time to witness the first Catalan General Strike. He is torn between three different women, all of whom arrive in the city at that time. One of them, Lazare, is a Marxist Jew and political activist, who is preparing herself for prospective torture and martyrdom at the hand of General Francisco Franco's troops if she is captured.

Simone Weil is Lazare in the novel, G.Bataille account is quite biographic and is a haunting presence knowing her story in Barcelona.

Maria Ginesta, a 17 years old Communist in action during Spanish Civil War in Barcelona



Contributions by:
Edward Dorrian
Esi Eshun
Marc Hulson
Liz Murray
Esther Planas

Her cross-dressing marks her out for many as a cranky spinster. Cross-dressing. Does that even exist anymore? I do want to like her butch-ness, but I am struggling with the arrogance of her glare. Really, she could care less what people say of her. What she does care about, as she discovers in the years after being invalidated out of the army with a nasty case of malaria and post-traumatic stress disorder, is in keeping Britain free of Communism. Her diary records a moment of epiphany, experienced whilst digging her vegetable garden; she saw the clear and present threat to her ultra-conservative values being undermined by the rise of trade unionism and the Labour Party. Her vision of Britain, of being overrun by foreigners and Marxist-Leninists, is combined with her own, personal, frustrations; the mind-numbing tedium of civilian life, of gardening, of her own repressed sexual desires. Seeking shared-values and solidarity she places an advertisement calling on other like-minded women to join her in forming a para-military association. Her mother financially supported the formation of her anti-communist league that, in many ways, resembled the mother's own nascently fascist Girl Scouts. It was run along military lines with uniformed regiments of women drilled and skilled in Ju Jitsu and other survival techniques. The mother cut her off when tales of her daughter's self-medication through alcohol, drugs and ergies became too prevalent to ignore. Artist collectives are surely bound together by such things as solidarity, cooperation, and shared ideals. This text is coming from within such an organization. I'm interested in artists who choose to work together and how individual and collective identities within that alliance are represented and made visible. What are the limits of that association, the unspoken terms of engagement? What binds us and what breaks us? We come together at openings, at closings, through sexual liaison and breakup, through education, over drinks, over tasks, over costs, by email, by necessity, in galleries and workshops, in protest, in rooms that are common and sometimes free. We feel part of a union until the point at which our collaboration no longer functions for the good of all or one.

Lintorn-Orman was the first female leader of a British political party. Hers was the face of the British Fascists, an overtly fascist organisation that predated Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

REVISE + RESUBMIT

ATTACK DOTORG <attackdotorg@gmail.com>

TO: ATTACKDOTORG
SUBJECT: Dean's Updates

36% Spelling, grammar + syntax - passable
NO citations, no evidence, rely on anecdote + emotive rhetoric.

Message from the Dean - February 2020

Dear colleagues - Who is this addressed to? Permanent staff? Who is your implied / actual reader?
This week I would like to spend some time on [...] the issue of ~~precarious~~ precarious employment within Universities. I've been considering writing on this issue for a while, and I'm conscious that with the announcement of further industrial action this could be seen as provocative. That is not my intention, Ready? rather I hope to engage in the debate and clarify some of the issues. I have a specific view which is wholly based on my own experience and the evidence I see as Vice-President and Dean of Faculty. LACKING IN RIGOR, UNDER RESEARCH NEEDS

Another opinion is represented by one of our own professors, who wrote about precarious employment in The Guardian last month. You can read his views here under the provocative title 'UK academics must stand up to stop universities becoming sweatshops'. Really? I doubt if many of us have ever seen the inside of a sweatshop, far less come close to working in one. As a student I worked on the floor of a very hot steel rolling mill and sweat there meant exactly that. The professor assures me the headline was imposed by an editor keen to grab readers' attention and he agrees that it is not very helpful so on that we have a consensus. In fact, the professor and I have had a number of very useful and productive discussions over the years, and I welcome his efforts to encourage debate. However, I happen to think that his substantive argument that universities have adopted a business model that requires a greater use of fixed term contracts is mistaken. Evidence to counter this? Citations?

I imagine we can all agree that in the overwhelming majority of cases, it is very difficult to become established in an academic career. [...] Fixed term contracts have long been part of the academic career, but the situation for staff today is so very much better. This is one of the reasons I find the rhetoric around precarious employment difficult to reconcile with what I have seen and support across this Faculty. Terms and conditions for all of us have greatly improved, due to progressive employment legislation and employers realising that you get better results from treating good people well. I regularly sign off requests to extend contracts or convert temporary posts to standard contracts when permanent roles open up. This is often because activity has stabilised, or because staff are doing such a great job that we want to ensure we keep them. Yet it is unavoidable that we will have some staff on short-term contracts. Currently there are a larger than normal number of Professional Services (PS) staff in this situation because of all the uncertainties around role changes associated with the Student Experience Project. That has taken longer than originally planned, hence people have been on these contracts longer than anticipated, but we hope to resolve this in the next few months. I regret that is where we are, but it has been necessary. [...]

Please let us keep some perspective on our working environment. We work in an incredibly supportive institution and, notwithstanding all the pressures we face, academics still have great freedom to choose how to spend our time. We have a dispute about pensions and there is the usual round of pay talks, but The University is not an exploitative employer that engineers precarious employment to suit its business model. We have an outstanding record in converting people to standard contracts where possible, and we treat those on temporary contracts with dignity and respect.

Best wishes,
Dean of Faculty

What do you mean by this? Avoid emotive rhetoric.

provides figures what about teaching staff?

CITATION NEEDED

Is the implication here that those on non-permanent or zero-hours contracts are not doing a great job? You are a very large university. It seems unlikely your familiarity with everybody...

You have failed to defend this claim. Provide evidence!

Expand upon this? Many work across multiple institutions, but it's hardly a choice.

Don't dance around the issue. State both sides clearly. Irrelevant.

This is a note evident in this submission.

DEFINE YOUR TERMS. Do you mean permanent staff? If so, this doesn't speak to the topic.

This is equivalent to 'my best friend is black, so I can't be racist'.

You have not proven this and it is precisely the charge against you.

Again, personal experience is not rigorous evidence. CITATION NEEDED.

Verge

contradictory

Clarify where have you looked? Provide statistics + evidence beyond the anecdotal.

Again, to whom does this refer? Casual staff? AEs? G-TAs? Prob. etc...

ATTACKING THE UNIVERSITY

DATE: 1/2/2020
SUBJECT: [redacted]

ATTACKING THE UNIVERSITY
Dean's Update

Message from the Dean - February 2020

This week I would like to discuss precarious employment

considering

debate

experience

opinion

views

to other universities

about

mean exactly that

not very helpful

consensus

I happen to think

I imagine all since

overwhelming

rhetoric

due to progressive

convert

stabilised

it is unavoidable

situation

Student Experience

uncertainties

Please

keep some perspective

free to choose

the University is not

dignity and respect

wishes

Dean

ARTWORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

Workers in the design and cultural sectors are coming together to organise for our collective rights

ABOUT DCW

The Designers and Cultural Workers Union evolved out of research undertaken by Evening Class (evening-class.org), which was presented at a series of three events over three years as part of Antiuniversity Now! Festival (antiuniversity.org).

This research explored problems within the graphic design industry, such as low wages, widespread overwork, unhealthy working environments and employment practices, and the ingrained depoliticisation of workers across the 'creative industries' as a whole.

In the UK, many employers in art, design, fashion, museums and theatre do not pay sick or holiday pay, or pay overtime. Illegally, 90% of internships are still offered unpaid. Fee payments are routinely late, workers have an unmanageable workload, and no job security and no pension, despite their high level of specialist skills and education.

The majority of enterprises in the cultural sector are micro businesses (95%) – businesses that employ fewer than ten people. In these small-scale working environments, managers and directors are often also designers themselves, and normally do not know their employees' rights at work. Such arrangements also complicate the right to raise complaints or grievances, as administrative procedures more often become informal interpersonal arrangements.

We object to the idea that those of us who work in the cultural sector deserve no protections or advocacy. Design and cultural work is largely sedentary office work. The misconception that creative ideation and production happen somehow without actual labour has allowed unfair wages to proliferate, overwork, stress and burnout to become chronic within the sector, and bad practice in employment to go unchallenged, even celebrated, for too long.

By setting up as an official union branch through United Voices of the World, rather than starting entirely from scratch, we benefit from the knowledge and skills of this successful and agile new union, and from our sister branches within it (Legal, Sex Work, Architecture, Gender-Based Violence sectors). UVW's framework is more responsive and adaptable to modern working arrangements, such as working for multiple employers, freelance and temp work.

Our branch has an intentionally broad, cross-sector membership, which includes: graphic, fashion and product designers, curators, film-makers, illustrators, writers, artworkers, educators. Any other type of creative worker is welcome to join. As UVW-DCW, we educate members about our rights at work, secure legal representation for workers, and organise campaigns to transform our industry in the interest of its workforce.

Join our fight to build a more equitable culture from below!

STAY UPDATED

We maintain a regularly updated Are.na channel with many links, articles, books and resources. are.na/uvw-designers-cultural-workers



FAQ

Creative work is fun, why do I need a union?

- + Unions aren't only for when there's a problem. They are a place for social exchange and worker education as well as direct activism and casework.
- + Workers' pay in our sector is at odds with the value our industry contributes to the UK. The Creative Industries are growing at more than 5x the rate of the economy as a whole. It's clear from recent figures and forecasts that wealth generated in our sector is unevenly distributed, with gross levels of income inequality.
- + There is no sense of good practice in our sectors, in terms of fees, contracts, workplace environment, freelancing and so on. We want to undertake the research work to produce these for our members.

I work freelance, or I'm self-employed – I thought I couldn't join a union?

- + 1 in 4 creative workers in the UK are freelance.
- + Traditional unions are changing. Most UVW members are not employed by one employer and they support each other in their struggles.
- + Even if you work for yourself, having access to resources and training to help you understand your rights as

a freelancer working for others is important.

- + Our aim as a union is to tackle the individualisation of work-related issues: it doesn't matter whether problems are experienced in a workplace or while working freelance.
- + Unions offer a space for solidarity with other creative workers in similar situations, and union members struggles in other sectors across the union.
- + We must recognise that our problems are shared, make connections between atomised workers, educate and support each other.

I don't have any problems at work at the moment

- + DCW aims to foster an environment of mutual support that goes beyond specific crisis responses.
- + While dealing with individual problems and casework will of course be a vital part of the union's activity, we want to build a supportive network that goes to the heart of problems prevalent in the current creative work sector (overwork, underpay, burnout, etc) and rebuild a more just work culture, from the ground up.

How is it organised? Do I need to be in London

- + We're a non-hierarchical member-led organisation. Anyone who joins can help

with organising, join a working group, organise a campaign or attend training. In London, there is an all member meeting every month and an organiser meeting every two weeks.

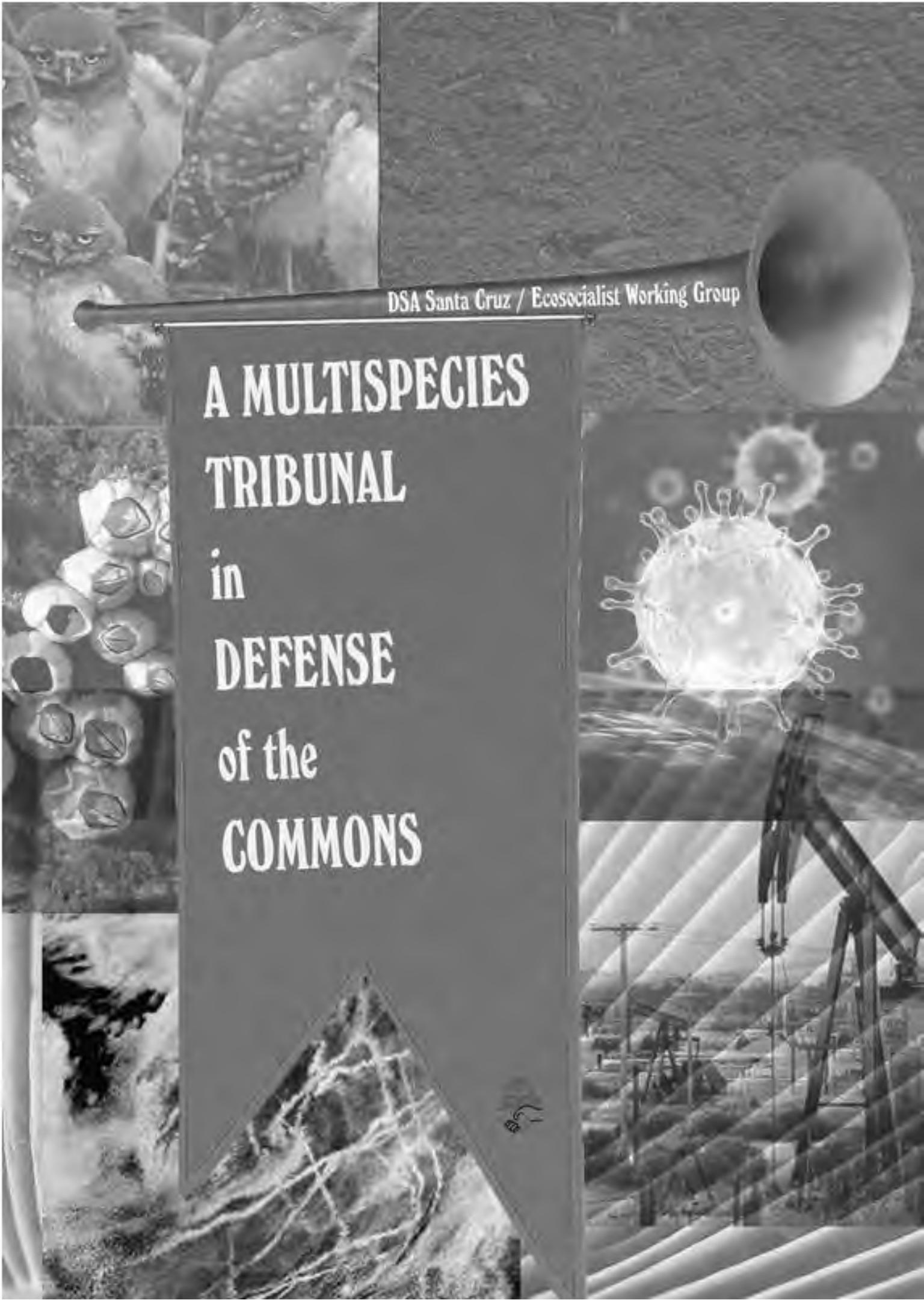
- + We mainly discuss things in between meetings on Discord, to avoid endless emails or WhatsApp group notifications.
- + We are looking to start other UK branches outside London, or around the world. Get in touch with us via email if you would like to be involved and have an area in mind.

Aren't unions just for blue collar workers?

- + The changing landscape of work has problematised conventional class distinctions, meaning that many people don't fit neatly into prescribed socio-economic categories anymore. With this in mind, unions are for anyone interested in just and lawful employment, and those actively seeking to improve workplace conditions for themselves and others.
- + DCW aims to work across class boundaries to foster a new consciousness that responds to current and arising labour conditions and build solidarity amongst its members.

Extracts from collectively written demands, formulated at the first DCW public meeting on 02/10/19

- + **We demand to be paid on time.**
- + **We demand paid overtime.**
- + **We demand to leave work on time and not to be expected to work outside work hours.**
- + **We demand that our employers are held accountable for our health, safety and wellbeing.**
- + **We demand an end to unpaid internships, unpaid pitching, unpaid 'opportunities' and unadvertised jobs.**
- + **We demand fair pay and pensions.**
- + **We demand union recognition!**



DSA Santa Cruz / Ecosocialist Working Group

**A MULTISPECIES
TRIBUNAL**
in
DEFENSE
of the
COMMONS

A multispecies tribunal in defense of the common tries to imagine a world without private property.

Even as we intuitively know that things like water, air, food, housing, and other means to live should be available to all, while in fact they are being privatized, and even as we thus feel that privatization has overtaken our lives, another common that cannot be privatized persists.

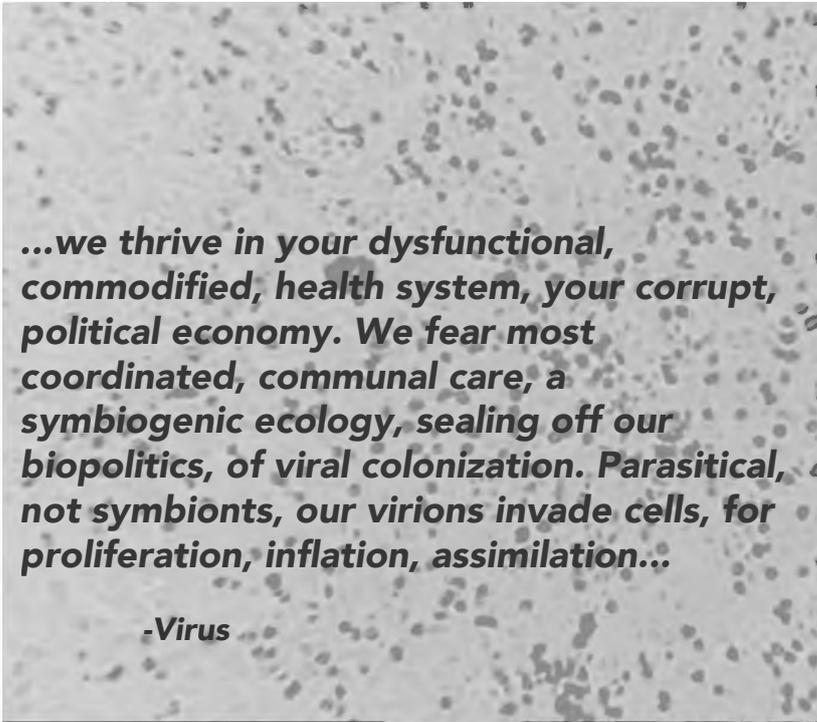
**Through a series of community-based,
performative public hearings
over the course of Spring 2020
—now impacted by the restrictions of COVID 19—
this public research project,
led by DSA Santa Cruz / Ecosocialist Working Group,
taps into our already existing ideas about the common—
it's here already,
if in forms that aren't quite known, seen,
or recognized—
and aims to help manifest them
in sensory, collective, public ways.**

**The tribunal is gathering testimonials that offer evidence of
harm enacted against the common by private property.**

Participants represent a broad spectrum of human and more-than-human witnesses and their advocates, including interdisciplinary scholars, artists, and activists and community groups who work on social and environmental justice issues in Central California.

Potential witnesses have already self-identified in the course of a series of public walks on the Salinas River that took place over the summer and fall of 2019; they include representatives of the anti-pesticide organization Safe Ag/Safe Schools, the anti-fossil industry group Protect Monterey County (an organization fighting oil industry incursions in Central CA), arundo donax (an "invasive weed"), as well as other community and indigenous activists in Santa Cruz (Protect Juristac), Gonzales, San Benito, Watsonville, and Salinas.

The longer term goal of the tribunal is to develop a comprehensive understanding of what is un/common among us, how we constitute that "us", and how to promote values that recognize and privilege what is shared rather than what is privately owned and controlled.



...we thrive in your dysfunctional, commodified, health system, your corrupt, political economy. We fear most coordinated, communal care, a symbiogenic ecology, sealing off our biopolitics, of viral colonization. Parasitical, not symbionts, our virions invade cells, for proliferation, inflation, assimilation...

-Virus

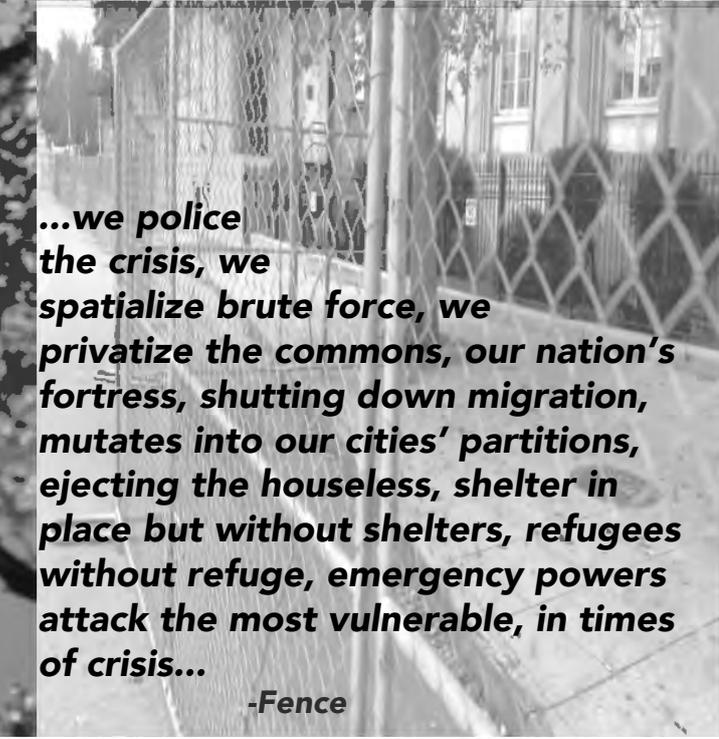


...Our discipline mirrors your subjugation...

-Succulent



COMRADE



...we police the crisis, we spatialize brute force, we privatize the commons, our nation's fortress, shutting down migration, mutates into our cities' partitions, ejecting the houseless, shelter in place but without shelters, refugees without refuge, emergency powers attack the most vulnerable, in times of crisis...

-Fence

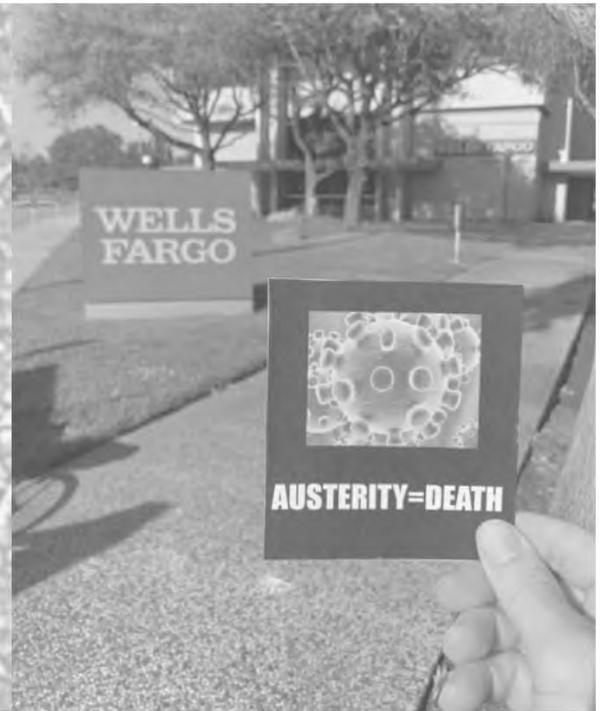


...We co-created cultures and traditions with human allies. The forces that have wrecked our habitats and ways of being are the same that attack theirs. Our sacredness is now packaged to benefit an idea of the individual divorced from any connection to the sea. Crimes against the commons in the name of profit, warming land and sea and breaking bonds of solidarity and splendor...

-Abalone

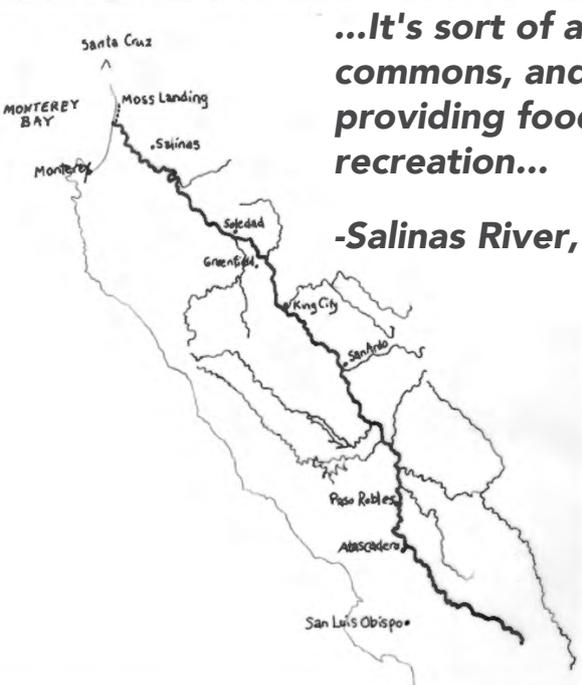
...Unhealthy California newt eggs represent the state of nature and commons under capitalism. The pond on a golf course is drained yearly to prevent flooding of the green, causing massive algae blooms and die-offs of wildlife in the pond. A healthy river with the eggs in almost ideal conditions under water with a live frog and pieces of various plants native to the Santa Cruz area shows nature and commons under community control...

-Newt Eggs



...It's sort of a fugitive river. It's underground, it's under the commons, and yet it's providing all this upper ground stuff—it's providing food, it's providing jobs, it's providing hospitality, recreation...

-Salinas River, California



tell your stories here

...A platform for free speech that captures data for profit and policing...

-@twitter

...How to decolonize the commons?



DSA Santa Cruz / Ecosocialist Working Group, 2020 (Contributors: Martabel Wasserman, Laurie Palmer, T. J. Demos, Angela Landes) Ecosocialism@dsasantacruz.org



Dearest Reader; In the last Critical Practice Notes (#5, Winter 2018/19) you were invited to a conversation, a study group as it were, on fascism and responses to it. You didn't write back. I decided to do my own study. Over the past year one cultural organization has drawn my attention in Los Angeles; it's called NAVEL. The reason for my interest is spelled out in the essay that follows. I'll say the impetus of the essay stemmed from a desire to find a distinct and perhaps avant-garde anti-fascist aesthetic there. Spoiler- I didn't find it, I found something else. Yet from the distance of this introduction I imagine if I wanted to go back and objectify queer bodies, I might arrive at something. But for the essay that follows I didn't do that. What I did arrive at is a renegotiation with a politics of culture, a kind of politics I've generally dismissed. So again I invite you to read this, and again if you have a response, a thought, a counterpoint, please write me back- it might end up somewhere meaningful.

-Your Scold,
Robby Herbst.

Assembly: Culture, Like Weimar Is a Hades, Or Is It A Bet?

What's the opposite of an assembly? Disassemble, get in line, suck it up, head for the hills, listen to what I say, follow the leader, order, chaos? Today is characterized by this kind of madness; gratefully the center hasn't held, sadly the center has ceded to a kind of parade of strongmen.

Assembly. In the past few years theorists Judith Butler and duo Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have published books looking at "assemblies" as social and political formations: respectively; 2015's *Notes Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly*, and 2017's *Assembly*. In early 2019 the art and event space NAVEL, in Los Angeles, began an ongoing platform called ASSEMBLIES. NAVEL supports the formation of distinct collaborative research, discussion, and creative groups through a discursive and self-reflective ASSEMBLIES platform. A biannual experiment now in to its second term, the first round of ASSEMBLIES saw groups form around African American ethics in music, re-conceptualizing Los Angeles' City governance, revolutionary wealth re-distribution, feminist and anti-colonial media literacy, and providing solar energy to power a bus tour for a queer African American artist collective called #SNATCHPOWER. The gatherings of

assemblies appear as a kind of madness, but they are structured and directed through a format developed as the ASSEMBLIES platform.

Butler's and Hardt+Negri's works both turn to the assembly as a social and political formulation responding to the limitations and demands of individually oriented identity politics and right-wing populism (respectively). In proposing the assembly they seek direction for "alliance" amidst the "multitudes". Ultimately in this era of Trumpian attacks on notions of democratic heterotopic power and identifications I'm wondering if culturally centered projects like NAVEL's Assembly could be considered as an anti-fascistic training grounds for innately queered formations, or does it remain within the realm of experiments within the economy of art?

The specter of Occupy, the movement of the squares, and the Arab Spring hangs over both books, though they reach different conclusions about it. As political theory Hardt and Negri's book wrestle with leaderless social movements. How they might be moved by there anarchic spirit, yet directed by a different form of leadership then what immediately presented itself at Occupy gatherings. They see the popular assembly (its success, it's failings) as an object lesson in leftist political leadership, and power-from-below, towards a future beyond neo-fascist-capitalism.

For her part, the philosopher Butler embraces the assembly itself. She opens her book as such:

Since the emergence of mass numbers of people in Tahrir Square in the winter months of 2010, scholars and activists have taken a renewed interest in the form and effect of public assemblies. The issue is at once ancient and timely. Groups suddenly coming together in large numbers can be a source of hope as well as fear, and just as there are always good reasons to fear the dangers of mob action, there are good grounds for discerning political potential in unpredictable assemblies. In a way, democratic theories have always feared "the mob" even as they affirm the importance of expressions of the popular will, even in their unruly form.

Butler sees the assembly as the place where the marginalized, particularly the precariat, make themselves seen. In the

assembly they engage themselves with a performance of “the people” (as in “We the people”) and accomplish two distinct tasks. They reaffirm the public-sphere as a location affirmative to the social-bonds that connect disparate individuals, and they make their demands upon the expansion of this very public-sphere known.

At NAVEL, Amanda Vincelli initiated ASSEMBLIES. She’s the Program Director and cofounder of the organization, and has been involved there since NAVEL’s beginning in 2015. She received an MFA from CalArts in 2017, and got her undergraduate degree from New York City’s New School in Strategic Design and Management. She is from Montreal. NAVEL is a non-profit 501C3. It’s located south west of South Park’s Staples Center. When you walk through the open second floor former warehouse space and out the side door that puts you on the roof, you can just about reach out to touch the 10 freeway as it rumbles past. When I went to NAVEL for the first time a video was being projected from this roof-top to a higher exterior wall, I imagine it’s primary audience were cars on the freeway itself.

NAVEL’s programming is notably diverse; both demographically and culturally. A recent month of programing included Swallow (the presentation of an “inbuilt queer club” designed by architects and designers Alison Veit and Noemi Polo), an event called *دايمه سفره* SOFRA DAYMEH (a night of “exquisite dining and conversation” centered around the Palestinian table organized by Daleen Saah and chef Reem Assil), and an exhibit of media arts and related workshops called The Zapatista Wi-Fi Rebellion (organized by Gloria Galvez with Color Coded). I’ve been struck by this diversity since the first time I encountered NAVEL; its public and its programming may take place in a sort of white cube, but it doesn’t speak neatly to that sensibility at all.

Vincelli presents as a Caucasian (but the nuance of her French-Canadian accent may not register in Southern California). From our conversations it appears to me that she has two programming goals at NAVEL; figure out how to make the organization self-sustaining fiscally, and figure out how to devolve her leadership so that it’s held by its community. ASSEMBLIES play a part in both goals. When Vincelli refers to the NAVEL’s “protocols” with me, her background in Strategic Design and Management perhaps speak loudly? “The strategy (of NAVEL) is to produce the protocols so the community interest, and what they feel, is most pressing is presented in the program.” The organization’s protocols according to Vincelli host a multiple points of “access” for the community, and she insists that is how the organization has always operated – so much so that there is a “snowball effect”. Vincelli stresses that NAVEL has a very open proposal process, whose diversity is built upon its preceding reputation. It is a diversity she stresses which has been built through outreach – to artists and communities who live in the area. When she tells me how they’ve been in communication with a nearby group of Latina mothers who’ve requested art education programs for their children – and how NAVEL looks forward to providing this – I asked her about the history of PSSST, the now closed controversial non-profit art-space in Boyle Heights that claimed its desire to produce art classes for its surrounding community as proof of its

political consciousness. Vincelli reminds me that NAVEL doesn’t own property, but that it rents. And that, assumedly, unlike PSSST NAVEL is doing community outreach “for all the right reasons”. She adds: “The space will be demolished. We’re occupying it till it’s last days. It was a private space before, till what it is now, and it’s continuing to open up to larger and larger groups of people.”

Before the start of the second iteration of ASSEMBLIES, NAVEL provided each sessions’ leaders a two-hour training in group facilitation led by social justice leadership facilitator Povi-Tamu Bryant. Povi has continued to make herself available to support the work of these leaders. But facilitation didn’t appear as stumbling blocks for the instigators of round one ASSEMBLIES whom I spoke with; Jennifer Moon, and Emma Sutton. Sutton lead her assembly, Human Connectivity and Sustainability, as a seminar in the same manner she would run a yoga workshop she does in private practice. She had proposed it to NAVEL, and then to NAVEL’s public, in order to explore the relationship between the body, trauma, human and natural ecologies. It consisted of 5 meetings. They included discussions, readings, movement workshops, and field trips to a composting facility and an urban organic farm. Sutton did the heavy organizational work in the assembly, proposing and scheduling meetings, readings, and leading conversations. However a culminating zine that summarized the assembly’s experience was completed together by the entire group, in a day of shared writing. Part of it joyfully declares, “We believe in fostering communities where cooperative action around sustainability, thrives. We believe in reinforcing a sense of optimism and humanity and hope in collectivity.”

Jennifer Moon’s assembly was titled “Faction 3 of the Revolution: Redistribute Wealth.” This theme stemmed directly from the interdisciplinary artist’s aesthetico-political practice; where Faction 3 of the Revolution is sandwiched between Faction’s 2 and 4; Political Pop Culture, and Science and Technology. Moon’s Revolution is an idiosyncratic, competent, personal and political philosophy and tract, which has in-part guided some of her cultural production in the past decade. Though the language of Moon’s proposition formed the basis of her assembly she told me that she happily fell into the role of administrator of the group, rather than its “leader.” This meant she was more of a secretary than a guru. According to Moon this assembly had a participation count that fluctuated between 15 and 5 members through its meetings. According to Moon and a video recording found online of this assembly’s final presentation at NAVEL, the group developed a fluid discourse together, and together they choose to move from the wide frame of Moon’s proposition to researching collective housing in Los Angeles. Moon told me that there were “tender moments” in her group. And the group displayed this affinity by adopting a collective name for one another, referring to themselves individually each as “Camille.” They did this so as to refuse individual attribution to collectively developed concepts in the assembly, borrowing the idea and name from contemporary French eco-autonomists of the Z.A.D. Through NAVEL each assembly is meant to commit to a 6 gatherings, though Moon’s group has continued to work together on the issue it discussed after the summation of its

official term; they've gone together on a field trip to the LA Based cohousing community Eco-Village. NAVEL's Vincelli tells me that one of the biggest positives she's witnessed through ASSEMBLIES is seeing groups of strangers come together in ways to discuss issues of mutual meaning. Moon says that a third of her group were strangers to her before Faction 3 began. Vincelli told me of a woman in Moon's assembly that works as an editor in the porn industry who participated in Moon's group. She described her experience in LA before her encounter with ASSEMBLIES as one of alienation, and that she'd never 'til then encountered a place where she could share in such a manner, particularly about her own precarity.

When I asked Vincelli if NAVEL's Assembly project was created in response to political trends in the United States and the rise of social inequality and disparate power relationships in Los Angeles, her response was pragmatic and emphatic. "I don't think NAVEL's goal is to directly address poverty in the United States" and "certainly, the program is aware of the political power of organizing in this way, but it is not delusional about having the capacity to solve the very complex systemic issues some of the groups are addressing within a semester." She stressed to me that its purpose is to represent and host its community and to promote the longevity and sustainability of ASSEMBLIES at NAVEL. Participants in the assemblies are asked to pay a small fee to support the program, and to create "micro-grants" for their use. While Vincelli underlines what appeared as an objectivist's technological perspective of creating neutral curatorial formats, the fact remains the platform she's created with ASSEMBLIES involves leadership training, and socio-political discourse and activity. The current term finds assemblies gathering around topics like organizing digital workers and artists adapting to climate catastrophe.

NAVEL itself is like its ASSEMBLIES project - it's everywhere and bringing different people along.

Gloria Galvez was a classmate with Vincelli at CalArts. She tells me she's been involved with NAVEL since its start. Her relationship with NAVEL began as a "collective resident." In NAVEL speak, collective member means she got a key to unlock the door. When NAVEL wasn't being used she could do what she wanted there. NAVEL business model started with the concept of a co-working space, it then changed, but kept that name, to become a rental space for events. According to Galvez it still receives significant income from its rental business, so scheduling exhibitions, assembly meetings, or personal time there can be a challenge. She believes her activist work in prison reform groups, and her relationship to the experimental anti-colonial school called at lands edge made her attractive to Vincelli. Today Galvez is on the Programming Committee at NAVEL, a step up in responsibility and support. Projects she organizes through the committee receives funding, production and curatorial support from the organization. Galvez' exhibition the Zapatista Wi-Fi Rebellion came about this way. The show included a bent video by the collective Anxious To Make; it detours commercialized digital speech and imagery. The new media

provocateur Fran Hich opened a short-term branch for his Zapatista inspired Spacebank during the short exhibition.

The north east facing wall of NAVEL, the one that fronts Venice Boulevard, it's mostly windows. There's a bar and service area in the open landing area near the top of the steps. Also a glassed off conference room looks into the galleries central space. Galvez tells me that one reason NAVEL's exhibitions are so post fine-art is because actual flat wall space is relatively limited, though truth be told there is a lot of wall there. Videos, projections, performances and lectures are just common at NAVEL.

Galvez suggests a second reason NAVEL's presentation of culture is so ranging. She says it's their mission statement. The statement is actually labeled as NAVEL's "intent", and it reads as a manifesto. Where other non-profit art spaces may offer implicit-critiques of the arts economy, NAVEL's implicates the entire global capitalist system:

The current state of the creative and intellectual class is precarious, unsustainable, and atomized. Under the conditions of late capitalism, the spectrum of options is slim between passive complacency, commercial compromise, or overwhelming hustle and insecure conditions. The current models of cultural institutions tend to provide mostly short-term visibility and support structures; many lack in opportunities for long-term engagement, care, and collaborative practice.

Art has the power to bring radical thought into meaningful forms and actions, which could lead to healthier and more just systems. However, critical and creative practices are vulnerable to instrumentalization, privatization, and subsumption into cultural capital. How can we maintain an autonomous position?

The tragedy of the commons calls for more intentional communities, collectives, and co-ownership models that act as protective layers, absorbing and distributing some of the financial and social pressures we face as individuals. This is what NAVEL is invested in exploring and actualizing. We believe the first steps towards more equitable cultural and socio-political systems requires a collaborative investigation and practice which:

- *Rethinks the topography of existing cultural establishments*
- *Explores alternative governance and organizational structures*
- *Favors process, collaboration, conversations, and re-negotiations*
- *Builds long-term relationships and engagement*
- *Uses technology, architecture, design and art as tools for rethinking and restructuring*
- *Is accessible and culturally equitable*
- *Redistributes resources*
- *Makes kin*

My interest in studying ASSEMBLIES developed from a desire to examine ways people have been making visual their power in relationship to fascism in this era of Trump. I'd

hoped to find a common cause between the deeply political meaning of the assembly book titles and the ASSEMBLIES project. Conscientious Anti-fascist organizing and action is taking place in Southern California; particularly addressing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). There has been vibrant, intersectional, representational, and direct action against ICE and its agents in the Los Angeles region. It's a daily battle for many, particular immigrants. Ad-hoc groups (along with other established ones) like the Koreatown Popular Assembly are rallying grassroots response to ICE incursions into the community.

In my search for common cause with NAVEL's ASSEMBLIES I'd been hoping to cite at NAVEL a visual language for our Los Angeles heterotopia; a crystalized radical form to hold up to the nation up a gem. This would be proof of a singular anti-fascist aesthetic from the woke-communities of SoCal. At one point I thought I'd glimpsed this in Emma Sutton's Human Connection and Sustainability assembly. Particularly in a declaration like, "We believe residing in each of us, from our evolution within nature, is the knowledge and understanding of how to coexist and flourish alongside nature." Then this shimmer quietly stepped back into the meaningful riot of holistic expression it had jumped out of.

What's funny is that the opposite of assembly, a disordered mob or chaos, is in many ways what appears as an assembly itself. NAVEL and its ASSEMBLIES are hard to hold down to a specific image and theme. While an assembly aims to give structure to disparate publics, aside from the invisible platform supporting it, it really does look like a lot of people doing random stuff together. It is the tedious aesthetics of attending and participating in meetings. Currently there are 8 NAVEL ASSEMBLIES going on, they meet at different times and places. Some didn't want to speak with me, others welcomed my questions. They each have their own language, conditions, and group dynamics. This profusion of styles is in striking contrast to the disciplined singular aesthetics we attribute to fascists; fascism's stark symbols, its ugly rhetorical phrases, its totalitarian uniforms. Fascism is a logo – the democratic riot of assemblies, they're an unruly mess.

But in the left we can identify an antifascist aesthetic, in Antifa with its committed recapitulation of black block identifiers; balaclavas, hooded sweatshirts, patches. punk. A December 2018 article in *Commune* magazine by A.M. Gittlitz titled "Anti-Anti-Antifa" comments on the way that this fixed black block aesthetic visually can identify Antifa as a subculture gang, which leaves it strategically weak. Gittlitz argues that in actuality defeating the fascists means so much more than just blocking up and battling Nazi's in the streets. It means doing the hard work of building an anti-racist world in the everyday. He suggests the concept of gray blocks. He advocates for ditching the black and becoming a part of the crowd; In context he reminds us the anti-fascist agenda is broadly supported. In the article Gittlitz says; "In moving forward, Antifa and pro-revolutionary groups more broadly should continue to change their wardrobe, ideas, and targets, in an effort to build a more effective movement against the state and capitalism."

An interesting conundrum's advanced by Hardt and Negri in their *Assembly* book is their recognition that public

assemblies invert Michel de Certeau's hierarchy of "strategy" over "tactics" in political organization. They note that grassroots democratic assemblies are primarily tactical in their position. In Tahrir Square, or Frank Ogawa Plaza assemblies are nothing if not public response units. If public assemblies apply inward or outward leadership it's invariably short-term and strategic in use. In their work of political theory Hardt and Negri wrestle with the conundrum of conceptualizing the power of "the party of movements" when the voice and action of the multitude are primarily spontaneous and reactive, and distinct leadership and leaders are fleeting and secondary. Our concept of political franchisement traditionally is built around singular images of charismatic leaders with distinct messages, not idiosyncratic mobs. For it's part NAVEL approaches its assemblies neither tactically nor strategically. NAVEL doesn't advance a singular concept of its political power- its mimetic form does so because it can and it should, though it isn't in response to a specific crisis. Like the eviction crisis, which has spurred the LA Tenants Union into existence, and into use of the assembly to successfully build popular power. NAVEL operates as a vessel from which many forms might emerge. This is the form of activism known as culture — an activism, if we can call it that, which may or may-not find its way in finding the way to building effective movement against the state and capital. It may or may-not be politics, it may or may-not be representation. Culture like, Weimar, is a bet, or is it a hedge? I imagine that classical liberalism has always embraced culture for these *enlightening* reasons, though there organizations have been top-down, rather than from the bottom upwards and outwards.

As a cultural organization, a 501C3, renting space in the city, the spare politics of self-preservation might define its existence and the parameters within which they frame for their ASSEMBLIES project. NAVEL may be just a cultural space, yet it appears to be doing that well. It is hosting and producing vibrant and extremely broad ranging forms. ASSEMBLIES could be a palimpsest of grassroots power. Doubtless there are other organizations just like it, grappling with the meaning of inclusion and inequality at this moment where those terms appear to be everything. Theorist Judith Butler doesn't ask much of assemblies; just that they happen amidst the precariat. Whether or not this visibility is a hedge against organized and perhaps armed fascists, that is the bet. While NAVEL is relatively private, it aims to disappear amongst the public that surrounds and supports it. It is hoping to keep going grey, both as a tactic for expansion and a strategy for its survival. We should hope so much.

What do you say? Got other ideas regarding queer visibility, organization, & fascism? Do you think the focus of this proposal studying responses to fascism is off? What would Arendt or Adorno, or your turtle say? Letters wanted perhaps for future publication. C.P.N. 3424 Council St. LA, CA 90004

The Center for Enchantment

The Center for Enchantment is located on Grand Street and seeks offerings & collaborations that animate the communities (past & present, human & non-human) of this place.

A STORY ABOUT ENCHANTMENT

Once upon a time, the whole world was made of songs. There were rocks and wood and water and fire and lightning and wind and all the things of the world, living and non-living—but it was song that wove them into a whole, into a world, that kept the globe together and alive. Along the way, something changed: Now, our world is made of things, of matter—of magma, of elements—and the forces that bind them—magnetism, gravity. But, even today, there are still lands of enchantment, places where sky and land and soil and water and animals and plants and living people and ancestors and buildings all sing together. If you are very lucky, you can wander into one—a mysterious cave, a sacred grove, a hidden valley where harmony turns you round right and you can't help but sense that there are fairies or angels nearby. Some of these places do still exist on Earth, but more and more disappear every year. They are endangered places, like an endangered species, like polar bears and tigers. That's why it is very important for us to create new enchanted places.

The Center for Enchantment believes that re-enchantment is possible and that it can happen right here at Grand and Madison in the shadow of the Empire State Plaza.

We know that re-enchantment is possible because there are new enchanted places on Earth. For example, the Grafton Peace Pagoda, located about 25 miles east of here, near the Massachusetts border. That is a new place which is made of a song.

As you arrive at the Peace Pagoda, you first pass the gendaihoto, or "standing stone," that bears the mantra "Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo." It is this song which has created the Peace Pagoda, which has brought the whole place into being. At sunrise, people sing this song to the Peace Pagoda and to the first light of day, and they sing it again at the evening light. The song lives here within this gendaihoto, which keeps singing for people when there is no one there. Long after people are gone from the earth, the stone will keep singing.

What are the songs that would create an enchanted land here in the shadow of the Empire State Plaza?

If this Street were a Song: a street interview radio show

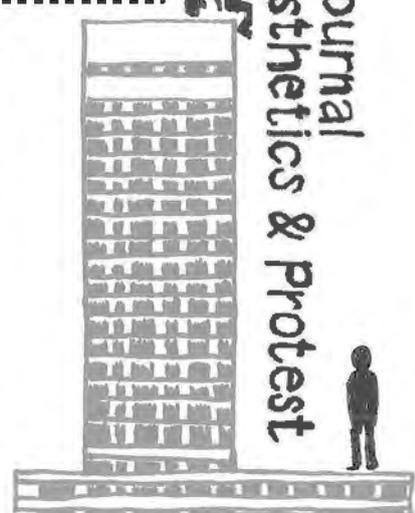
If this street were a song, what would it sound like? A new radio show, *If this Street were a Song*, will launch in Summer 2020 on **WCAA 107.3 fm**, the community radio station that broadcasts from **Grand Street Community Arts**.

Will you be a part of it? Our show is about the fabric of life on Grand Street—the voices, sounds, and stories of those of us who live, work, or spend time here (who sit on the stoops, commute on the sidewalks, or plant things in the ragtag community garden...) We are curious about things like: How long have you been spending time here? What brought you here? What sounds, feelings or memories are connected to this street? What do you love or hate about it? But maybe you don't want to talk about that. Then, tell us your favorite songs? Sing one for us? We will sing one back for you.

How to Find the Center for Enchantment

Email centerforenchantment@gmail.com to set up a socially-distanced, phone, or Zoom interview.
Or, find Stephanie out with her microphone.
Or, find Lex in Gabi's Garden on Sundays.

Culture beside itself
as a part of issue #11
The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest





Photos and images:

Header background photo, p. 1: **Lake Tear of the Clouds**. Bottom photo, p. 1: **Gendaihoto & Peace Pagoda**. SOS ad background photo, far right: **Occupy Albany meeting at Grand Street Community Arts, 2011**. Image, near right: **Black Madonna of Tindari**. Image, below: **Abdul, photo by Bhawin (Life is Grand)**. Image, center right: **Arendt van Curler**. Image, center far right: **Photo of 8 Elm St., from Historic Albany Walking Tour Guide, 1980s**. Footer background photo, p. 2: **St. Anthony's Procession of the Feast of Our Lady of Tindari, 1930s**.



buildings. These five buildings were the last of the high style Greek Revival groups built in the Mansion district. Although there are similarities among rowhouses of all styles, characteristics which distinguish the Greek Revival are very flat surfaces, enlivened only by slightly projecting sandstone sills, recessed doorways with pilasters and sidelights, a brick frieze, dentiled cornice, and a flat roof.

23) St. Anthony's Church. The church was built by the Italian community in 1906 and was designed, appropriately, in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The church closed in 1974 following an exodus from the neighborhood in the 1960's. For many years the blocks around the church would be closed off for the annual Italian Festival.

► Proceed South on Grand Street to Elm Street

24) 78-92 Grand Street. This eight building row on the east side of Grand Street was built in 1854 by James Estor, a prominent Albany contractor. The unusual Gothic detail here features drip molding above the windows and a tall finial at the center of the row. The row represents a shift in style in the mid-19th century from classical to more romantic forms such as the Gothic and Italianate styles which will be discussed below.

► Proceed West on Elm Street to Number 8 Elm Street

Notice the elegant and unaltered cast iron storefront at 77 Grand Street dating from the 1870's.

25) 8 Elm Street (1869). This structure was built originally as the Church of the Evangelical German Association. As the picture here indicates, a church steeple has been removed. In keeping with the changing ethnic composition of the neighborhood, St. Anthony's Church purchased the building in 1910 for use as a school. The structure is now used by the Free School Association of Albany.



Former Church of the Evangelical German Association, 8 Elm Street



We Share A Soundscape

THE QUESTION Should we use the term 'fascism' to describe the current hard-right turn in global politics? Like many others, we asked ourselves this question before forming our group. As theorists, artists, filmmakers and writers, we were aware that capital's (alleged) commitment to democracy was weakening. Liberal democracy was fraught with problems, but evidently a new authoritarian mentality was taking hold, in part a reaction to protest movements generated by the global financial crisis of 2008. Yet while this resurgence of viciously racist, misogynist, anti-migrant, and anti-communist politics has been transnational, its articulations of ideological and cultural elements must be interpreted – and fought – in the context of history, class struggle and emancipatory politics in each national formation. National space is the circumstance not of our own choosing. While thinking about the 'right term', certain things happened in Greece.

ANTI-FASCIST CULTURE

The First Year
February 2020

THE STATE (OF AFFAIRS) Greece, a border EU country facing East and thus receiving annually thousands of the persecuted and dispossessed, has become a laboratory for the normalisation of a diffused *fascist effect* since the right won the national election in July 2019. We formed as a group just months before, in February 2019, having anticipated the electoral defeat of the Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) government, following its earlier defeat at the negotiation table in a divided EU where the taxpayers of one country were set against those of another. We can't forget this 'divide and conquer' success of capital (assisted, of course, by the economic violence of capital controls imposed in the country) which turned the Greek left into the 'left parenthesis' of 2015 to 2019. Nor can we forget that the shameful EU-Turkey pact of 2016, entrenching the detention of refugees and migrants in concentration camps called 'hotspots,' was signed by Syriza. But we won't forget, either, that this defeated left did expand *by law* the civil rights of 'sexual' minorities (the 'creditors' did not object to that). A year after

we formed, we share the country's predicament in joining Trumpism with a European face. Eight months into the right-wing government, we have witnessed: the end of Greece's important university asylum law and the branding of public university as the cradle of criminal 'ultra-leftism'; the violent evacuation of squats that hosted refugees and anarchists; the glorification and free reign of the police; an alarming increase in anti-migrant hate-mongering in the media and formal state discourse; historical revisionism so as to discredit past anti-fascist struggles alongside plans for spectacular, costly fiestas of national/ist pride ('Greece 2021'); the push of misogynistic and anti-queer religion in schools and society at large; the affirmation of mafia capital; and, as we write these lines, in February-March 2020, the Greek-Turkish border is becoming a militarised crisis zone since Turkey opened its borders to

put pressure on Europe. On March 2, Greece announced its suspension of examining asylum applications (contra international law) for a month. The fascist effect is being suffered by thousands of the dispossessed trying to cross to Europe right now, being pushed back by the Greek armed forces. All this, and a lot more, amply confirms the aims and orientations of the party in power.

So for our group in Greece the interminable debate about the 'right term' is over: the 'new normality' promised by the government of New Democracy (the old establishment right-wing party, largely responsible for the country's indenture) is installing a Police-Religion-Business state that intends to end the left *even as a narrative of opposition*. This is why structures of solidarity are a primary target. This is a counter-revolutionary state that constantly identifies internal and external 'enemies'. Greatly assisted by a press and TV owned by media moguls, this state is planning a sea wall off the eastern islands against floating 'refuse' (read: human refuse) while also undermining women's and

LGBTQ rights. This is a government that has eliminated the gap between the far and centre right, ruling us as a Total Right. The Golden Dawn trial, ongoing since 2015 and not unrelated to the electoral defeat of this neo-Nazi party, is extremely important. Yet, as everyone here knows, Golden Dawn's insidious political objectives and worldview have been comfortably accommodated within this Total Right.

As for the Greek left, we see it in the writing on the walls; in the initiatives of solidarity schools and social centres; in the anti-capitalist feminists' collectives; in the social media and in 'islands' of the press; in the universities. We also see it as a divided presence in the parliament, unable to stop the barrage of anti-labour policies, and as a divided extra-parliamentary counter-power: dozens of political organisations are present in the frequent protest rallies whose crowds are nowhere near the size of those that filled 'the squares' just a few years back. The grassroots clusters today, vocal as they are, do not amount to a 'dual power' situation by any stretch of the imagination. Greece's Total Right and its fascist effect enjoy popular support - of the same kind enjoyed by the Tories in the UK and Trump in the USA. And this despite the fact that Greece is no imperialist hegemon. Still, it grabs some of the fruits of social imperialism available to the Global North, and it will do anything to hold this place. Greece now aligns itself with imperialist capital's general tendency to securitise all crises.

What was to be done? Greece has a rich anti-fascist history. And many anti-fascist groups doing good work were around long before our group formed. Why then did we form it? Because of the near total hegemony of the right (often camouflaged as the 'centre') in the cultural field. This meant restricted space for voices of protest, with little room to think *deeply* and *collectively* about the dismal developments under way. The understanding that fascism emerges to protect the status quo is not widely shared by cultural workers, because the dominant narrative sees fascism as the 'totalitarian' antithesis of 'democratic' capitalism. This

blind-spot pervades the cultural field, which bears the stamp of the class that owns it.

In the field of literature, very few have spoken publicly against the threat of neo-fascism. In the visual arts and in critical theory, things have been better, awareness more visible. But the public sphere overall is dominated by intellectuals of the right, while the art field is devastated by precarity and the 'save yourself' mentality that undermines collective opposition. Even if not overwhelmed by conservative liberalism, the country's art scene writhes in its split between commitment to the bourgeoisie and



International Women's Day demo, Athens, March 8, 2019

nostalgia for an avant-garde that was only rarely articulated as a force to be reckoned with in Greece. All this has been exacerbated by the absence of state support for art workers (which predated the crisis of 2010).

In our inaugural text, of March 2019, we tried to connect the dots between broader political developments and the state of the cultural field, refusing to see the situation in terms of 'business as usual'. We took the name Antifascist Culture to mark our stance and opted for member anonymity to ensure that whatever we did would not become 'cultural capital'. We wanted to register collective resistance in the cultural field in advance of the fascist effect. Anti-fascism would be low-fi political education: a means to stand against dominant ideology in the circumstances faced in Greece. We are keen to acknowledge that our inspiration came

from friends, colleagues and comrades abroad - and above all from Poland, where the Antifascist Year was just starting in February 2019. Most in our group live and work in Athens and some other city (Moscow, Edinburgh, Geneva, Amsterdam) or do residencies abroad; or travel for fieldwork and work. Our networks are extremely important for getting the bigger picture, for reading developments in Greece in relation what is going on elsewhere. We work against the dominant narrative that always sees Greece as an exception and as 'particular'. We know that all governments disseminate such narratives, and we know they are aimed against solidarity. For many decades now, internationalism has been stolen by capital from the workers and the 'wretched of the earth'. This has been a precondition for neo-fascism as an emergent transnational politics.

We knew from the outset that collective interventions are not easy - especially when one's life is dominated by waged labour (or securing income) and social reproduction work across borders. Yet we had no option but to try, knowing well that voluntary work means that something else is left undone. In the past year, we wrote and published theoretical texts about the situation in Greece, held an open assembly, filmed and screened an antifascist manifesto, gave lectures, started monthly workshops, translated and signed protest letters by comrades in other countries, and joined many demonstrations (the first of which was, symbolically, on International Women's Day, March 8, 2019). Some members left, others joined. Throughout the year, we have, above all, shared daily our fears and dismay over the deepening divides. This communication has, at times, been important for our sanity. We have not yet overcome the shock that we must now, in the 21st century, engage in antifascist struggle. Yet it becomes ever clearer that the conditions that necessitate it are here to stay.

THE FUTURE We are aware that the Greek Total Right in power comes with a total package of policies fully consistent with the country's place in the extraction and production chains of contemporary imperial-



Demo protesting the Turkish-Greek border conflict and in support of refugees and migrants, Athens, March 5, 2020. Called by the extra-parliamentary left and drawing thousands of protesters

-ism, even as a 'semi-periphery' of the Global North. Greece's 'exposure' to 'migraton flows' (state language) will only increase in a future of climate destruction; climate fascism may not be a distant future - this is widely discussed in activist and academic circles but rarely appears in public discourse. Overall, very few of the conditions that will define the 21st century enter public discourse in the country. What dominates public discourse are shrill calls for harder borders and the privatisation of everything. The future will be a situation of potential or actual explosiveness determined by global geopolitics. Will the rival imperialist powers go to war over control of resources and migration? Will the European Union unravel? Will Latin America be captured by new dictatorships? Will cyber-monarchists manage to realise their vision of accelerated techno-supremacy? There is no end to questions of this kind.

The lessons of the 20th century are in short supply. The politics of memory must be practiced from one day to the next. On the best of days, hopeful comrades ponder the possibilities of 'disaster communism'. But then we're all dragged back to everyday life: we switch on our computers (products of imperialist extraction) and carry on - unless, that is, we find ourselves drowning in our sea crossing to Lesbos island or shot by a local employer for daring to ask, as migrants, to be paid for labour done (this does happen in Greece). We're well aware that the

capitalist class, in defending its interests in multiple converging crises, will not hesitate to choose outright fascism over liberal democracy. Capital's adaptation plan, the one point of agreement among all its fractions, is to securitise and militarise just about everything. The endpoint of such adaptation, fascism grows by step and turn, as an organised power of elimination (for the 'unfortunate') and control (for the 'fortunate'). We refuse to capitulate to this dystopia - this is the stance we take as a group. We are grateful to the comrades who come to our aid against the ethics and politics of fear. As for poetry, it seems to exist after Auschwitz, but what is its universal cause?



museum

adjacent

adjacent

museum

Dispatch from the Ruins of our Alternative Futures

by Larissa Nickel

Mike Davis theorized in his 1990 book *City of Quartz*, that “the best place to view the Los Angeles of the next millennium is from the ruins of its alternative future.” Referencing the rural high desert of Los Angeles, and its alternative future conceived by Job Harriman in 1914 as the Llano del Rio Cooperative Colony—a socialist utopian colony which was secular, cooperative, feminist, and economically self-sustainable.

Now what remains of the Llano colony is a deserted adjacent void. Positioned next to or nearby the metropolis of the urbanite city, the stars appear brightest in the vast black emptiness of the desert. Except that the desert is never really empty—just yet to be rediscovered.

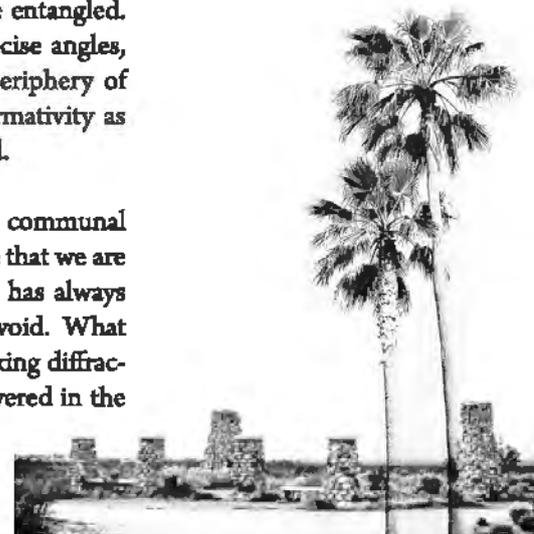
In rediscovering what remains in the ruins of our futures, can we actualize the margins, the other spaces, the adjacency in order to activate the representative voids of our concluding relativity? Could what is learned from Llano, that deserted future chance, be idiosyncratically

applied to practical problems elsewhere, where residency, collective space, museums, alternative futures, and heterotopias collide?

The collective process and its transpositions asks us to critically explore how social forums—and their institutions—create, distribute, and organize content, and where the infrastructures and conditions for curating and art production, consumption, and spectatorship are entangled. Not necessarily in the arranged precise angles, but within and beside the messy periphery of our empty gestures, and our performativity as the memory spaces of what’s beyond.

Adjacency promises little in any communal formation, but defers to the promise that we are together in a shifting labyrinth that has always been adjacent to an omnivorous void. What happens next is up to the light-breaking diffraction, to the creative potential discovered in the prisms of our alternate futures.

Look where one might, there was no other museum which covered the whole range of knowledge, which housed a great national library, and which formed a living embodiment or recreation of the classical museum where works of interest or merit, and books, and scholars were all housed side by side.



Kunst = Kapital

"we need to build new infrastructures within the ruins of the old." *The Vectoralist Class, Part Two. McKenzie Wark, 2016*

The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries

"Question not only official power structures, but also the revolutionary project itself." *Sisyphus*

dystopic

Dreams of a Better Future

by Leslie Foster

If there's one thing I love about being queer (and let's be honest, it's impossible to really just pick one thing), it's the permission we are given (and have taken) to be expansively strange, to see the structures around us, smirk, joyfully subvert them, and then subvert them again.

If there's one thing I love being about Black and queer, it's that I have a legacy of incredible resistance and hope on which I can build. It is a legacy of people who refused to stop building in preparation of futures they would not see and could not fully imagine.

I can trace my artistic lineage to the queer, trans, Black, and Brown folks who steadily worked to reframe and dissolve countless binaries. Forced into the margins, we have used the edges of society to construct our reality and it is beautiful. In his book *Cruising Utopia*, queer, Cuban American artist and academic José Esteban Muñoz stated that queerness' time is "a stepping out of the linearity of straight time." We are the builders of futures that have left the binary far behind. And as creators of better futures, we need a language, a way to leave signposts to future generations.

Dystopias exist to mirror and magnify past horrors as futures to be avoided. They are necessary, but in a world where popular culture cheerfully hawks doom without relief, we are in danger of becoming so completely dispirited

that it is difficult to find a way back. Balance is needed, instruction manuals for queer futures are required, and experimental film is an incredible vehicle for those guides. Dark times require a special kind of hope. Those of us who are queer know dark times intimately and are gifted at weaving sensual, joyfully defiant resistance in the midst of despair. And in its sensuality—much like the sensuality of those of us who are Black and Brown, those of us who are trans—it is perceived as frightening. "Does my sexiness upset you?" Yeah, it sure does upset folks, Dr. Angelou (rest in power). I want to be a part of creating work that delights in what Muñoz calls "the sensuous intersectionalities that mark our experience" as queer folks. Read that phrase again...isn't it delicious?

We have the tools that allow us to create hope for the generations of queer, trans, Black, and Brown folks who come after us. These tools allow us to subvert the normative world, breaking down binaries and oppression. We may not be able to live in the world to come, but we can strengthen its foundations. Let us leave mile markers for those who arrive after us; let us inspire them to continue building what our own foreparents began.

Collectively as Museum Adjacent, our publication of gray literature opens up the boundaries of creative practice to a range of socio-political, environmental, and spatial/formal territories that are either recurring in museological discourse or traditionally seen as hidden operations, on the periphery, or in the intercultural desert of culture beside itself.



art sucks

musetopic

Social Interfaces- On Being Present Where You Wish to Disappear

Museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up.

How do museums function? Can we alter the interface?

When do museums experiment? When do you?

Are museums beneficial for memory? Preservation? Display?

How do we knowingly and unknowingly perform institutional and museum functions?

Are institutions beneficial, and in what ways?

How does adjacency matter to arts institutions?

Does art=capital?

Does collectivity re-create the institution?

Will the revolution be televised, itemized, or socialized?

Should we disappear?

Should we be present?

How do we engage? Or drop out?

Hello everyone,

I have been blocked on Facebook for three days because I commented "Ugly Americans" on a friend's post regarding Mitch McConnell. Please help promote the Generational Aesthetics if you are on facebook.

Thank you- Hagop

> WILL ANYONE OR TWO BE WILLING TO TAKEURNS SERVING AS BARTENDER TONIGHT???

>

> PLEASE REPLY ALL.

>

> THANK YOU- Hagop

YEAH I'LL VOLUNTEER FOR A SHIFT

YEAH ME TOO

(I'll be rolling in around 4:30 with 4 large-ish paintings. See y'all later!)



Some Recent Readable Books

Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity by José Esteban Muñoz. Part manifesto, part love-letter to the past and the future, *Cruising Utopia* argues that the here and now are not enough and issues an urgent call for the revivification of the queer political imagination.

How Institutions Think: Between Contemporary Art and Curatorial Discourse ed Paul O'Neill, Lucy Steeds and Mick Wilson. This anthology—taking its title from Mary Douglas's 1986 book, *How Institutions Think*—reconsiders the practices, habits, models, and rhetoric of the institution and the anti-institution in contemporary art and curating.

Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity by Irene Gammel. In *Baroness Elsa*, Irene Gammel traces the extraordinary life and work of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874–1927), viewing her in the context of female dada and the historical battles fought by women in the early twentieth century.

Culture Class by Martha Rosler. In this collection of essays Martha Rosler embarks on a broad inquiry into the economic and historical precedents for today's soft ideology of creativity, with special focus on its elaborate retooling of class distinctions.

Dark Matter by Gregory Sholette. Art is big business, with some artists able to command huge sums of money for their works, while the vast majority are ignored or dismissed by critics. This book shows that these marginalised artists, the 'dark matter' of the art world, are essential to the survival of the mainstream and that they frequently organize in opposition to it.

Citizen: An American Lyric by Claudia Rankine. In essay, image, and poetry, *Citizen* is a powerful testament to the individual and collective effects of racism in our contemporary, often named "post-race" society.

Lee Lozano Dropout Piece by Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer. Drawing closely upon Lozano's private notebooks, Lehrer-Graiwer argues that *Dropout Piece* still haunts the art world today as oral history, ephemera and fantasy, and reveals how Lozano's practice advanced the relationship between language and performance and between private thought and urgent action.

Society Against the State by Pierre Clastres. Clastres offers examples of South American Indian groups that, although without hierarchical leadership, were both affluent and complex. In so doing he refutes the usual negative definition of tribal society and poses its order as a radical critique of our own Western state of power.

The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten. In this series of essays, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney draw on the theory and practice of the black radical tradition as it supports, inspires, and extends contemporary social and political thought and aesthetic critique.

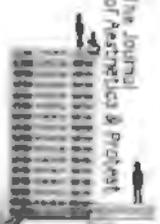
A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None by Katherine Yusoff. Yusoff initiates a transdisciplinary conversation between feminist black theory, geography, and the earth sciences, addressing the politics of the Anthropocene within the context of race, materiality, deep time, and the afterlives of geology.

MUSEUMADJACENT

Henderson Blumenthal
 Leslie Foster
 Kim Garcia
 Sharon Levy
 Kim Murray
 Hagop Najarian
 Larissa Nickel
 Dakota Noot
 Amoral Poem (Devion Law & Joshua Ross)
 Molly Schulman
 Christina Shurts
 Joshua Vasquez



culture beside itself
 on a part of issue #11



WE TBD

1st ENCOUNTER

Olga is offered to show at Human Resources. She contacts us. Why?

- A. Inspired by Sense 8
- B. Rosi Brackotti
- C. How people can truly work things out when coming from different places in life? Using art as platform to compress time and model stressors

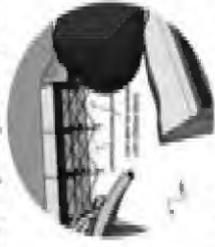


Met at Alex's house for dinner → shared our work

Met at Olga's — broke down workload, subgroups

Disagreement about need for physical buildout, disagreement about architects, disagreement about scaffolding (difference of opinion based on differing philosophies, beliefs, tastes)

We decide no architects (compromise, empathy, understanding after discussion)



Building pumpkin



Cutting hole open, everyone helped paint upstairs room red. Olga begins ancestral cleansing ritual.

Play space for Hey Baby

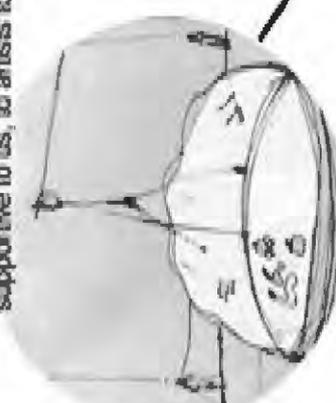


We meet at HR to feel the space

Met at HR — what are we doing? (Confusion)

A. Pulley, elevator, access, bereavement pumpkin for mourning groups, open upper space, WhatsApp, not group show, collaborative, how to activate high ceilings? Make a hole through the wall to change bodily movement and creative flow of energy in the space. How to make the space supportive to us, to artists to Human Resources and their mission?

Series of meetings at Olga's



PRODUCTION

Sketch design for scaffold

Occupying space, cleaning, Niko skateboarding inside HR, in Chinatown,

Olga and John move the soda machine into space and try to get it to work.



Series of performances

Radio show

Labor/manpower was thin towards the end. (Expectations & Overwhelm of tasks)



Daytime crew and after day job work evening crew. Sometimes we didn't see each other. (dissapointment at isolationand lonely feeling)
A. Expected others to contribute a bit more to building pumpkin
B. Olga's outside labor for scaffold, hiring queer carpenters to build steps and do finish work, we screw boards down



Felt overwhelming (help!)



Abandoned idea that was initially Alex's idea (supposed to be intimate [closed] and open for performances)

SOFT OPENING

Scaffold up, open wall, pumpkin structure, Fran casting John, all of us. Plaster cast of some of us get placed in red room. Video synopsis created by Kristy of our process is projected on second floor panel. Alex brings lots of hot dumplings for everyone to eat.



Where should Alex's painting go?



restorative justice dinner, (feeling of warmth as community forming) Hey Baby play group takes place during the whole installation and art opening times. Niko skateboards inside HF (our kids and other youth welcome in space during work hours makes me happy)

Jennifer maps out all the participants.



Queer Poets do a reading

CLOSING

von screens his video on big wall and does live performance with sound. Ofelia's sister makes hot posole.



DEINSTALL

emotional crisis painting over red wall. (emotional trigger from family trauma) Jennifer helps paint it white and finishes task for her. (empathy- soothing help) We get tall ladder and fill holes, Olga and Jennifer paint walls over all the marks from the mapping project.
Lumber collected so NIko can build halfpipe. Arrangements made with one collective member to borrow truck for pick up Other member of HF calls trash pick up. Olga arrives with truck to find lumber is thrown out in trash. (anger at poor communication of collective)



Microaggressions against Grandma Clock Artwork (racist actions against work is provoking and triggering- why didn't HR stand behind artwork?)

TOOK BREAK



Met at Olga's

wrote about our experience with project (exquisite corps)

Jennifer and Olga spoke on phone and came up with questions about why from our words?



We responded to questions

Olga and Jennifer talked on phone → Olga expressed that this project was about making friends while being artists? (how personal needs are multifaceted and messy and typically not accounted for in work)

Fran offered to design the timeline in in-Design

1. Due date for final timeline: Wed, February 12th
2. Fran lays out content provided timeline by Sat, February 15th
3. Fran sends timeline to us and we fill in what we want in response to timeline: feelings, thoughts, actions, images, etc.
4. Fran designs structure.

MEETING FOR POSSIBLE PUBLICATION (Luke)

Didn't happen, exhausted and irritated, no capacity (drained)

JOURNAL OF POLITICS & AESTHETICS (Olga emailed us)

Brought us to think about what we had done, why share this process? (Emergent Strategy)



Tiny Tortures writing

Fran and Jen met w/Olga about design of newsletter

Meeting w/Olga (Jennifer FaceTimed in for a bit)

A. In phone conversation Jennifer shares her dread about participating because she is so busy pulled in too many directions, but once she speaks to us she feels better. (Olga takes it personally. She is hurt by her expression of dread and lashes out at group.)

B. Olga expressed frustration, wanted us to be more open and honest, write more

Olga stepped back from group (had to self reflect about my tendency to want to control others when my expectations of others weren't happening- challenge inherent within collective work)

Fran, Olesia, von, and Jennifer met at Jennifer's and made this timeline

Hey

Olga, I'm sorry I haven't been able to add very much to this process. I have been in Oakland all week and the past several weeks have been very trying at work... Lots of tension, intense trauma exposure and very tight capacity personally. Its extremely challenging to hold it together each day doing this work and come home to be present for family. Its felt difficult to find time and emotional energy to dig into the task of recounting conflict or figuring out what to add to this document. I struggle to articulate with folks in my life how draining my job is. I really have to work very hard each day to keep on track and not internalize all that I see and interact with. And the last phone call we all and your stepping back and all that was in that made me feel unsure that I've had the emotional capacity to add more than I already have or that I was able to have the mental space to process this project, recount, etc. I've been a little unclear about the objectives inside a recounting of emotional conflict, not sure what it produces, that it feels like intense emotional/intellectual labor but I don't know to what end? Maybe this text should go in? At any rate, I'm sorry I haven't been more present but haven't really known how to.

tiny-tortures

5. Fran lays out our contributions and remarks into timeline format that will become newsletter for public distribution.
6. Jennifer asks for extension as she is very busy. (frustration with structure set up and deadlines set up by others and not aligning with her needs).

7. Olga Texts Marc at JOAP on Jennifer's behalf
8. Fran and Olga talk on phone and text. Olga frustrated since Journal although flexible needs our content on sooner side and Fran has other shows to work on)

9. Olga and Jennifer text negotiating about deadline and her inclusion.

10. Olga and Fran come to an agreement and new plan with Olga adding on behalf of Jennifer more emotional content in timeline respecting Fran's labor and time needs.

Microaggressions within the art community are common place just as they are in the heteronormative. Allow this to stand as an example for both institutions. A friend and I are walking into a gallery, a dinner party, a happening etc. My friend is light-skinned, dapper, elegant. The host is polite and greets him with a hug and a kiss on the cheek. A standard greet. Naturally, I expect the same formality. I extend myself in a moment of intimacy and they jerk away. Once again I am the Fool. We both tense up, with a level of my embarrassment my gesture into a bow. "good day!" I say. A turn of phrase that has now come to mean f--- your life. And so I joust and somehow simultaneously shuffle away. I find my friend and ask, "do you know the bossess?" my friend returns, "the bossless with the mistress. No, why?" I give no answer and try to enjoy myself. And after many a glass of whiskey, I do. Just to capitalize on the fact that this happens all the time. While writing this in the library (side note: I work in the library) an older gentleman comes to return some library material. The gentleman surveys the library workers and notices that we are all reading except for me. He comes up to me and asks what language are you writing in? to which I shrug my shoulders and say English. He says, "Oh I thought it was Ethiopian. I ignore the fact that Ethiopian is not a language. I smile... shyly... and ask, why? His reply is standard. "I don't know", then promptly hands me several jazz/blues albums to return. I think to myself I should've said, "Let us leave the present and return back to jazz..." or "A while ago, my partner and I were featured in an art show with Olga and several other notable artist. I won't go into the specifics of the show. As I will solely be discussing the instance of the microaggression as it pertains to the artwork being produced."

My partner my spouse my love my lady (sometimes) my sculpture (athletism) and I were tasked to create an addition to my grandmother's collection of Aunt Jennima portraits as she collects old Black memorabilia and anything old and black is very racist not that quaint sh... that happens now. By the time I was 12 I was completely desensitized to white supremacy, as well as completely confused about white folk. All I knew was that somehow white folk whom I immensely racist. As I was saying my grandmother had tasked us to create Auntie Jay this time she wanted auntie Jay to keep time. So she had us incorporate a circular clock she had hanging in the kitchen. You see all of the Auntie Jay paraphernalia was displayed in the kitchen and dining room. A nod to our ancestors that were forced to labor there. My grandmother referred to Auntie Jay as the "Queen of the Kitchen" holding dominion over the entire home and thus the well being of every individual in the household. She was and is responsible for our physical health and spiritual well being as the typical of Black families the daily communal prayer happens at the dinner table called "grace" at this moment the family discusses their wants needs and concerns. As an anti-cultural author I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to extend the narrative of Aunt Jennima beyond the familial and back into art discourse. Something I believe has been done many times, at this moment the most proper being Betty Sars militant vision of auntie Jay but there is also that giant mammy spirit Kara Walker did. Both amazing works both very bad. I wanted my entry to be a reeling off those works but also, I wanted it to add something to the conversation and make-scale of the present times we find ourselves in, while still adhering to the specifics of my Grandmother's wishes. The first decision I made was to allow the Mammy figure to have a lighter complexion. I wanted the messiness of that history to be present. The second was the positioning of the clock hands, which were to echo the doomsday clock which at the time was 2 1/2 min. Till midnight the closest it's been since 1945 which was 3 min (as I'm typing this it's gotten closer it's now 2 min till midnight. I guess the human race will have to become more or less either way, as men we are surely doomed). My final decision would be the name as I ended up calling it "times-up" in reference to the most recent progression of the Black movement condemning rape culture. Afterwards Olga and I presented it to the rest of the (active) artist in our cluster and we discussed its value and relevance to our show and where to place her within the project space. We decided upon a high overhanging space in the center most part of the abandoned Chinese theatre gallery. The collective then decided to add a large black drapery that followed out of the second floor window integrating auntie Jay and connecting the bourgeoisie with the uppercast, the wall, the floor, the space. And with that particular gesture we were finished with Auntie Jay at least until the closing reception where I was to perform and screen a short film featuring my Grandmother. But, in the weeks that were to come something strange was to take place in our project-space...

(so these motifs were allowed to perform in the abandoned Chinese theatre gallery art venue with us that is We did kept climbing up a dinner ladder to remove Auntie Jay from the wall wd???)

In the meantime, I was mesmerized by the cluster of female energy doing what some might call masculine labor. (Something my dad once said to my mother, "your daughter does man work.") Nonetheless, build build build. We did most build something! How else can we be invulnerable as artists. Our thoughts can only be visible through our actions. For this reason we did write this essay as we build platforms, scaffolds, using words and layers of friendship. For this reason I wrap my thoughts in plaster. Yet in this journey, this journal, I have learned to be vulnerable, bare. We did have embraced the truth, things that we cannot control. We did have encountered the beauty of nature, that whatever will be will be. We have faced absurdity, negligence, unconscious racism, narcissism, care, love and ultimately ourselves.

****Sees-if *** wooooo collective strength
Free Redrafts, lefty diote diblalom

Within fascistic political times, there is a need to come together to organize against brutal politics. A convening of people recognizing each other coming together in defiance of state sanctioned attacks of powerful structures. This is a necessary process when folks need to mobilize defenses quickly. However, the practice of forming a functioning community with work, limited resources, that based on notions of external markers of identity is a short term utilitarian defense and not our ideal long term aspiration. In a time characterized by intolerance of difference fueled by an increasing normalized narcissism, working together while holding space for our differences is one I wanted to explore... a skill to cultivate, an ideal to pursue. We are indeed all connected as explained in the understanding of contemporary physics, ecology, spirituality and chemistry. These ideas of shared consciousness and interconnectedness are an inspiring ethic and philosophical tenant many people can espouse easily. No to a mere thought experiment. Let's put our bodies in it! Make use of the real estate granted to us with high stakes, vulnerable stakes. But how do we practice these beliefs and put it in action, live it together as a "we" in real time? With this prompt we came together to see what art could be, created in, shared in physical form and space with a clock ticking for one month. Now we will create an art form that embodies our discrete differences (not a melting pot) AND try to tend to our personal circumstances, needs, sustain ourselves in this art context with identities changed by this very mission -We did.....

We did together, open, possibilities, expressing, sharing, thoughts, feelings, ourselves, negotiating time, space, labor, needs, outcome, new relations, habits, connections, time, discussing, building, shaping, questioning, I get around.

Our imagined structure starts as a fragmented entity (I enjoy this visualization) it slowly becomes more visually abstract to serve everyone's needs, wants, feelings, I fail in everyone and in the process feel like im losing my voice. I need to focus and redirect my attention to my needs and wants constantly. I enjoy making. Building. Keeping to myself. Masculine labor like sewing calms me, allows me to process.

But also enjoy giving. This labor is about giving, being perspective of our differences, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and the possibilities of the outcome. We keep building personally deciding we wanted to be part of this physical labor. Some time later as my energy is depleting I question "what was the point of the structure im helping create?", specifically the benevolent room. I feel like we have been laboring, giving my energy, to an idea that has been absent. The proposed benevolent groups never happened. The proposer was absent. I get frustrated. Thinking back, I grieve the best on my own.

In the increased absence of 3 we 5 continue our efforts, respect and love for one another.

I was satisfied in our outcome and the many uses our structure took on. It was a space for children, parents, musicians, performers, artists, queer folk, community

Around the Table: Reflections on Collective Working

This publication comes out of a series of conversations at The Field, a social centre in New Cross, London. The initial conversations were prompted by a collaboration by Zarino M. Lanni, at that point a member of The Field, and Fred Dewey, writer and educator, to apply his working group method of reading Hannah Arendt at The Field. Through this working group method, we aimed to discuss issues of difference, plurality and politics. Here we attempt to continue the conversation that was started there, through some reflections on personal experiences and memories by a small number of people involved in a range of collective projects. These are broader reflections not just limited to The Field, but ones which may shed more general light on processes of collective working in activist spaces.

In this pamphlet Christine Haigh writes about how people may have different stakes in activist projects, reflecting on her time spent as a housing activist and member of two housing cooperatives. Rosemin Najmudin describes her thought processes during the conversations prompted by Fred Dewey and Hannah Arendt and through them reflects on her own conflictual relationship with The Field. Jacob Stringer discusses internal and external stresses involved in organising at The Field, and Claudia Firth, (also co-editor of this publication), describes the friction of social relations in a London housing co-op and the labour involved in repairing and maintaining them. Lastly there is a prose poem on community cohesion by Danielle M. Heath.



The aim of the reading sessions, as agreed among some of The Field's members, was to create a space in which people could speak and have an equal say. We felt that there was a struggle, for the initial group involved in The Field and increasingly for others who joined, to find such a space. That while work had been done to agree on ways of working and to air differences, it had not been enough. While we had elaborated on our values and structures of operating as a collective, they weren't always remembered or adhered to, and sometimes conflicted with day to day decisions that the members managing the space had to make. Like with many groups, some people felt that certain personalities dominated, that cliques formed and people felt excluded. This was disappointing because the overall aim of The Field had been to build alliances between different groups and people, particularly in the local area. We hoped that the working group conversations on Arendt would provide an exercise in thinking together. And that we could become more conscious and able to engage with each other and work together, with the differences and discomforts these can produce. We wanted to provide a step in allowing a multiplicity of voices into the space.

The collective set up The Field to create commons and address the politics of inequality and difference between racialized, gendered, mentally or physically dis-abled or classed bodies. The initial ethos of The Field, was as a space where people from almost all walks of life should be able to find a space, to "sit" around the table and engage with the politics of the place. This at times translated into a cacophony of perspectives that promoted activities such as public debates, the co-existence of disparate groups (i.e. unions, university-related activities, choirs) and individuals using the space, where direct actions, fundraising, decision making for running the place, co-working office space, bike workshops, art therapies, theatre and music rehearsals as well as various leisurely activities from Yoga to art therapy were mostly free and open to anyone. The place captivated the imagination, as a hub for social change through the forging of relationships and the building of solidarity. It seemed important that to learn how to act outside of our comfort zones and to work through our differences was a fundamental step to accomplish this.

Through the readings and discussions, which were open to the wider public, we wanted to bring these things literally to the table. To discuss difference in politics and how it is to work within spaces of collectivity, with all their complexities. To 'bring things to the table', is to place them as topics for discussion, but it is also worth focussing attention on the table itself. A table is a thing that people can share and an object around which they can sit. It appears as a metaphor in the Arendt text extract chosen by Fred for the reading sessions. For Arendt, the table is a metaphor for public space: providing the arena for what everyone can see and hear. The space of politics. Sitting and taking up different places in relation to the table, the people who have gathered literally have different vantage points around it. For Arendt this allows for disagreement while also being a stable shared object in front of them. It relates them to each other and separates them at the same time. Fred Dewey describes the coming together of people around the table as a kind of proto-polis, 'the gathering builds a preliminary, or *propaedeutic* leading *into* politics'.¹ This is an introductory lesson in politics defined as people meeting, concerned with what is between them and in front of them. It aims to form a political equality among the differences. While the discussion was productive, some people found Arendt's writing inaccessible. Even so, it seemed to provide a useful perspective through which to debate everyday issues. This sometimes became quite heated. For instance there was a difficult conversation around anti-semitism and feelings ran high. The questions of how or whether listening was always even possible, desirable or just, were real ones that we had to face in order to work towards having an inclusive conversation.

Many different people attended the sessions, including seasoned members of The Field and newcomers. People talked of their experiences of working in groups and collectives and shared challenges they had had to face. Although, the sessions perhaps didn't quite create the space that was needed or affect The Field in the way it was hoped, they produced some useful reflections. The desired space to talk was only fleeting and temporary, and perhaps that is only to be expected. As Arendt says, the space for politics exists wherever people gather together: 'it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.'² This is one of the reasons it seemed a good idea to extend an invitation to write and record experiences of collective working.

Claudia Firth & Zarino Maru Lanni

A Diversity of Stakes in Housing Projects

Christine Haigh

After nearly a decade of working as part of different collectives and projects seeking to challenge the capitalist housing system, it feels like a good time for me to reflect on their strengths, failings and differences. These projects range from the household level, in two different housing co-operatives that both in different ways seek to provide different means of collectively owning and controlling housing, and living together outside of a traditional nuclear family set-up, to campaigns organised at the city or regional level that sought to influence national housing policy. In conversation with one of the convenors of this pamphlet, a theme that emerged from all of these projects was that of the diversity of objectives, motivations and what is at stake for the different actors involved in these collective endeavours, something that I am attempting to elaborate on more coherently here.

As the housing crisis began to bite more acutely in the first years of the 2010-15 UK coalition government's austerity programme (following decades of financialisation of housing), existing grassroots housing groups found themselves reinvigorated and new collectives emerged both to support those at the sharp end of the crisis and challenge those policies that were seen to be causing and exacerbating housing injustice. These included London Renters, a loose coalition of local authority-based private tenants' groups (which has since disbanded and been replaced by the more coherent and representative London Renters Union), and the Radical Housing Network, an alliance of over 30 groups and campaigns across London fighting for housing justice, including council and private tenants groups, squatting and homelessness projects, and those challenging gentrification. In both networks, there appeared to be a diversity of motivations for the involvement of the different member groups and the individuals that represented them at meetings and through online platforms such as email groups.

For some, being part of a network, with the information-sharing and solidarity that this entails, was sufficient motivation for their involvement. This was often reflected in an emphasis on using meeting time for groups to share detailed updates about their local activities, and a desire to identify similarities between specific campaigns and struggles for the purpose of practical solidarity and skill-sharing.

For others, their strategy was dependent on participation in wider coalitions or networks. Housing activists have often organised at the local level because struggles are by definition geographically based and people have often united around a concrete battle for a home (for example, resisting an eviction), an estate (often against demolition or 'redevelopment') or a neighbourhood (against gentrification). However, given that the UK housing crisis is a national phenomena (albeit more acute in some regions than others) and largely attributed to central government policies (or sometimes a lack of them), action at the local level and in particular campaigning directed at cash-strapped local authorities mainly run by opposition parties could often feel inadequate. But local renters groups from across London coming together around common struggles such as unaffordable rents and insecurity of tenure to challenge power holders in the capital while simultaneously remaining rooted in local struggles could make for a more coherent strategy to reform the conditions under which an increasing proportion of the population live.

The existence of these networks could also facilitate the organisation of collective activities such as protests, trainings or conferences. One site of diversity or potential conflict within these networks was often whether and how to undertake such projects, particularly when their success depended on a certain minimum amount of 'buy-in' from member groups. Typically an enthusiastic individual or group within the network would propose such a project but agreement to proceed would be useful to the network or at least some members, they either could not or did not want to

prioritise their personal or group's resources to help with realising it. In some cases, particularly with fairly straightforward undertakings, such as creating a set of resources of new housing groups, this did not create conflict or resentment, but in more ambitious projects, such as organising a conference or large-scale protest, a failure to gain widespread 'buy-in' from the wider network could result in frustration, burnout for a small number of individuals shouldering the majority of organising work, or even failure in the case of a planned mass mobilisation supported by too few groups.

My more recent experience of organising against the capitalist housing system has taken the form of building small-scale practical alternatives to individual home-ownership and the exploitative private rental market in the form of housing co-operatives. In two projects I have been involved in, one in London and the other in Swansea, individual participation has been driven by a diversity of motivations. One of the strongest in this type of project is typically a fundamental need to house oneself – but within this there can be a variety of motivations, from those who are often excluded from mainstream housing options due to their low income or receipt of Housing Benefit, to those who have the resources to obtain housing through other means yet seek the other benefits of co-housing arrangements such as company, shared meals, support with mental health problems, sharing responsibilities such as parenting or simply the tedious but necessary tasks of managing a house and home.

Surprisingly frequently (including in my own personal experience), people can also find themselves working to build co-housing projects in which they never expect to live. Often this occurs where impending life changes (in my case a move from London to Swansea) means that a project that might once have had the potential to house someone no longer does. Yet the nature of these endeavours often means that we believe in what the project is trying to achieve and want to see it succeed (and not see work we have put in up to this point go to waste). This sense is often enhanced by seeing how often new housing collectives fail to come to fruition – but can shift these actors role from 'doing for us' to 'doing for others', with potential implications for the sense of ownership resident members may feel.

In my current co-op in Swansea, we have also recently been navigating diversity of opinion with regard to expanding the project from a single house to a two-house collective. Motivation has ranged from those who feel that their needs are not met by the current house and while wanting to maintain a high degree of communal living, seek a smaller house with more flexibility about how the degree of communal living, seek a smaller house with more flexibility about how the communal space is used, to those who full support expansion of the co-op as an alternative to conventional housing options both socially and financially but want to stay living where and as they do currently, to those for whom the expansion of the co-op (with the change of membership and living arrangements that this will entail) feels like a challenge that is not necessarily welcomed.

Obviously in these latter collectives where participants live together, the stakes – namely maintaining the structures to remain housed – are typically much higher (although housing campaigns often engage in direct struggles, such as eviction resistance, to try to achieve the same end) and as a result the level of 'buy-in' is greater and the turnover of active members is much lower – although this tends only to be true of established housing co-operatives, with collectives that have not yet housed any of their members often finding it more difficult to retain a stable membership and involvement over an extended period. By contrast, the housing campaigns and networks that I have described have much lower barriers to entry (both for individuals and groups) and their membership, form and function has typically been much more fluid – which brings both strengths and challenges.

Meanwhile, power within such collectives often reflect the traditional privileges such as gender, class, education, race (which often manifest in whether and how people can participate in such meetings) – but may also be the product of more chance circumstance: the campaign that has taken off against all the odds and has more members able to propose and take on new projects within a network, or a couple of co-op members realising that the different living situation they are looking for coincides and they can work together to achieve this. As participants we should be mindful of our intersectional privileges and actively seek to rectify their effects within our collectives as well as within society more broadly but also recognise that these are never the only forces at play.

In all of these collectives, ambiguity over the objectives and diversity of motivation can be a challenge and frequent source of heated debate and conflict – but can also be a strength, widening participation compared to organisations where all actors must share a narrow focus, and enabling participants to have varying levels of involvement according to their resources and objectives. So as participants in collectives such as these, rather than trying to force alignment of objectives where this is not always possible – and may even stifle the diversity of involvement that this may bring - perhaps our priority should be to consciously recognise where there is a range of motivations for participation, and accept and embrace the diversity that this may bring to our organising.

Working Together with Stress

Jacob Stringer

At the beginning, organising at The Field filled me with excitement. The project was bursting with possibilities and some days I went home from a meeting or event walking on air. It continued to fill me with excitement for some time after the beginning. Some of those possibilities did become realities, there were great highs and some of the usual lows of trying to do anything experimental. Then, at a certain point, The Field began to fill me with stress. There were times the excitement and stress overlapped and that felt bearable. By the time I left, stress had destroyed all joy. The specific reasons for this change would make fairly dull reading to outsiders to the project. I would rather discuss some generalities I began to see emerging in this and other projects I have been a part of. Stress in organising is often discussed as something to be avoided. Take care of yourself, we are admonished. Make your meetings fun. And so we try to get decisions made without becoming stressed, and that seems like a good goal. But there are, I find myself thinking, many causes of stress, some of which cannot be avoided entirely. I'll discuss here two stress factors, and the possibilities of truly ending them.

The first type of stress comes from our internal drives. We have a dream and want to see it brought into reality. The gap between what a project is and what we want it to be can fill us with tension. Therapy and self-help books have a lot to say about how to resolve this tension, but a lot of it feels unhelpful to those of a radical political persuasion. Learn to accept, be content with what is, we are often admonished. Look within yourself and see that you are creating the stress. Yet it is in the nature of those with radical political views that they are dissatisfied with what is. Trying to suppress that side of ourselves would be to kill part of our identity. And so the project we are building grows, yet grows into something we don't quite recognise from our dreams. As time goes on the divergence grows greater, because life is not controllable in the way we want it to be. How are we to deal with this? Our dreams drive us. Is it time to discard our dreams in order to face reality? That feels like giving up. Why not just leave capitalism as it is then? Why not just wait for the rising seas to find us? Or perhaps we could compromise a little, between our dreams and reality. Compromise? Who wants that? Nobody. But it is necessary for those who want to work collectively. The compromise we must make is not with capital or our rulers, but with those around us and the reality of our collective resources. That compromise so often feels like a loss of dreams that it can become part of our angst about the world. But need it be a source of stress? What of valuing the dreams of those around us? And what of respecting the limits of ourselves and our capacities? Can we not build dreams that encompass other people and our own limits within the world? Perhaps we would have to learn to dream anew, but is that such a bad thing? A change to our ways of being created by pursuing a radical path is bound to include a change to our dreams, isn't it? Yet it is the original dream that drove us, it is our very engine. How can we abandon it? And if we do allow our dreams to change, in a few years' time would circumstances make us abandon that new vision in turn and re-shape our dreams once again? In the end I can only present this as a kind of puzzle, not a solution to stress.

The second type of stress is that which comes from disagreement and outright conflict. At The Field these were low-key at the beginning, which is not to say we agreed on everything, more that one of the problems of 'consensus' decision-making is the tendency for the conflicts to be pushed below the surface for the sake of a functioning organisation. There are also other reasons for conflict to remain hidden: to make life easier, for politeness sake, because friendships might be damaged, because dominant people wield social power, or because you all just want to go home at the end of the night. Hiding the conflict creates one kind of stress, perhaps emerging in sleepless nights or drunken rants to friends not involved in the project. But bringing the conflict out into the open - much healthier, we all agree - often makes the stress worse. Now people are openly upset at things other people are saying. Friendships are being strained, even broken. The conflict begins to poison other parts of the organising. Nobody feels good about meetings. I say 'nobody', but here's something we don't always notice: our tolerance for conflict and the stress it creates varies with our upbringings. Psychologists talk about our ability to self-regulate in response to stress factors; that is to say, our ability to return to a relaxed state when something has caused us to go into alert mode. We differ wildly in our ability to do this. Those who had parents who helped them 'self-regulate' their feelings are more able to hold the conflict without letting it reach their inner core. They are unlikely to take the stress to bed with them. Those with parents whose own stress or neglect meant they didn't learn to self-regulate well will find such conflicts more intrusive. The stress will begin to overrun their lives and haunt their dreams. For a minority whose childhoods were troubled or abusive in certain ways, their stress levels are so high all the time that the conflict will make little difference to them, will simply blur into the constant stress that is life, leading them to feel little need to limit the conflict.

We can try to resolve these stressful conflicts, but I do not take the view that they can always be resolved. Sometimes standpoints or personalities are too far apart, sometimes the demands of our inner selves are set directly against the desires of others. Even when we can resolve the conflict, people's reactions to it arise not just from their views, or their level of investment in the debate, not even just from their learned reactions to stress, but also from the way they have been raised to regard conflict itself. Is conflict an okay thing to live with, or is it to be smoothed over as soon as possible? Is conflict a bit of a game, or is it a catastrophe? People react differently too to

'losing' an argument. In consensus decision-making losing is not really supposed to happen, but in my experience it does. How it feels to us to lose depends to a high degree on our histories. The emotional landscape of our upbringings then creates a whole set of stress factors that can intersect with class, race, gender, in complex and difficult ways. It is difficult to talk about this publicly, for perhaps many people don't recognise their own stress response, or have no wish to talk about its origins. Yet it lurks there whether we talk about it or not. We could perhaps create more of a therapeutic culture within our organisations, attempt to recognise our traumas and how they prevent us working together, but even if everyone were willing to engage with such a culture, therapy is a long process and not always successful. Unless we can reach a utopia where every childhood is trauma-free, conflict and our differing responses to conflict will continue to create stress among us.

I wish we could organise without stress, yet I think there's something inevitable in its appearance among those trying to create a new world: tensions must arise in the process of creating anything collective and anything new. Perhaps if we accept this we can begin to understand more about stress, where it comes from, how to negotiate with it. And yes, I feel sure we can reduce our stress by learning more about each other and how to work together. But I suspect we must work with stress as we must work with other less welcome certainties of political organising - setbacks, exhaustion, moments of doubt - not as something we can get rid of entirely. It's good to talk about the joys of political action, but I've never met anyone who found it to be all joy. Stress always creeps in. We can't wish it away and we can't design it away with more fun meetings. Perhaps we should talk about that.

Reflections on Living in a Housing Co-op

Claudia Firth

There are over 200 housing co-ops all over London, most of which came out of campaigns and social movements of the 1970's and 80's. Because of this, most of them, like the one I live in, have been in existence for a long time. Many were set up by a small group of people who wanted to live together, while others such as this one, were set up as an empty shell, with basic 'off the peg' structures and policies for self-management. This means that shared knowledge, values, ways of living and doing have to be constantly rewritten and negotiated by a group of people who would not necessarily choose to live together. It is a very mixed organisation, in which people come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of occupations: teachers, taxi drivers, retail staff, lecturers, doctors. A large number of residents have been in the co-op since it was set up over twenty years ago, but there is also a flow-through of new people arriving as flats become empty. These new residents come into the existing relations with all its historical baggage. Mostly they get involved but sometimes they get put off and back away if it looks too difficult and acrimonious.

I'm not sure what I expected when I moved in, but living in a co-op, while very rewarding, is not always easy. While cooperation exists in all areas of life, it is often accompanied by rivalry and competition and these often surface into cooperative life even as people try and do things differently. I want to highlight here some issues around collective living and working I have come across in the years I have been living cooperatively.

Housing co-ops tend to pride themselves on the upkeep of the buildings they inhabit, but the upkeep of the social relationships within the organisation can sometimes be neglected. The repair and maintenance of the social fabric is just as important as its physical repair and maintenance, but is easier to ignore. Social interaction takes work. It is invisible labour that is not always valued. Small gestures like nodding or saying hello to a neighbour in a lift, corridor or courtyard, can be significant for the ongoing functioning of the organisation. This is similar to those of a workplace, and small gestures of recognition can reaffirm neighbours' common status to each other on an everyday basis. The significance of these tiny gestures becomes clearer if the knowledge of them as transactions is ignored and they aren't reciprocated, or don't take place at all. Their absence might be read badly, as a sign of ambivalence or even hostility. With neighbours who share a building and a supposed sense of community, this becomes even more acute, as unlike a workplace, there are less boundaries, you cannot leave at the end of the day and it is more likely to catch people in those liminal spaces and moments between public and private, in pyjamas to pick up the mail or the washing, or in the transition between work and home.

These are moments when the self might be a little unravelled, dishevelled or not totally together and the mixing up of different modes of address have the potential to cause irritation or upset. This can be particularly the case for those members that have taken on management roles and might be expected to respond in a certain way when they are thinking of themselves as being 'off duty'.

This reveals something about the different sets of social relations that exist within the co-op. There are those of neighbours, relatives, friends and co-workers and these can overlap and coexist, or be quite separate. The boundaries between them and which ones are operating at particular times might not always be clear. There are also different levels of neighbourliness with varying degrees of distance, closeness and reciprocity. In particular, there is the relationship between co-op members who have taken on management roles and those who have not. This was one of the first things I noticed when I moved into the co-op. I remember getting into a lift and somebody saying, 'they've put the rents up again', as if it was an outside body, when in reality, it would have been a small group of their neighbours setting the rent levels, and the decision would have been agreed by the majority of co-op members. And while those in positions of management rotate quite often, there can still be a feeling of 'us' and 'them'. Much of neoliberal society is based around notions of a service economy with an emphasis on customers and service providers and this culture of service provision leaks into the cooperative sector. Within a housing co-op, all members are theoretically both the customer as a tenant, and the service provider or landlord, as part of the wider collective. This can be confusing and tenant/members still sometimes expect a particular kind of service from the co-op even though they in effect have both roles.

Social interactions are generally governed by a myriad of unspoken rules. These are shared usually within a culture, including the culture within an organisation. In cultures where there is an attempt at a high level of democracy, there is also the potential for more issues to become contestable. In a self-managed organisation like a co-op, everyday issues can very easily become contested and partly because of the overlapping of these different types of social relations, it can be difficult to figure out how to deal with this increase in contestation. This political aspect of debates, disagreements and decision making can test people's relationships with each other and sometimes cause minor abrasions. If these difficulties are not dealt with or repaired or mended at the time, they can start to pile up and become hardened like layers of geology. Tiny resentments can build up over time and it can become more difficult to work together as a group. The longer the organisation has existed, the more difficult it can be to deal with historical issues such as cases of disagreement between neighbours. Sometimes people may not talk to each other because of something that happened a long time ago or it can just be awkward and difficult to get people involved. An influx of new members can sometimes help as long as they also don't get embroiled in historic arguments that resurface.

While a housing co-op has a reasonably flat structure and everyone is a volunteer, hidden hierarchies can still very easily occur. Bullying can and does happen and has happened within my co-op. Sexism and racism, while not overt can also affect people's relationships with each other and exist within the wider cooperative movement as they do in society as a whole. Sometimes people in positions of management see themselves as having power and want to hold onto it, consolidate or turn it into a little kingdom. There can be unspoken disagreements about how power should operate. Tensions between different ideas of cooperation and what this means in practical terms

Inclusion?

Rosemin Najmudin

The most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution.

Hannah Arendt, *The New Yorker*, 12 September 1970

Attending the discussions, I was reminded of the quote above. I questioned mine and the groups' involvement, our decision to participate (or not) and what was to be gained from such conversations. I decided that it was best to think of my own reasons for attending and to try not to judge, but I was affected by others. Some wanting to be there but not listen or choosing to sit alone outside the group.

Having reached an age where I feel confident, I want to expand my own activism with others. My background is in education, culture, diversity, inclusion, equality and community engagement. I like learning, sharing ways to learn, empowering others and I am a firm believer of local sustainable politics, sharing resources and knowledge. I thought I was quietly assertive. I research and always try to talk to others. The difficulty is to listen and be listened to. I am Ugandan Indian and feel I am often fighting a western culture that tries to make me feel inferior. Luckily in the Arendt conversations this was not the case. I did feel listened to on issues of equality and activism in the 1950s that were applicable to issues today. Some of the conversations were academic and I set myself the task to put them into practice.

Generally I feel at ease with people, I believe that it is in talking that we negotiate and learn. I believe that communication is key, we can learn and teach, share experiences and listen to the other's point of view. However I know that not everyone thinks the same, so how can we progress? As well as talking, I think we need to do. We need to be active and do things together. But suggestions only work when people are willing. How do we put this into practice? Does everyone share these thoughts and feelings? Will everyone want to include everyone or is there power in excluding? A clear example is The Field where we held the discussions. Since I joined the project, it has been mainly led by one person, even though in reality it was meant to be community-led.

During the Arendt conversations, discussions flowed. Sometimes were difficult to hear and at other times there was an ease and commonality. We cooked and shared food, made each other drinks, broke into small groups and shared as a large group. I made friends and widened my network, however recently I have found that I am excluded and communication from The Field has ceased. I have tried to ask why this is, but no-one seems to be able to give me an answer. I am excluded and doors have closed. I gained and I lost.

can also arise. This is especially the case if people come from and are used to different traditions of group working such as traditional trade union models which tend to be quite hierarchical in nature, or more non-hierarchical models.

It is not always easy to disagree effectively in a way that is respectful and productive. Most people don't have a lot of experience of cooperation. Working together in a way that is productive for the whole organisation takes practice and thought. It seems that perhaps cooperative social relations have to be learnt or re-learned. Education, one of the seven principles of the cooperative movement seems really important in this context in order to communicate the culture to members and encourage reflection and learning.

Written policies can also be useful to work against potential abuses of power, bullying and discrimination. However the question of how much structure to establish can be tricky. On the one hand, informal social structures can allow hidden hierarchies to go unchecked while on the other, too much bureaucracy and structure can be stultifying. Reflecting on these issues, it seems that building and maintaining social infrastructure is really important for keeping an organisation such as a housing co-op healthy and thriving. Maintaining good social relationships is just as important as mending the windows and doors, giving the walls a lick of paint or cleaning the corridors. Perhaps goodwill could be treated as a form of wealth to be built up in a similar way to the financial reserves that every co-op has to keep in order to run smoothly. Goodwill could be generated in the tiny every day interactions between neighbours. In trying to dig down and loosen up historical issues between people, through social events and respectful communication. If this was understood and taken as a core value, it could potentially act as a buffer to the political wear and tear that self-governance can produce.

Community Cohesion

Danielle M. Heath

There are many definitions, common objectives and reasons for coalition.

A cohesive community shares a unique vision without precision but incision of a sense and a reason for belonging as a given right to all in our diverse community and where people's heritage is truly celebrated.

A space where cultural differences bring fresh insights and they are not diluted with prejudices overnight.

Strong relationships are formed, nurtured and healthily maintained between people from all backgrounds in a common ground; overcoming typical challenges in the struggle for a place to simply be, within a society where class solidarity versus agents of industrial capitalism chew the best of humankind and spit out to the streets what's left.

Did you notice that bird nest?

There is no clarity on what to do next.

They say "Never mind", but my sense of cohesion is not blind and my solidarity goes on override.

Where does the interest align on social capacity and formal politics in our cultural realm?

Our cosmopolitan margin often marginalized leaves a lot to be desired.

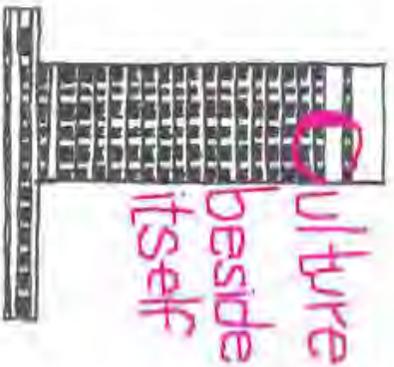
Politeness while it all seems a mess is encouraged less and less. Who cares?

Swimming against the tide is also pointless.

Before we can shout that we all can access opportunities to learn and grow as humankind, first we have to ensure it is included in the institutions, written in their constitutions, put into day-to-day practice, without malice. Not for a special event but for good practice.

I am all for regular requests for revision and amendments of laws and policies to incorporate a more cohesive approach to people, which evolves with the times and reflects that we are equals in the eyes of the laws that govern the land.

The Journal
of Aesthetics & Protest



¹ Fred Dewey, *From an apparent contradiction in Arendt*

² to a working group method, Berlin: re: public, 2016, p. 23

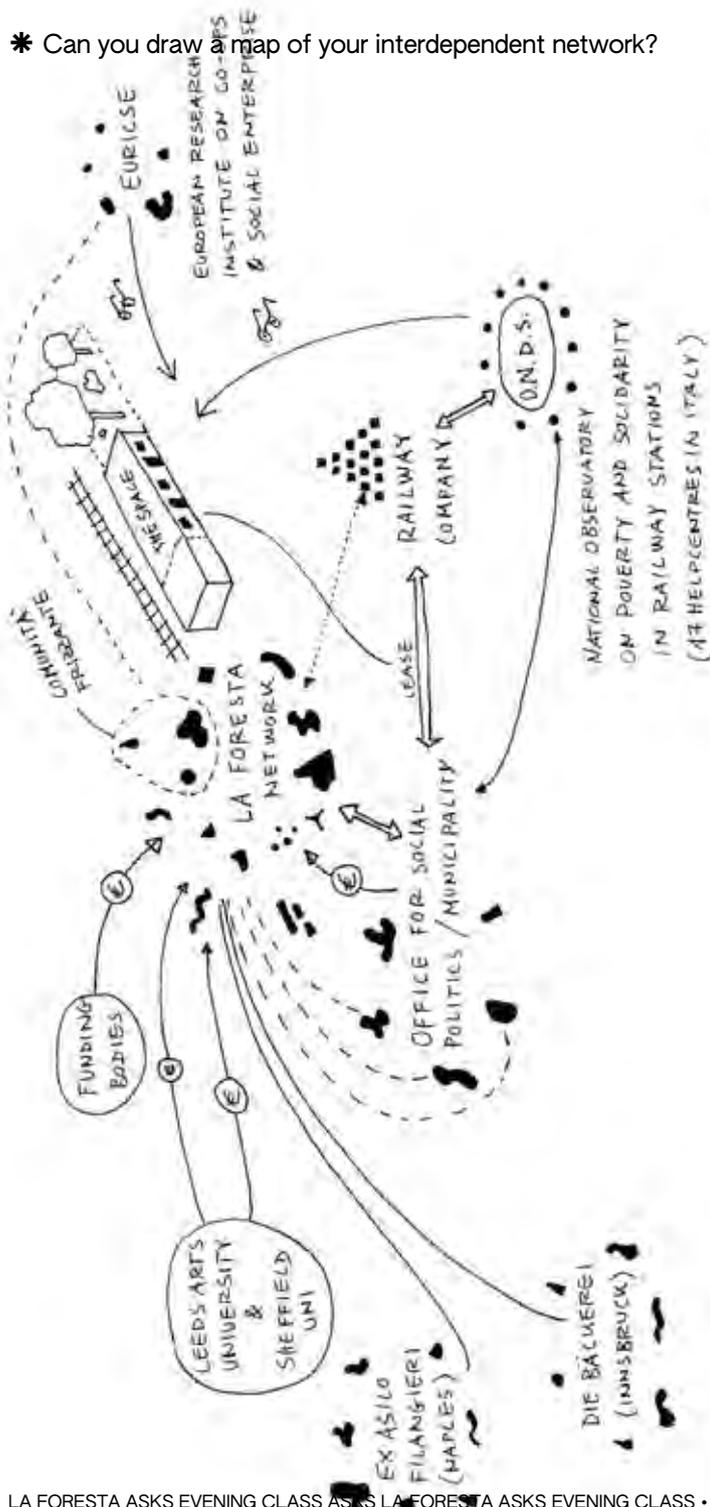
³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018 (1958), p. 198

* One of our main impressions from spending time here is the sense of abundance—people are so generous with their time, attention and resources. What role do you think generosity plays in creating a space like this?

There is a saying in synergic gardening that *ci concimiamo a vicenda*—“we fertilise each other”. The social relations between us are the most important thing we have, and need to be cultivated and safeguarded, while material resources come and go. We want to build up an environment in which everyone feels free to contribute to the Forest according to their own resources and will, without feeling guilty for giving too much or too little.

Our approach is that whoever proposes a new activity, tool or method also takes responsibility for it, while feeling supported by others and welcome to try out new things. In the Forest everything is in a permanent state of experimentation and evaluation.

* Can you draw a map of your interdependent network?



La Foresta asks

EVENING CLASS

* Who are you?

An experiment in self-organised learning. An unwieldy collective effort. 14 members right now. Over 40 members since we started in 2016. A support structure. A common pool of resources. After hours. Cultivating common interests. Open for anyone to join. Flexible and resilient. A group of designers, artists and teachers. Prototyping new methods for living, working and learning together. Based in London. An interdependent network. A space for learning and investigating. A space for empathy. A collection of many voices. Self-supporting. Not-for-profit. In, between, with, around and against the academy and industry. Learning from each other. Working it out as we go.

* Can you make a drawing of your organisational form?

* How do you deal with the fact that some people are more passionate about Evening Class and therefore make more time for it?

It's hard to get the balance right between individual autonomy and mutual support. It's important for us to allow everyone to define their own level of commitment. We need to take into account that some people are more interested, motivated or simply have more time than others.

On the other hand, we also need to make sure that we're supporting each other, and that the same people don't end up doing all the work while others benefit from it. We try to always be aware of, and actively redistribute, the reproductive labour that underpins all of our activities. We collectively write protocols, like our Working Agreement and Membership Agreement, in order to define structures and our expectations of one another.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of our collaboration to work out, as it also changes over time. We don't have an answer yet.

* What makes you feel most alive from all the things you do with Evening Class?

The friendship we have made together within the group. It sometimes feels like this is what holds things together and keeps us turning up, more than any other structure we articulate around it. It's an unexpectedly collegiate peership, even (especially?) without academics above us setting the agenda.

Being in the same space, making something together. Having a space where we're free to experiment and improvise, and a reliable network that can contribute to and feedback on our projects.

The connections we have made to other people, projects and movements in different locations around the world. When we speak to these people and realise (through their reaction) that we are actually creating something valuable and interesting.

The feeling of being part of a collective, something bigger than yourself.

* Can you draw an iceberg diagram of the Evening Class economies?

Commissioned projects
Workshops and lectures
Freelancing
Working for studios
Non-design work

Friendship
Unpaid work
Interviews and articles
Self-initiated research projects
Pirated fonts, books and software
Reading groups
Resources "borrowed" from our day jobs
Book fairs
Gifts
Book launches and cash bars
Skill swapping and other exchanges
Volunteering
Exhibitions
Trading insider knowledge
Family
Other self-organised groups
Cooking for each other
Cleaning, washing up
Administrative tasks
Donations
Building things ourselves
Social events
Other people's time
The Internet
May Day Rooms

EVERYONE@
EVENING-CLASS.ORG

Building

CIAO@
LAFORESTA.NET

Acts of smashing, while vital for disruption, do not create the kind of resilient, large-scale, long-term bodies needed to replace dominant powers. As we have seen, the direction our world takes in moments of chaos will be defined by the ideas and institutions that are already available. If we want a world of workplaces owned and run cooperatively, of political decision-making power in local community hands, we stand a much better chance if this is already being built in time for social shocks.

— THE SHOCK DOCTRINE OF THE LEFT BY GRAHAM JONES

Evening Class asks

LA FORESTA

* Who are you?

We are an open network of associations, informal groups, social cooperatives and individuals that have come together to create a community academy at the train station of Rovereto, northern Italy. *Foresta* in Italian means both “forest” and “the foreign woman”: a woman from another place. In both meanings there is an element of mystery. Both fit well the way we want to collaborate and the composition of our network.

The project, as it is now, is the result of a two-year collaboration between us and the Municipality of Rovereto. Following an initial project proposal from our side, the municipality signed an nine-year lease with FS, the Italian railway company, to implement a social-cultural project inside a 150m² indoor space of the train station, plus a 100m² outdoor space/garden.

By the end of this year, the space will have been renovated and open its doors to the public. It will be divided into five areas: entrance & convivial waiting room, educational space with kitchen and kids area, event space, workshop, and garden.

At the moment there are about 25 people involved. We are quite diverse in terms of gender, age, expertise and areas of interest, which span from migrant support to cultural animation, collective gardening to hacking, digital literacy to practice-based research.

* What was the motivation for starting La Foresta?

When the group began forming in August 2017, the common wish was to find a space as a shared resource (with floor space, infrastructure, machines, etc) to continue to develop individual activities but also to generate possibilities for encounter, making in common and forging new alliances.

Our location inside a train station has been steering our collective imaginary since the beginning. In Rovereto, the station is one of the few places where there is an atmosphere of internationality and diversity, with many social groups traversing the same spot as part of their everyday lives. It is a “portal” connecting Rovereto—which sometimes can feel quite provincial and bourgeois—to the world. This animates us and helps maintain a good level of energy.

We have been working from the as-yet-unrenovated space since October 2018. Although it is makeshift, being and working inside the building has helped strengthen the relations within the group and to bring in new people.

Some questions we formulated together at the beginning of this adventure are:

- How might we make a community today?
- What are the ingredients for building solidarity, resilience and openness?
- How to respond to the multitude of today's crises?
- Where, how and with whom can we begin?
- What tools do we need?

Never Again

Art Against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries and Internationalism After the End of Globalization

Never Again was an interdisciplinary conference of two parts - Art Against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries on October 24th, 2019, and Internationalism After the End of Globalization on October 25th and 26th, 2019. This event took its name from the concurrent exhibition Never Again: Art against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries, which was organised in cooperation within the EU programme Our Many Europes and L'internationale coalition of European museums, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. Both exhibition and conference took place at Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art and both were part of the Anti-Fascist Year.

The Anti-Fascist Year is an emergent programme of cultural activity launched on February 1st, 2019, lead by a group of Polish comrades with a growing concern: the resurgence of right-wing populism. The methods of the Anti-Fascist Year are pragmatic and protean; the group's call to arms entails rethinking what fascism is as it mutates to confuse and deceive, then mobilising against it. These activities are documented at rokantyzystowski.org.

In what follows participants and organisers offer an account of Never Again and the projects that grew from it. The first two days of this event hosted conference papers from European museum directors, academics, and practice-based researchers. The third day manifested in an assembly of participatory working groups that brought together cultural producers from across Europe to propose, develop, and network practical forms of resistance.

The polyphonic composition of this report stands to acknowledge the range of voices and perspectives that made Never Again a wellspring of new learning and emergent solidarities as it bridged knowledge of fascism, past, and present. Our interest in publishing this document lies in our desire to promote international networks of resistance against complex forms of oppression. We, the editors, are committed to collective care and institutional organisation as cultural expressions of hope. Writing the report's introduction on Winter Solstice 2019, we are reminded that the darker the days, the more crucial it becomes to make hope a political project.

We offer thanks to the Warsaw's Museum of Modern Art for its generous hospitality and to everyone who supported and attended Never Again and contributed to this report.

Never Again: Art Against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21 Centuries
by ZOFIA CZARTORYSKA

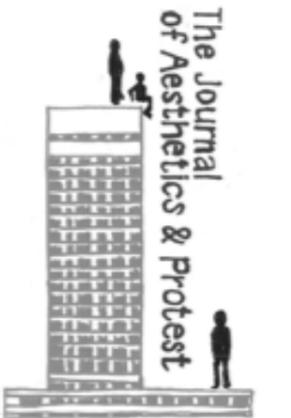
The first day of Never Again was directly connected to the exhibition by the same title at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. Two academic sessions represented new scholarship related to anti-fascist artistic manifestations in the pre- and post-WWII period, while contemporary art and its political context was discussed by the directors of seven European museums from the L'Internationale confederation (www.internationaleonline.org). These talks highlighted how relevant the strategies adopted by anti-fascist artists of the past are today, in the face of rising nationalism and the brutalisation of the public sphere.

Jenny Nachtigall's remarks on the relationship of early twentieth-century Berlin Dada to the mass culture of the time, introduced insights into the question of the mainstreaming of the anti-fascist cause today. Agata Pietrasik pointed to the serious status even a frivolous work of art can acquire in an extreme, authoritarian context. The political ambiguity of antifascism in the communist Eastern Bloc (which weighs heavily on the perception of anti-fascism in the region today) was reflected in presentations by David Crowley, Dorota Jarecka, Piotr Słodkowski, and Justyna Balisz-Schmelz.

The discussion of the museum directors on the role of art institutions at this time of extreme political polarisation linked the question of the cultural heritage of the left with that of the current need for solidarity. A common view among the participants was that the traditional authority of the museum to impose narrations should be replaced by the "structures of the commons" (Manuel Borja-Villel). Zdenka Badovinac analysed "the end of the society of solidarity" in the 90s as something to be reversed, possibly by a more "affective relationship with the public" (Joanna Mytkowska) or by turning museums into shelters from "zombie capitalism" (Charles Esche). While not denying the "culture of narcissism",

from

culture beside itself
as a part of issue #11



Newsletter

Reading Room

#3
October 2019

It is Time...

<http://terracritica.net/readingroom>

Eva Hayward, “Time of In/Difference. Extinction, Sexuality and Coral Science” (unpublished talk)

Eva Hayward, “FingeryEyes: Impressions of Cup Corals” *Cultural Anthropology* 25/4 (2010):577-99.

Fred Moten, “Erotics of Fugitivity” in *Stolen Life*, Duke UP 2018, 241-267.

Koleka Putuma, “Water” <https://pensouthafrica.co.za/water-by-koleka-putuma/>

ReadingRoom is a semi-autonomous project at the margins of the academic humanities and art institutions, a collaboration between *Terra Critica* and *Casco Art Institute*. The group might be defined as a porous affective collective, dependent for its continued existence on the generosity of its attendants. Engaging with texts from various disciplines and the arts, each series of the ReadingRoom weaves itself around a theme that it acknowledges as urgent with regard to our living and thinking practices in times when critical engagement and close reading are shadowed by the neoliberal mode of quantifiable productivity and gain. Each session brings together people from different backgrounds to re-imagine the idea of community and practice it by attentively listening, reading, and thinking together.

This session of the ReadingRoom marks the first of the new series titled *It is Time...* Series six stays connected to the previous series *Reading Rosa, pink and other colors*, in which we grappled with the systemic weave of capitalism-patriarchy-colonialism (CPC). *It is Time...* looks more deeply into the question of temporality and its relation to the current ecological crisis that necessitates a re-thinking of human exceptionalism in our understanding of the “future.” We read with the concern for the complex threads between CPC and environmental destruction, and we think collectively about the co-habitation of humans and non-humans in these troubled and troubling times. We had Eva Hayward from the University of Arizona—and Terra Critica researcher in residence 2019—as our guest for this session, thinking and talking about extinction, fugitivity and sex/erotics.

Newsletter from

Reading Room

#3 October 2019

The sensuous as the sexual...
the undergirding desire towards
a future that can never be mastered..
But improvised, sensed...
A future that is imagined and foreclosed
refused but consented
that will never be but
somehow / somewhere become.

Happy / joyful to be in a space where I can
feel irritated without the need for confrontation.
Especially when people desire dialectics
/ old white folk's thinking so much, they
overlook the generative force of thinking
without them.

How might we sense the moment(s)
when fugitivity veers toward the
non-erotic, toward the reordering
of the world, toward what is (or
might become) captured?

Space is what is left for feeling
out "life" when Death, which
otherwise serves to capture
and hold it as individuated,
contractual lives, is
"revealed" as simply a ne-
gation. Sometimes this
"reveal" happens through
humor, ridicule Death so
all those deaths (in/as
life) can run loose.

Newsletter
—
from

Reading
Room

#3 October 2019

Do we need to re-invent nonperformance always
anew if there is no model, no contract, for it? How
can it be nonperformed as a conceited action, in
concert with more than myself? Who is Betty in
concert with, perhaps even unwillingly?

I have never experienced such
an interesting, intimate microcosm
of a meeting inspirational people.
Very welcoming.

Is it impossible to think about/as
speaking about fugitivity +
non-performance in a space
that aims for conversations?
A sense(!) of disorientation–im-
portant?–doesn't leave me to-
day.. What to do with it I'm not
sure in the conversation of
Moten with Hayward.

Necessity of (re)turning
(to) erotics. The anticipa-
tory uncertainty of
reaching for your lover
in bed. In the tempo-
rality of pleasure I'm
a fugitive. My sensory
access puts me out of
time — time of
CPC. Resist the urge
to pin down the
unbearable.

If silence, (no)thing,
non-performance,
a pause or being
forgetful is a way to
break the contract,
are they also third
concept in a triangle
against dialectical
thinking? Or stand
for the thing that is
always slipping out?
Is forgetting /slip-
ping out a method to
bring something into
the future without
even knowing, in be-
ing a trace to mess
up temporality.

How to map
(not the word)
sense(?), be sent,
arrive, feel or intuit
these beings and
relations in non-
static space time?

How we can become
beings/onto being a
lot more from our per-
ception of the world
and other (what was
mentioned as “im-
pressions”) rather than
through the contracts
we make. Is this so and
when is it the case?

Newsletter
—
from

Reading
Room

#3 October 2019

I really want to like
Moten but I find it
alienating. If I think
of it as poetry, or as
some sort of
Finnegan’s wake
I can relax and
almost enjoy it, but
if his writing wants
to have political
value wouldn’t it
make sense to
make it more ac-
cessible? Where
can I buy the key,
the annotated ver-
sion, the transla-
tion?

There’s a whole
new angle to
silence that
I hadn’t thought
of before.
Now with nonper-
formance, there
is always still
something, “the
table is prepared
without ameni-
ties.” Eva’s way
of thinking also
adds a whole di-
mension, textu-
ality to thought.
The sexuality
of life, not as its
reproduction but
the desire of
the unknowable,
unarrivable, death
drive to keep
going.

So much hope in
the non-terms!
Each author
causing words
to slide until they
reveal(?)othersides
of their meaning.
Words as objects.
Able to walk around.

I don't understand.
There were two freedoms
at the table, but only
one discussed as such:

Freedom as the life drive,
as an organizing force of
murderous normativity.
What about that idealic
idea of unbinded sexual-
ity? Isn't that just the other
side of the coin? A totaliz-
ing wish for totalizing sexu-
ality?

What is before and after of
individuation? How do we,
by refusing individuation, find
an "other side" that is neither
the freedom to be or the
freedom not be? What might
de-individuated encounters be?
(Encounters that do not refuse or
constitute individuation?)

"World as Man" // "Man as World"
The distinction between life and
death as saying/naming life and
lives made me think about the
multiplicity of deaths occurring within
a (singular) life (thereby, paradoxically,
becoming lives) that Alok Vaid-Menon
talks about.

Is writing also a performance? Words?

There are things far worse than
our fear of death; and extinction of desire,
of sexuality ought to be one of them.

Bringing sense,
sensoriality, sensual-
ity, sexuality into our
engagement with
texts, knowledge,
theory, our bodies,
other's bodies, oth-
er bodies ought to
be done. An imagi-
nation of the not yet,
not quite, has to be
non individual, non
individualized, non in-
dividualistic. "Has to,"
"ought to"... not to be
normative, but to be
passionate, desiring,
urgent...

Queer temporalities
comprises that we re-
arrange our bodies as
rhythmical encounters that
deconstruct the essential-
ist CPP clockwise tempo to
be able to dive into and see
through the membranes of
things around us our ability to
control our habiting into an en-
vironment.

Are we allowed to bring up
Agamben? I can't help but feel
that non-performativity resonates with
potentiality as the possibility of something
not occurring—especially in relation to
preferring not to (Bartleby). But at the same time
I worry that that would be a deflection, an escape
and domestication of the text, a way of telling about
something familiar in order not to have to reckon
with fugitivity.

But what made the discussion so difficult today?
The attempt to grasp at straws, anything to hang
on to, feels like a cop-out. But it's also possible to
speak (even if silence is also a performance) about
things of which one cannot speak.

we live in (Meriç Öner), Bart de Baere underlined the need to relinquish control and “allow contamination” of the sterile museum space.

The first part of the Never Again conference revealed the untold histories of the anti-fascist art that needs to be further investigated but also popularised and made relevant in our contemporary context. For the participants it was clear that at a time when fetishising the past and rewriting history in a nationalist, simplified and exclusive manner are powerful tools of populist politics, building an audible counter narrative becomes one of the key tasks for academics and progressive art museums alike.



Day One

Internationalism After the End of Globalization by KUBA SZREDER

We, the curators, invited a group of speakers to trigger collective discussions and update each other and the audience on the recent developments in both the theory and praxis of antiauthoritarian struggles in art and activism. Debate was embedded in the context of Warsaw and more broadly of Europe and its peripheries.

The presentations by members of the Anti-Fascist Year and Zuzanna Hertzberg, an activist working within the Anti-Fascist Coalition, conveyed the complicated politics of today's Poland. Worryingly, similar stories were told about other European countries. We heard about refugees evicted from squats in Greece, the struggles of ecological activism in Venice, and the complex politics of popular fronts that emerged in the aftermath of the Gezi Park uprising in Turkey. Keep it Complex shared their experiences of feminist anti-Brexit activism, while Why, How & For Whom reported on struggles against erasing leftist histories waged in Zagreb. Tomislav Medak and Ana Teixeira Pinto scrutinised the connections between alt-right, fascism, and technocapitalism. Joanna Bednarek moved from deconstructing the prose of H.P. Lovecraft to analysing the politics of fear underpinning resurgent fascism. Yaiza Hernández Velázquez criticised the Western

colonialism and pseudo-universalism that motivates nationalist violence and Charles Esche spoke about complex entanglements of Western modernity, and whether the same critique applies in the countries of Eastern Europe.

The conference was an opportunity to search for ways to counter resurgent fascisms and challenge the forces of technocapital that encroach on democratic politics and daily life. In this vein, Angela Dimitrakaki called for a new, anti-nationalist alliance of feminist proletarians, while the comrades from Plan C advocated Acid Communism, which mobilises techniques of consciousness raising to rekindle leftist politics.

The delegates managed to bridge theory and praxis, art and activism, and link their struggles. Seemingly abstract discussions about art institutions proved their merit when we had to formulate a response to the alt-right takeover of one of the major art centres in Warsaw the following day.

Day Two

Internationalism After the End of Globalization by MARSHA BRADFIELD

This public assembly offered time, space, and a self-organised structure to support attendees in working together. This was an opportunity to hatch and progress practices of resistance related to overlapping concerns, specifically: the current crisis of capitalism; fascist revival; climate catastrophe; attacks on democracy, public institutions and on radical social practice.

As the assembly's facilitator, I focused on creating common ground by holding a space where diverse voices could be expressed and heard. This unfolded through a tripartite structure: the sharing of pitches from individuals or collectives who wished to propose a working group (collected through open call); two and a half hours of working group sessions; and finally, a plenary.

PROPOSALS FOR WORKING GROUPS

Szabolcs KissPál pitched Propaganda Train, which took its cue from the brightly painted agri-trains that chugged across the Soviet countryside in 1918. This current iteration will provide a space for cultivating radical imagination and producing counter-narratives to prevailing right-wing propaganda (report below). The next contribution was more an opportunity to raise awareness about the fatal protests in Santiago in resistance to Chile's oppressive status quo, with Sara Buraya and Jesus Carrillo reading aloud a declaration by Red Conceptualismos del Sur (redcsur.net/en/2019/10/25/outbreak/). Next, Quinsy Gario proposed using Caribbean resourcefulness in the face of hurricane disaster and EU discrimination against tax havens. This lens was inspired by Aimé Césaire for thinking through fascism as a colonial procedure applied to Europe. The proposal for Collective Research on Gender Ideology came from Marisa Perez Colina and explored feminist tools for

fighting fascism and the far-right's special obsession with smashing "feminist ideology". Central here was the shapeshifting of this obsession depending on its national or cultural context.

Keep It Complex then proposed Making Networks that Work. The workshop would begin with probing desires, brainstorming formats (both on and offline) and developing mobilities to support one another (report below). Nadia Idle of Plan C made the sixth proposal, Consciousness Raising Under Capital Realism would begin with this activity and then analyse the experience to understand the techniques involved (report below). Livia Páldi drew on her lived experience to raise questions about connecting practices that are context specific (report below). Natalia Romik of RUCH Collective invited attendees to develop the Anti-Fascist Kiosk as a mobile space for displaying anti-fascist texts, images, drawings, photos, and songs (report below, as part of Anti-Fascist Dining Car).

Next, Kuba Szreder solicited contributions to the newsletter you are now reading. This working group was initially conceived as meta space to develop a mission statement for the Anti-Fascist Year but was eclipsed on the day by more pressing urgencies; namely the Crisis in the Castle. Mobilised just minutes before the Assembly began, this working group was a rapid response to the situation at Ujazdowski Castle, a state-funded venue for contemporary art. A new right-wing director had recently been appointed by the Ministry of Culture. The Crisis in the Castle working group was an opportunity to discuss the strategic marginalisation of critical contemporary art by growing nationalistic interest in heritage.

A large group of activists from the Czech Republic proposed slowing down and practicing sustainable activism. After this Katalin Erdodi asked: What is the place of the countryside in the anti-fascist struggle? What to do as regional media outlets give way to centralised broadcasting networks intent on hindering the access of rural communities to diverse perspectives? Jana Shostak described her growing interest in the changing connotation of words, such as 'refugee' in Polish. Working with philologists and others, Shostak is searching for new and more humanising language. Finally, Tomislav Medak's proposal bridged two invitations. The first related to practices of pirate care, i.e. technologically aided practices of disobedient care that are emerging in response to the politics of retrenchment, precarity and austerity, and the criminalisation of solidarity. The second invitation concerned practices of custodianship and shadow librarianship, specifically his work on Memory of the World (report below).

WORKING GROUPS AND PLENARY

The assembly self-selected into working groups, which fed back into the plenary by sharing what they had discussed and how this might be taken forward. The following reports summarise the respective responses:

Anti-Fascist Dining Car led by Szabolcs KissPál (Propaganda Train) and Natalia Romik of RUCH Collectiv (Anti-Fascist Kiosk).

The agit-trains initiated in the year 1918 served as important instruments for the dissemination of political propaganda and for the enlightenment of the rural population in the Soviet Union. Extremely multifunctional cultural products, they transported intellectuals and political agitators, carried books, brochures and propaganda films to remote places, merging the tasks of a university, a mobile cinema, an exhibition space and a library. In the midst of fascist revival, the agit-trains, both in their concept and methods, could provide contemporary art not only with a brilliant metaphor for art activism today but also offer models for functioning formats: making possible a long-term investment into the educational potential of art, and offering a platform for alliances and tools for networking to cultural workers and institutions on a European level. During the group session the following considerations were developed with regards to the possible future realisation of the project:

1. NETWORK/INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS – Anti-Fascist Year, Union of railway workers, NGOs dealing with commuters' rights, railway museums, trainspotters, art institutions
2. SPACE, STRUCTURE-INFRASTRUCTURE what infrastructure should the train car have? Kitchen? Projection screen? Security? Ownership of the car? insurance? How to counteract possible violence?
3. DESIGN convertible, modular furniture? Glass walls (accessibility)
4. CONTENT innovative form of the message (humour), dialogue-based, participatory, emphasis on the input of the local community, transformative content (partly generated locally), opening up, art residency, public-private spaces, the element of the trip itself – cooking, eating, drinking.

Anti-Fascist Populism led by many, summarised by Jesús Carrillo

This working group merged several proposals in a spontaneous response to the question asked by Vasyl Cherepanyn in his presentation Against an Anti-Communist International. The hypothesis of a "popular front", which may respond to the success of right-wing ideologies among European population, was present in the very conception of the summit. The analysis and different diagnoses discussed in the previous day's presentations showed both the urgency to rehearse new languages to meet the current demands of people, as well as the difficulties to do so from the fragments of leftist discourse. Different voices (Angela Dimitrakaki and Yaiza Hernández, amongst others) engaged in debate, confronting a clearly class-based perspective with others, which stressed the need of a radical critique of any sense of commonality from a feminist or anti-colonial position. In spite of the obvious difficulties

to reach a consensus there was a clear will to avoid the automatisms of the current polarised debate.

Cheat Sheet on How to Talk about Anti-Fascism over a Family Dinner proposed by Tomislav Medak

The cheat sheet should contain counter-arguments to common pro-fascist, revisionist, racist, xenophobic, anti-LGBT arguments. Such arguments are constructed and repeated with the intent to legitimise fascism and disavow the history of the anti-fascist struggle. As they get repeated over and over, by politicians and in the media, they are turned into common sense. Their counter-factual character is performative and adversarial; whoever disputes them risks becoming the enemy of the nation. The cheat sheet will list common pro-fascist rhetoric and counter them with informed arguments. These are primarily meant to be used in private and non-adversarial communication in informal settings, with the intent to change the opinion of people.

Anti-Fascist Syllabus proposed by Tomislav Medak

Building on the work that the Anti-Fascist Year has already done around creating an anti-fascist syllabus Marcell Mars, Valeria Graziano and Tomislav Medak are working towards creating an online framework for syllabi of social movements (for context see their text "Learning from #Syllabus" <https://tinyurl.com/y3h6n27r>). We propose to create this online syllabus condensing anti-fascist learning materials. This public document will be easily editable to suit different political contexts, be translated into different languages and taught to different groups.

Keywords proposed by Livia Páldi

The selection of keywords was prompted by experiences when working on short-term contracts across Europe and resulted in a query regarding curatorial and institutional methodologies. Moving between contexts means to identify a shifting set of internal and external factors that need to be navigated to create a framework for particular projects. The selection included the Dig Where You Stand Movement, the critical revisiting of the manual for participatory heritage activism written by Sven Lindqvist, the activist-scholar/historian, in 1978; and The Neighborhood Academy (Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin), a self-organised open platform for knowledge sharing, cultural practice and activism. The interconnectedness of these keywords supports action via a nuanced understanding of the cultivation of critical consciousness and plural and participatory learning of and from legacies that possess great emancipatory potential, including that of anti-fascist resistance.

Consciousness Raising Under Capitalist Realism led by Nadia Idle of Plan C

This working group began with a consciousness raising workshop. Discussion focused on two questions: When did you last feel anxious? and When was the last time that you experienced collective joy?

For many in the working group, this was the first time they had heard of "post-capitalist joy", which is the subtitle for *Building Acid Communism*, the unfinished book by cultural theorist Mark Fisher. Consciousness raising like this is a process for identifying common features of lived experience. It very quickly produces new relations amongst those in the room; stronger bonds for creating stronger work. This particular session ended with "lifting the veil", which is to say reflecting on the experience of consciousness raising to better grasp the methods involved and consider their future use in other contexts. We can think of this as a kind of care - a way to build solidarities by creating common ground as a basis for acting together. It is a political release to prime a transformative process.



Networks that Work led by Keep it Complex

Art professionals are involved in radical politics on the ground, to act out and defend ways of interspecies living and working together that demand and value equality on all levels of life. We are many and we are everywhere. This might not be obvious and therefore needs to become such. We focused on a simple and usable technical solution to make this critical mass visible and usable. A simple code would be able to list all the affiliation networks on any website, e.g. you enter makeitclear.eu (the website of Keep it Complex) into this new search engine and will see the list of all links from this website, instead of going through webpage after webpage. A risk assessment assured us that the enemy might have these tools already, so we should make use of them to affirm our ubiquitousness. Everything is made by many, and we are many.

This newsletter contributes to culture beside itself, as a part of issue #11. The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, www.joaap.org

The summit was subsidised by the time, energy, and ideas of dozens of supporters and participants, both individuals and collectives, without whom it would have been impossible to organise it. It was financially supported by the Foundation for Arts Initiatives, European Cultural Foundation, British Council, Austrian Forum for Culture in Warsaw, the Embassy of Spain in Warsaw, Goethe Institut in Warsaw, and co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

Edited by Marsha Bradfield and Keep it Complex, with support of Kuba Szreder. Designed by Keep it Complex.

The calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) have challenged all Canadian institutions to question and change, especially public institutions like public libraries and universities. These challenges are especially resonant in Thunder Bay, where several recent inquests, books and media investigations have revealed profound racism against Indigenous people. However, while these factors have led to a welcome interest in questions of systemic racism, colonialism, genocide, and while predominantly non-Indigenous institutions appear keen to adopt an approach towards "reconciliation" it is our belief that more is necessary.

While "reconciliation" focuses on the past, it is vital to see (settler) colonialism as an ongoing process or dispossession and oppression against Indigenous people. While most people agree that racism is unacceptable, few understand the way racism operates beyond the beliefs, behaviours and ideas of individuals but also functions in systemic, institutional and structural ways. And while the word decolonization is heard widely today to refer to all sorts of programs, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang make clear, decolonization is not a metaphor: it must mean the repatriation or, better rematriation, of stolen lands.

What is Rematriation?

By "rematriate" we mean "give back," but unlike the legal term "repatriate," which signifies a simple transfer of ownership, "rematriate" means something more profound: a restoration of right relationships and a true action of decolonization, aimed not just at righting a past wrong but transforming our collective future.

Library Rematriation Project

This two year collaboration between The Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL) and The Re-Imagining Value Action Lab (RiVAL) aims to open up public imagination and to grow political literacy about Indigenous rights, land, "public institutions" and the potential benefits of "decolonization" for all people. The project was proposed in relation to The TBPL's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, which made "decolonizing the library" and "challenging institutional and systemic racism" key strategic objectives, in parallel with its core mandate of being an inclusive community hub.

Starting in early 2020, our work begins by meeting with local groups, institutions and individuals to discuss and receive feedback on this project. Further work includes interdisciplinary research-creation, which employs methods including Indigenous forms of inquiry and reflection, academic research and creative/artistic engagement, with a focus on generating a body of collective wisdom and public awareness that might, eventually, lead to policies, protocols and practices of rematriation: the "giving back" of the stolen land on which the TBPL now rests in ways that encourage, expand and enrich the TBPL's core mandate, now in right relation with the land, with the treaties, and with sovereign Indigenous peoples.

What is going to happen?

First, three research projects by local graduate students that respond to questions including: what are precedents for the repatriation of land to Indigenous communities in the territories we currently call Canada? How is rematriation different from repatriation? What are the legal barriers and possibilities for rematriation? What are Anishinaabe perspectives on rematriation? How might such a plan be expressed to non-Indigenous people in Thunder Bay? How could rematriation benefit everyone in the long term? Where does rematriation fit within various visions of decolonization?

Next, is a series of art and public engagement aimed at awakening the radical imagination. We believe the most important dimension of this project is to build new relationships and ways of thinking and feeling. To this end, we are planning to hold workshops and consultations with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous library patrons and staff, learn from elders and youth, and challenge ourselves and the community at large to dream big.

What would it mean Goals

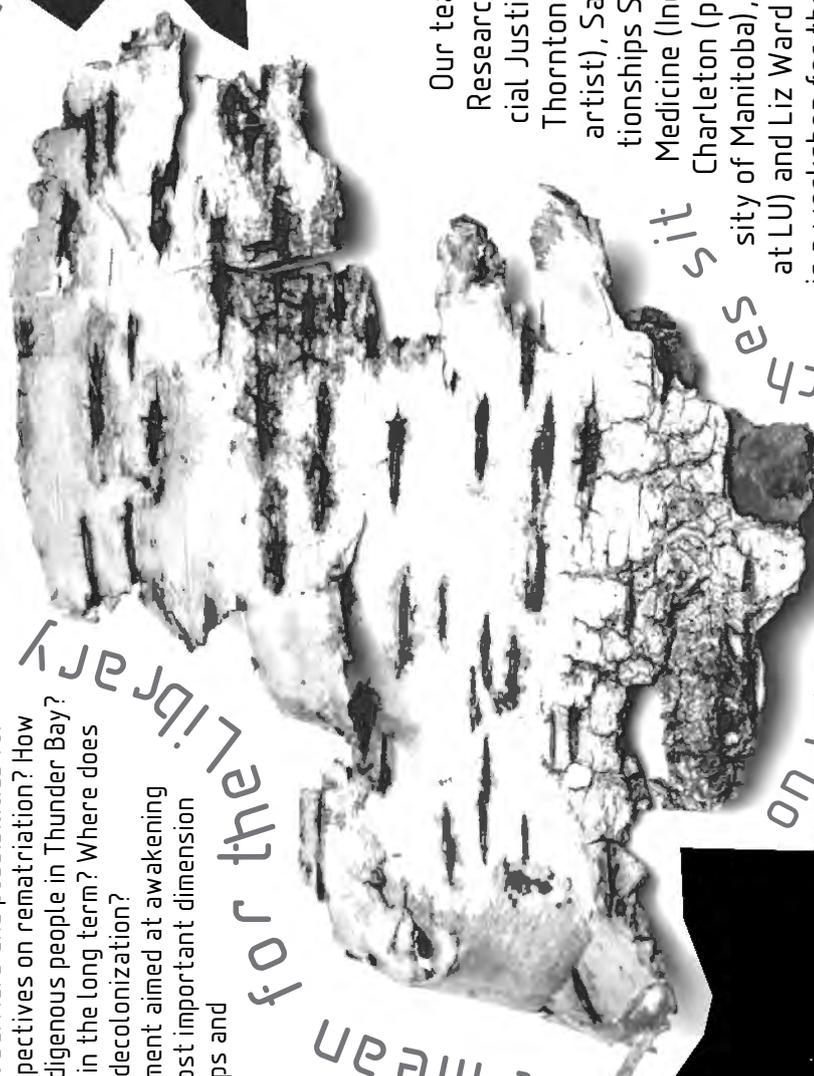
1. To build good relationships between many communities based on honesty, respect, & learning
2. To develop a thriving conversation with & between communities about pathways to rematriation
3. To develop research and wisdom that might inform the production of policy for the TBPL, the City of Thunder Bay and other bodies towards rematriation

Starting in early 2020, our work begins by meeting with local groups, institutions and individuals to discuss and receive feedback on this project. If you are interested in giving us feedback or learning more, please contact us:

Who are we?

Our team includes Max Haiven, (Canada Research Chair in Culture, Media and Social Justice at Lakehead University), Cassie Thornton (a participatory and community artist), Sam Martin-Bird (Indigenous Relationships Supervisor at the TBPL), Robyn Medicine (Indigenous Liaison at the TBPL), Adar Charleton (post-doctoral fellow at the University of Manitoba), Matthew Benoit (graduate student at LU) and Liz Ward (graduate student at LU). RiVAL is a workshop for the radical imagination, social justice and decolonization based at Lakehead University and active around the world.

to return the land



on which its branches sit

to the Anishinaabe people?

the casual school collective

Care = Methodology
Connection = Purpose

an introduction and an invitation

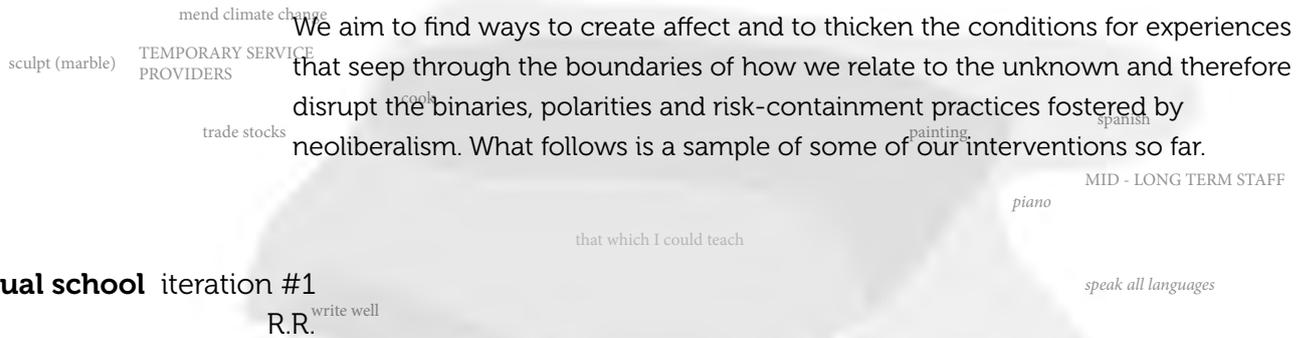
- Curiosity
- Entanglement
- Non-linear time (temporal plurality)
- Reciprocity
- Co-authorship, co-teaching

The Casual School Collective has only just begun. We are three - R.R., MijT and Zora but we hope to grow a little. We are an ongoing project originating in Canberra, Australia, exploring a range of intimate public/artistic interventions which foster meaningful interactions and modes of learning. These 'research-creation events' take place primarily in institutional contexts and, as such, are a kind of counter-institution: an alternative pedagogic structure which hopes to formulate a more accessible, social and care-infused mode of co-learning/teaching.

If you could learn anything, what would it be?

If you could learn anything, what would it be?
Where there are no barriers stopping you from learning this thing.

Using multiple live research events allows us to elude the idea of a finished piece or static end point. Rather, we think of the project as constantly evolving and entangled.



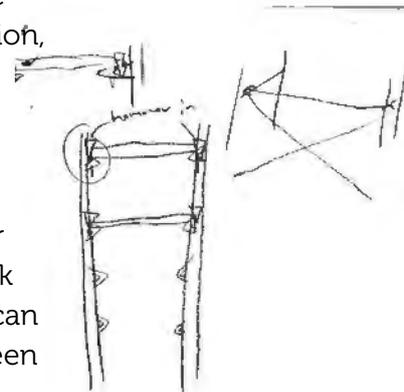
the casual school iteration #1

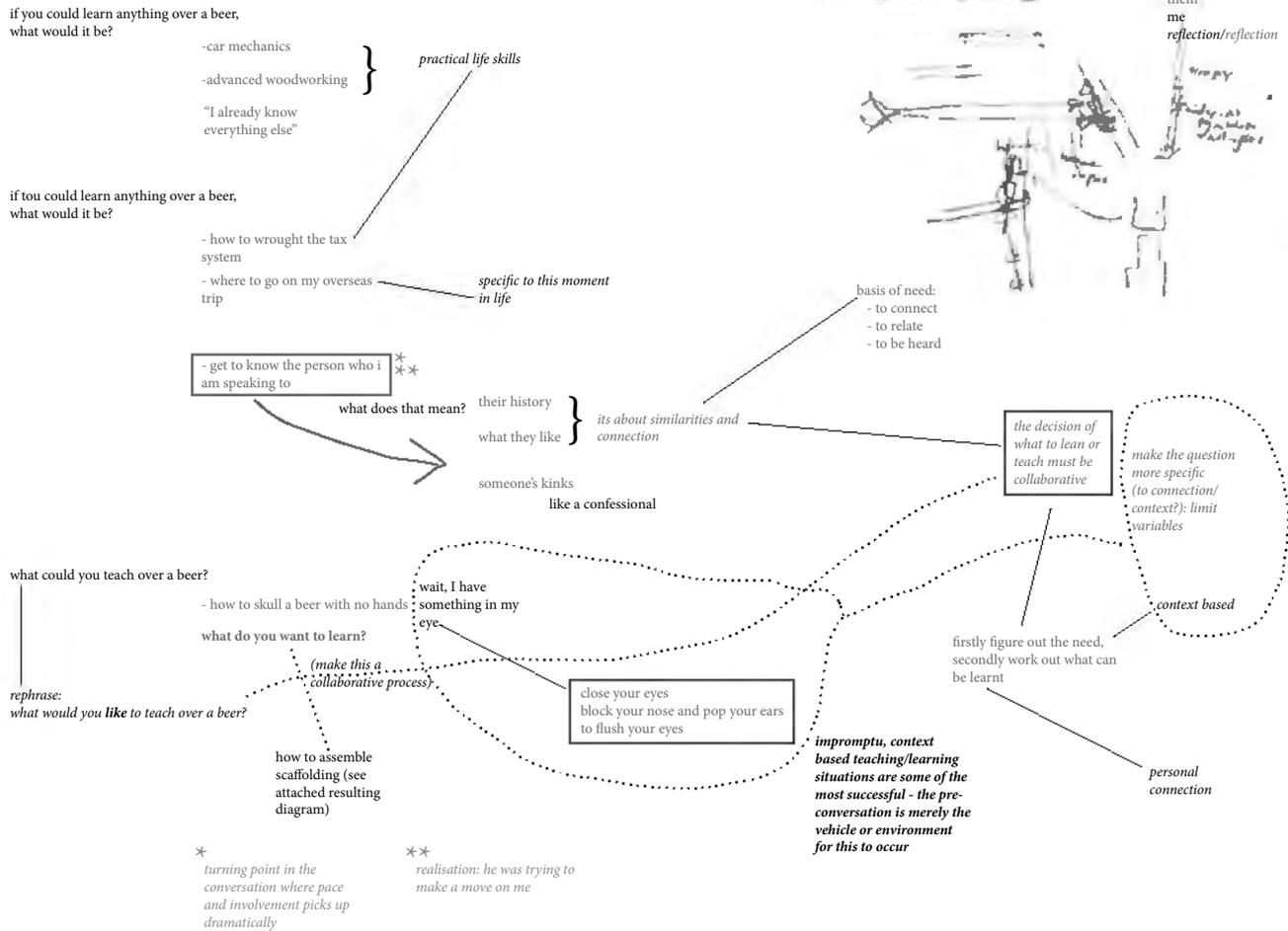
R.R. write well

In this research-creation event, our aim was to engage with people who inhabit the Australian National University campus in different ways - students, teachers, other permanent staff and temporary service providers. Initially conceived as a series of short 'lessons' at one or more of the pubs on campus, The Casual School morphed into a number of conversation-based iterations, of varying lengths and depths.

The original pitch was: each lesson may be taught by one of the participants and should take no longer than the duration of a schooner of beer. There may be more than one lesson (more than one beer) per event. A technique for provoking these learning situations is to approach strangers with a simple and open-ended question, such as: "if you could learn anything, what would it be?" Several conversations resulted. Teachings and learnings were recorded in diagrams. Only one lead to a 'lesson' over a beer. Two are presented here.

The constraint of doing it over a beer is relatively arbitrary, but it acts as a familiar social apparatus which hosts discussions well. It is symbolically and literally a break from work or study and requires little commitment of time, energy or money. It can be replaced with a number of similar actions, eg: a coffee, a cigarette (and has been in some of the initial experimental conversations).





There's something about reciprocity
MijT

What are the conditions where a moment of deep connection and kindness occurs between strangers?

Are these conditions able to be translated into an inclusive and accessible learning environment?

These questions are my launching pad into understanding the effects of the current socio-political systems and structures of neoliberalism upon my personal life and my art making - in particular, how I am enmeshed in reciprocal relationships of self-interest and desire within its institutions.

We retreat if we feel we are not good at something or are not going to be good at something at first, and, in this neoliberal world, acceptable levels of risk have shifted from theoretical suppositions to affective realities. So, how am I going to get people I don't know to open up their soft, gooey insides in order to co-author or collaborate on this project with me?

I'm using the practice of connecting over simple object/image making activities to ground and occupy social anxieties while talking about the ways the institutions we live with affect our lives. In using a mediating object and activity as material to facilitate pedagogy and communication, it creates an affective experience by allowing the creative, curious and empathetic parts of ourselves to breathe. This, in turn, airs our social confidence. It also allows agency and co-authorship status for both the participator and the made object/image.

What is collaboration, though, if your voice is not heard or accepted? My recent experience in a psych ward raised the issue of illegibility where your voice or the language you use in any format is not recognised by the institutions in your environment, practice, culture, etc. If you are not recognised, or heard, it leads to invisibility and further insecurity. "Who are we seeing and hearing? Who is deciding who we are seeing and hearing? How do we decide what we want to see or hear?" Knowledge sharing within and between institutions and participants becomes scarce and expensive and mis-valued.

By offering resources and the time-space to come up with ideas and try them out, the timeline of the project deviates from chronological linearity and succession. If there is room for improvisation, new knowledge and learnings can arise and be shared. Not knowing what will happen in any iteration of the project means I can expand the idea of reciprocity to focus on the process as much as the end.

institutional confines
neoliberal navigations
me



There's something about reciprocity Iteration #1

There is an immediate solidarity formed when you are with others who are experiencing hard circumstances.

I was recently admitted to a psych ward for PTSD treatment. While I was there, I withdrew into studying for uni - but I had to do this in public space as there were no power points for my laptop in my room. I was reading Alana Jelinek's "This is Not Art" about neoliberalism, activism and the art world. I wasn't really across how much neoliberalism affected everything - so reading this book was a good way of delving into that. People - nurses and patients alike - started asking me what I was reading. We began having group conversations about the systems that affect us, hold us, and strive to control and constrain us over art activities like colouring-in or origami, over walking and over impromptu dancing in the hallways - which was so liberating! It became a system of self-medication for us and a little bit of counter-institutional activism and consciousness raising arose. I thought this is a good process for me and it ended up being a good process for everybody.

We began talking about the history of psychiatry and the role of gender and race and queerness within that whole history. A few people who were struggling with their relationships with the hospital and their psychiatrist started having better sessions, being heard and getting what they wanted - rather than being told how to be. I found that was quite an interesting release point - emotional release point - for everyone on the ward - group cheering evolved into a sense of solidarity.

There was autonomy and confidence - we didn't feel alone. Some people could begin sharing previously individualised experiences and see that there is a pattern, that it's not an individual fault but a pattern of treatment by the institution

And the best thing, these conversations continued on the ward after I left.

linking consciousness raising to history and institutionalism



Rediscovering Home

Zora



"The more interesting art practices today may bring us closer to this paradox: to mobilise the other as an extension of yourself and mobilise yourself as an extension of the other - where alterity (the state of being other or different) is mutually reinforced and where me and you are continuously replaced by a larger and external contact area. What can we do but live outside of ourselves?"

— Ricardo Basbaum, Post-Participatory Participation, P101



'Re-discovering home' is a little show that happened at home around July to September 2019 to re-discover my relationship with the space I inhabit every day. This is an excerpt from my website.

It happens throughout the house, with the main exhibiting site being a spare room in the southeast corner. During the experiment, I made lots of tags using torn prints from my previous works, typed with my second-hand typewriter from the Greenshed. These tags were either distributed or stuck onto some unexpected spots at home using bluetac.

One series of the tags reflects my individual desire expressed through space, for example, 'turn me on' on a light switch, 'dust me' in the corner of the bottom window frame, 'life me up' on a washing machine lid.

The show was set up before I had several dinner parties, including some tools and my typewriter with which new tags could have been made. Some people adventured out, creating new tags and reacting to the existed ones, like 'fold me,' 'take me away'.

It was initiated as an experiment to reflect on my curatorial practice. What is curating? Why this space? How to interact with space and the context? What works should be selected to express what ideas? What is 'meaning'? Does a curator create, interpret, analyse or invalidate meaning? What is the relationship between text and artworks? How to engage your audience and what is actual engagement? How to make works and exhibitions that do not rely on money?

However, with time, I started to realise that the project reveals a difference between the concepts of "house" and "home". A house is an objective notion, an instrumental vessel with a function, a purpose. It exists whether there is a person or not. A home is a subjective notion which does not exist without a "me", and it is sometimes a virtual or internal space. My home reflects my own desire once the connection or belongingness is realized, but such understanding of self can also be broken through reflecting on my own desire and having others to interact with it.

This is a space that I share with my family. The intervention of little pieces of paper with words in such communal space created a new and unusual connection between me and the family members who interacted with it. I was in a constant battle with my dad who keeps the world clean and organised. He kept throwing away any tag he found that was not on a collective spot, i.e. a paper, a canvas, a box. While I have disassembled all the works, I left the scattered tags in the house so family and visitors can interact with them, move them, throw them away, ignore them. There is still a tag that no one has found yet - it reads 'leave me alone'.

protocol for [making meaningful connections with] / [learning from] strangers and the unfamiliar

Given the elusive and intangible nature of our research focus, it is no wonder that the outcome slips away from a finite, concise resolution. While the research nature and multiple iterations of our work so far fits in with the themes we are exploring, at times the possibilities have seemed too endless.

We believe, however, that it is important the project continues to grow, morph and take new paths. This is the reason for the formation of a 'protocol' document - it allows the core ideas and framework of the project to be disseminated and utilised by any number of many people.

A fixed idea about how exchange could happen is limiting. Try not to set out with fixed goals.

What is a speculative question or learning process? Conversations are speculative: they exist simultaneously in the past, present and future.

Use what you have/know to lift others up.

In asking someone a question, consider how you can ask it in a way that gives something to the person you are asking. Maybe its just that, in posing that question, you give them a moment to step outside of the day-to-day routine thoughts.

Be generous: with your attention, knowledge, time.

Invite reciprocity, but don't expect it.

Be inspired by two of Don Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements:

- Be impeccable with your word: be clear and honest, use your word with kindness and thoughtfulness.
- Don't make assumptions: about what other people mean, or are thinking, or any other unknown. Instead, be curious and seek to understand.

In combining these two ideas: Let dialogue be the material of reciprocity. Speak with clarity and listen with curiosity.

If there is room for improvisation, new knowledge and learnings can arise and be shared.

Remember, inclusion in conversation is entangled with many socio-political factors.

Consider: "Who are we seeing and hearing? Who is deciding who we are seeing and hearing? How do we decide what we want to see or hear?"

taking it forward

We have a few ways and a few communities we want to engage with using the protocol established for the casual school collective.

- a series of experiments with the notion of a reading group at Tributary Projects in Fyshwick, Canberra
- an expanded roll out of **there's something about reciprocity** in the fire affected communities around Braidwood, NSW
- a colouring-in sheet design, production and distro by and for people staying or living in psych wards, jails, detention centres etc
- establishing a multi-disciplinary borderless reading group using existing social media platforms where members float a topic of enquiry, a suggested reading resource list and an 8 week timeline in which to produce a response in any artform. Results will go into an archive of sorts which the community can dip into to create and curate events and documents with.

If we have time this year, we may also play with the following ideas...

the keep Inspired by Temporary Service's Designated Drivers project we are providing an annotated bibliography of the sources for our project on USB as the beginnings of a collective archive, or anti-archive as Jakob Jakobsen prefers to call it in his Hospital Prison University project. We are still exploring what that means and how to navigate authorship and collectivity - so our USB will be open for people to not only download, but to add to, edit and interact with as they will....

brutally soft a call and response volley of conversation, performance and artwork between several artists on how we live with anxiety (practice led research, documented online)

10 seconds of joy care methodologies in practice (a co-learning situation)

4 seconds too long conversations about awkward silences (research creation)

the art of falling a physical and metaphorical jam sharing ways of falling safely (research creation)

a body reading group on ableism and activism, trauma and the body and self-medication

play = vulnerability
approach with caution

open sourced-ness =
disrupting the chrononormativity
of reciprocity



talk to us about everything

the casual school collective headquarters
ANU School of Art and Design
Sculpture Workshop
Canberra, AUSTRALIA

thecasualschool@gmail.com
#thecasualschoolcollective



半年多報

WUHAN 2020/02/19-21

Z和复印Info的朋友 Z & 复印 Info

武漢日記
WUHAN DIARY

第四篇：封閉 Part Four: Quarantined

1 我小时候有个小说的构思，是讲全人类都进入长达百年的沉睡模式，让大自然重新恢复生机，当然后来没写成。1月底2月初看到一只野猪在二环线上狂奔的视频，也有许多宠物因为疫情被放逐或活埋的消息。

When I was young I had an idea for a novel where all of humanity would enter a 100 year-long sleep mode and nature would slowly recover. Of course, this novel was never written, but in January towards the beginning of February, I saw a video of a wild pig fleeing on the Second Ring Road, and there were a lot of reports about animals being expelled or even buried alive because of the epidemic.

SHENZHEN/JIEYANG 2020/02/18

超家族 Jojo of the Ultra Clan

超家族消息
ULTRA CLAN UPDATES

最近两个月上阳台的朋友们发生了很多事情，艺术家朋友#杨立才(#老羊)去年底突然因微信言论被抓。大约在同一时间，苗子(女子天团 sewingco-op的 双月)回老家生了一个婴儿。由于当地公共医疗系统的缺陷，这一过程不寻常地痛苦，婴儿在重症监护室呆了两周。

Recently many things have happened to our friends of the Soeng Joeng Toi space in Guangzhou. Our artist friend YANG Licai (AKA Lao Yang) was abruptly detained by mainland Chinese police near the end of last year. Around the same time, 双月 (AKA Mother Miao of nzt sewing co-op) gave birth to a child in a painful process made worse, in fact life-threatening, by the

HONG KONG 2020/01/10

月百石

鋪路石下是海灘！
SOUS LES PAVES, LA PLAGES!

(Beneath the pavement, the beach!)

We took shelter at a secluded spot, our throats were aching.

A strong wind was blowing through the streets.

Our eyes saw it all, the concrete was trembling; beneath the pavement, was the beach.

The coldest time of winter arrived then, "the square" was tucked into storage.

At every street corner was the cop, as if it was the end of history.

HONG KONG 2020/01/09

Kay Mei Ling BEADMAN

HERE. OVERWHELMED

In April 2019, I popped in to the Black Book Assembly at the Foo Tak Building in Wan Chai. I'd heard of it through word of mouth, and that word of mouth had also led me to helping accommodate a couple of the participants. Having met them, sorted the sleeping arrangements and mostly having a long talk about their practice and plans back in Wuhan, there was extra reason to go along,

YOGYAKARTA 2020/01/05

Indisciplineartij

KINDNESS AS A WEAPON FOR ACTIVISM

It all began when Indisciplineartij was invited to contribute to an exhibition about zines and protest in late 2019. At the time we were so excited, since we hadn't made any 'significant' work during that year. Without proper knowledge and experience about protest culture or activism, yet with a great amount of eagerness, we decided to respond to this

HONG KONG 2020/01/03

Safe Ways HK Work Group

SAFE WAYS HK

Safe Ways HK是由一班關心移工的朋友在工餘設立，為在港工作和生活的移工及少數族裔，提供有關交通情況及反送中運動資訊的英文專頁。 Safeways HK is a spare-time initiative of a group of people concerned about our migrant worker and ethnic minority friends living and working in Hong Kong. It is an open, online web page providing information in English about the anti-extradition movement and latest traffic conditions during times of conflict on the ground.

HONG KONG 2019/12/18

韋齡動人 waiabstfabulous

各位【黑書眾】的朋友：
DEAR FRIENDS OF THE
BLACK BOOK ASSEMBLY,

大家好！未見半年猶隔三秋。真的發生了很多事！你們汗水和腳毛都停留過的地方：銅鑼灣、油麻地、元朗和太子都真的發生了很多事！我和我們亦在面對很多轉變！

Hallo! Almost a full year has already passed since we have last seen one another, and really so much has happened! The areas that our sweat and footprints passed through during the Black Book Assembly—Causeway Bay, Yau Ma Tei, Yuen Long and Prince Edward—have now been through so much more. I, and we, are facing a revolution of many changes.

2019/12/04

「後勤」履運 LIGHT LOGISTICS

HQL-335

出發點 START POINT // 香港 Hong Kong

目的地 END POINT // 福岡 Fukushima

[經由大阪+東京 via Osaka + Tokyo]

SEOUL 2019/12/01

아나클랜 Anarclan (Korea Anarchist Network)

아나키즘 교류모임
LITTLE BLACK BOOKS ON
MY BOOKSHELF

내책장속의 작고 검은책 Anarchism Reading Share

◎ 아나키모임이 열립니다. 열린모임입니다.

◎ This is an open meeting.

◎ 모임의 목적은 교류와 이야기 나누기입니다.

◎ The purpose is to meet, read, share readings, and exchange ideas.

HONG KONG 2019/10/27

快馬工友組 Fast Horse Workers' Group

快馬風雲
FAST HORSE WINDS OF
CHANGE

參與社運外，公司不合理制度，快馬工友組，當然要嘈下公司，傾受1件貨，件10kg，一條call貨van，二係搵公司司機送，唔肯，抱歉，客只能出9kg貨，本打算大家分別起稿，揀最精彩稿，公司附近周圍貼，突發女工友遭扣糧，快馬 We are a group of courier company employees, and when we go to work we regularly see or encounter all kinds of unjust treatment. With the encouragement of other workers and friends, we decided to do something about it, to spread information in the community about the unjust acts of certain companies and come together with other workers for an aligned resistance.

FUKUSHIMA 2019/10/21

バーバリアンブックス The Institute of Barbarian Books

LONG LIVE
GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

We are witnessing a new round of insurrections kick off across the globe.

私達は今、世界各国で沸き起こる暴動が新しいラウンドに突入するのを目の当たりにしている。

我們正在見證新一波全球反抗運動在各地展開。

HONG KONG 2019/10/18

narccassan

STAND WITH ROJAVA,
HERSTORIES HEARD

【街頭飯聚】第N回 暨 我想同Rojava共存亡放映會
Street Dining for the Nth Time +
I Wanted to Live or Die with Rojava Film Screening

The call of the event was as follows:

這次飯聚，未必輕鬆。

This dinner gathering might not be relaxing.



WUHAN

日記第四：封閉 (2020年2月10日)

Wuhan Diary Part Four: Quarantined



2 从2月10日开始汉阳口诸小区封闭管理，17日武昌的小区和一些小路陆续封闭禁行。18号时我们住的村村尾把守还没有那么严，我们骑电单车绕小路去超市买了一些肉和菜；沿路各村口都用遮挡物拦着，戴红帽子着红背心的人在把守。到了19号，村口村尾的路障升级，并看守森严，不能出去了。20号我生日，自己尝试做了一个面疙瘩当蛋糕。

From February 10th, they had started to control the quarantining of all housing communities in Hankou District. On the 17th, housing communities in Wuchang District and many other small roads began closing off one after the other. Until the 18th, the guard of our village was still not so strict, and we rode an electric bike around a small path to get to the supermarket to buy meat and vegetables. Along the way, the entrances to every village were obstructed by barricades, with guards wearing red caps and red vests standing by. But the next day, on the 19th, the security for our village was stepped up, and the guard became very strict—no going in or out. The 20th was my birthday, and I tried to make a doughball-shaped cake for myself.

3 到21日煤气没有了。平时换煤气是打另一个电话，价格是90-100元，现在打不通了；能打通的煤气供应电话贴在家门的角上，接通的那头感觉是个瘫在桌子上的胖子，告诉我中午把罐子抬到村口，价格是130元。

On the 21st, the gas for our cooking stove ran out. Usually getting a new gas tank involves calling a number, and it costs around 90-100 yuan, but now that hotline has stopped working. On the corner of the door of our house there is a sticker with another phone number for an official gas supplier from the city, and when the phone picks up, the person's voice sounds like a fat guy sprawled in front of his desk, telling me that they can deliver a new tank to the village entrance for 130 yuan.

4 村口在原来的垃圾箱前加立了蓝色挡板打围，只留了一个口子出入。挡板上对外贴着黄纸倡议和社区(包括几个村子)疫情通告，还有本村微信群的二维码。村队长和村委的工作人员戴着红袖章，在口子边用桌子和遮阳伞架了一个临时的休息岗亭。

At the entrance to the village in front of the rubbish dumpster, a blue guard wall has been added, leaving only a small opening to dispose of waste. Printed in yellow on the barrier are public notices and announcements about the situation of

the epidemic in our local neighbourhood (a radius of several villages), as well as the QR code for joining the chat group of our village. The village leader and neighbourhood committee workers wear red armbands, and at the village entrance they've set up a table with an umbrella to make a temporary station for the guard.

5 附近园林的清洁工和快递工人有住在村里的，上班需要在岗亭出示工作证明，登记后才能出去。外面的菜和米送来了，队长在群里帮把人叫出来：送菜的是隔壁村的菜贩，种类比不上超市，价格和原来差不多；听说城里有些小区团购买菜，超市给他们ABCDE的套餐，每套搭配不少根本不需要的菜；而汉口的菜价更是夸张，猪肉高达60元一斤。



5 Couriers and sanitation workers from the botanical garden nearby live in our village, and when they go to work they have to stop at the guard's station and show their credentials. They can only leave after signing out. Produce and rice are delivered in bulk by the vegetable seller who lives in the village next to ours; the village leader sends a message to the WeChat group telling people to come out. There isn't as much variety as the supermarket, but the prices are about the same as they were before. I heard that in the city some neighbourhoods do group shopping in bulk, and the markets offer them fixed sets from A to E. Each set is strangely put together with vegetables that nobody would ever need, and in Hankou District the prices are really extravagant. Pork costs 60 yuan for half a kilo.

6 五户人等着换煤气回家做午饭，等了一个小时还没来。我打电话威胁胖子为换煤气把十几号人聚集在村口万一出事谁负责，把运气车的电话要了来。村队长打过去，问车子20分钟内能不能到；又半开玩笑安抚村民说，要是超过了时间才到大家就哄上车搬气罐，拒不给钱。

There are five households waiting to have their gas tanks exchanged so that they can go home and prepare lunch, but after one hour, the delivery has still not come. I call that fat guy and threaten him, saying that he will be responsible if someone gets sick because there are over ten people standing around together waiting for their gas tanks. I get the delivery man's phone number from him, and the village leader calls, asking if the delivery can arrive within the next twenty minutes. He jokes with us in order

to calm us down, saying that if the delivery doesn't come on time then we can all raid the truck and just take the gas tanks, no need to pay.

7 下午1点钟大卡车来了，他解释刚从青山过来(比较远)，并说我们的罐子都是不合格的，公家的要比私人公司更安全和负责，于是煤气135还要再加换罐子的钱80；村委一个工作人员帮忙中间打圆场；我说那胖子跟我说就130，你给我开个票。他在岗亭写收据的时候，我看他制服后面写着附近一个网点的字样。

At one in the afternoon, a truck finally arrives and the driver explains that he's just come all the way from Qingshan, which is pretty far. Taking our empty tanks, he adds that ours are all not proper, because their official tanks from the city have safety standards. Taking our below par tanks will cost an extra 80 yuan on top of the 135. I say that the fat guy told me it was 130 and ask for an official receipt. One of the neighbourhood committee workers tries to smooth things over. As the driver stands at the guard station to write a receipt for me, I see the name of a nearby (non-official) gas company branch written on the back of his uniform.



8 晚上吃完饭，继续刷微博微信朋友圈追资讯：监狱确诊病例200多人的事件，有作家说监狱里关着“反人类”倾向的人，听着特别令人反感；是朋友发起的蒙面天使救援队，前阵一直在帮运送物资和医护上下班，这几天她去地下通道给无家的流浪汉派物资，结果被人指责不按城市管理的规矩办事，这些乞丐“才是城市真正要除掉的病根”。

In the evening over dinner, we continue poring through Weibo and WeChat to follow the news. It's been confirmed that the epidemic has now spread into prisons, and over 200 inmates are infected. One writer states that people inside prisons are "inhumane" anyway, and I feel disgusted. One of our friends has started the Masked Angels rescue team, and she has been helping to transport goods as well as doctors and nurses to and from work. These last few days, she went to some of the underpasses and tunnels to deliver goods to homeless people, and some people critiqued that she was not operating under official city protocol, saying that these beggars "are the real illness that need to be eliminated from the city".

Q 有村民在群里发了张一窝小狗的照片，问谁要。邻居领养了其中棕褐色的一只。

Someone in our village chat group posts a photo of a family of newborn puppies, asking if anyone wants one. Our neighbour chooses a sepia-coloured one to take home.



10 21日早上，群里说现在开始巡村消毒。声音嗒嗒地吵，医院里那种味道，我赶紧把大门关了。

On the morning of the 21st, it is reported in our chat group that they will start disinfection spray patrol. The sound is really loud, and it smells like a hospital. I hurry up and close our front door.

武漢日記 WUHAN DIARY

第三篇：玉林的消息
Part Three: News from Yulin, Guangxi Province

1 她妈妈在汉口，小区的业主委员会比较厉害(我曾见过该委员会就电梯维修和闲置空间出租所得“围剿”物业的大字报)，现在开始组织集体买菜了；她的姐姐们住在武昌，一大家留守在大伯屋里。每天都和家人吃饭，她爸有时还是放心不下隔一周送些菜来，尽管她一再告诉他不要乱跑。

Her mother lives in Hankou District, and the owners' committee there is fierce (I've seen them posting *dazibao* posters to criticise the property management about elevator repair work and the renting of common space). Now they've started collectively buying medicine. Her sisters live in Wuchang District, and now they're all staying together at their father's house. Everyday she calls her family, and her father worries incessantly, bringing fresh food over to us every other week even when she tells him it's not necessary to make the journey over here.

2 听说玉林有一个毒王，带着病毒在村里与兄弟叔伯各种酒席吃喝；我看到了他老婆被救护车带走的视频，还有一张照片里很多人围着圆桌吃饭，被红笔圈起来的男人是另一个确诊的亲戚。我想象着他在牛仔裤加工作坊门前抽完水烟，抬头远眺是一栋



小洋楼，几年前由梁老板送给了浙江来的水师傅；再过几分钟他就会被乡镇干部和李警官扭送去183医院隔离；在等待核酸检测结果的时候，他在病房里百无聊赖，和好友张八及狗弟在微信上开始聊天，用玩笑的口吻倾诉自己成为网红的眩晕感。

I heard Yulin has a drug lord who brings a virus to villages by drinking and feasting there with a gang of his brothers and uncles. I saw a video of his wife being carried away in an ambulance and also a photo of many people sitting around a table eating, the one circled in red supposedly a positively diagnosed relative. I imagine him standing outside of a denim garment workshop, just finishing a smoke on his pipe then raising his head to see in the distance the western style house that Boss LIANG had bought for the rinse technician from Zhejiang a few years ago. A few minutes later, he would be taken into custody by police officer LI and his cadres and sent to Hospital 183 for quarantine. He becomes bored stiff in the hospital ward while waiting for the results of his nucleic acid test and starts chatting on WeChat with his scoundrel brother and his good friend Eight ZHANG. He confesses to them in a jokey tone about how he's

SHENZHEN/JIEYANG

超家族消息

Ultra Clan Updates

incompetence of the local public health system. Her unmarried status has also led to discrimination by nearly every public servant she has encountered, almost preventing her and the baby from obtaining the social insurance legally rightful to them. Soon after, a few friends visited Mother Miao before traveling to Lao Yang's home in Shenzhen, where his old mother has been left to survive alone without any income since the police took her son into custody. Thankfully, Mother Miao and her baby are both healthy now. Jojo is living with them, and more friends will join after the peak dangers of the corona virus have passed.

由于未婚身份，她遭遇了政府和医疗单位几乎所有工作人员的歧视，艰难努力后才获得合法的社保。期间，几个上台朋友拜访和照顾了苗子，随后去看望老羊的老母亲——老羊被抓后，她孤身一人生活在深圳，没有收入。苗子和婴儿现在身体恢复了，我住在这里，疫情之后有更多朋友过来。有时我会通过数婴儿的年龄来数老羊被关的天数，相隔只有几天。老羊一人在寒冷的东北监狱，朋友们都无法拜访他，甚至没有办法与他取得联系。唯一来自他的律师的最新消息是，老羊的状况尚可，不再是单独监禁了，但至少还要在里面关半年才会有任何实质进展。

But Lao Yang is still in custody, two months later, in a cold prison in Northeast China,

and neither family nor friends are able to visit or even get in touch with him. The latest information shared via his lawyer is that he is staying in tolerable conditions and has been taken out of solitary, but it will be at least half a year before there is any concrete development on the situation. Sometimes we count the days of Lao Yang's detention together with the baby's age, which are only a few days apart.

这是他被关的第68天。
This is the 68th day of his detention.

每过去一天，我们可以写一条和他有关的东西，无论是关于他的作品还是关于当前状况的思考。这是超家族的Jojo的一个简单的倡议，无论你跟老羊熟不熟，都欢迎通过留言加入。Maybe as friends, we can write something for each passing day about him, his work or reflections on the current situation. This is a simple initiative started by Jojo of what we now call 'The Ultra Clan', and everyone is invited to join us, regardless of how familiar or not you are with Lao Yang.

你可以发到任何社交平台
标记#杨立才 #YANGLicai 即可

On any social media platform of your choice, hashtag #杨立才 and #YANGLicai.

想支持一个叫做苗子的年轻未婚妈妈，可以购买电子版的视频作品《超家族婚礼合集》，装在一个定制的U盘里，请联系：
logistics@displaydistribute.com

If you would like to support a young single mother goddess named Miao by purchasing a digital version of the video work The Ultra Clan Wedding Collection, housed on a custom USB card, please contact: logistics@displaydistribute.com



扫码看《超家族婚礼合集》的开头片段，出现在吴昊的“烟雾中的洞”项目中。
Scan left to see the opening section of the video, featured in Holes in Smoke by Amy Suo WU.

关于杨立才的更多信息，扫码：
For more information about YANG Licai, please scan:

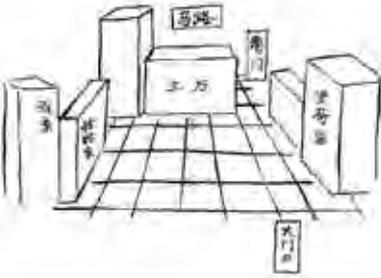


想为老羊捐赠资金，用于持续的援助和协助以支持他的律师费、租金和他母亲的日常生活费用，请联系：assembly@blackbook.hk
To donate funds for on-going aid and assistance to support Lao Yang's lawyer fees, rent and daily living expenses for his mother, please contact: assembly@blackbook.hk

武漢日記第三篇：玉林的消息

Wuhan Diary Part Three: News from Yulin

all in a tizzy about becoming an internet sensation.



3 弟弟1月31日夜里和我说，家里出事。后来确认是一个堂嫂有疫区旅行史，与其父亲确诊，堂哥带着他的两个娃一家10口人全部被隔离；他们住在家族祠堂前大地坪的东侧，围着地坪的其他几户包括我家、姑妈和五爷爷家等几个亲戚，全部被要求居家隔离。

My younger cousin tells me on January 31st that something has happened back home. Later I confirm that it's one of our cousin's wives who has travelled with her father to where the epidemic has spread, and they've been diagnosed. My elder cousin and his entire family—ten people—are all put into quarantine. They live on the eastern side of our ancestral hall, the other sides of which are owned by my family, my grandpa, father's elder sister and their family. All of them are forced into in-house quarantine.



4 爸妈没住在老家，我打电话回去时我妈才菜场回来。她说我爸买了台无人机，在楼顶玩。

My mother and father don't live in our ancestral home though, so when I call them my mother is just back from doing the shopping. She says my father bought a drone and is playing with it on the roof.



5 我看到群里姑姑发的视频，她从楼上窗户往下拍，底下两个白色防护服在大地坪喷洒消毒药水，再走进对面堂哥家，后面跟着一个蓝色防护服在跟踪摄像，大概作为诉职报告用；我很熟悉的场景里，似乎被入侵了，出现了这些奇怪的人。过了几天，社区工作人员把附近的住户家门都贴上了封条，包括奶奶去世后空置的房子。

接下来有社区工作人员给姑姑家送菜，她又发了一条如何在家发豆芽的抖音教程。My aunt sends a video to our family chat group, and in it she is filming from her window two people down below wearing white protective suits and spraying disinfectant in our family courtyard. They walk into my cousin's house on the opposite side, and behind them is a blue suited person recording video, probably to



7 我和她吵了一架。

She and I get into a fight.

8 WangH临年带着女儿回武汉，被困在家里，这次喝酒活动也正好叫上身在东京的妻子YK一块视频参与；镜头的那边，宇翔不断说着中文“你们家是我们家”；我竟然还见到了久未谋面的Yama！因福岛核难滞留武汉，萨克斯吹高田渡的“Monomorai”，他写信给影子带着儿子小海前来投奔……实在太高兴。Ozzy快来喝酒！WANG H came back to Wuhan with his daughter just prior to Lunar New Year, and they are quarantined inside the house. His wife YK is in Tokyo, so it's convenient for them to join the online drinking party. On that side of the lens, YU Xiang is constantly repeating, "Mi casa es su casa". I even see Yama, who brought his wife Akiko and their son Ui for refuge in Wuhan for a while after the nuclear accident in Fukushima. I haven't seen Yama for ages! He used to love to play that song "Monomorai" by Wataru Takada on the sax. It all made me so happy. And Ozzy! Come drink with us!

6 我们在武汉住的村子附近，也有了好几例确诊病例，于是村口也被拦起来，出入量体温；再后来就不建议出村子了；城里的小区禁足更为严格。在这种时期，最难熬的还是开店的朋友，开年了没有顾客租金却仍要交的。于是东京高圆寺的朋友们提议，2月15号一块儿做个“武汉PANDEMIC×东京PRISON”的活动：在当地的南多迦酒吧卖热干面、冠装啤（科罗娜）和二锅头，当天我们也视频云喝酒入局，买卖所得留给武汉的地下文化经营场所。

Near the village where we live on the outskirts of Wuhan, there have also been a few confirmed cases, so the entrance to the village has also been sealed off. In order to enter or exit your temperature has to be checked, and later they completely forbid all residents from leaving at all. Neighbourhoods inside the city are even more strict about leaving. During this period, the hardest hit are friends who run businesses. It's the new year, and there are no customers, but rent still has to be paid. So our friends from Koenji in Tokyo gave us the idea to hold a "Wuhan Pandemic x Tokyo Prison" event on February 15. They would sell Wuhan's famous hot dry noodles, Corona beer and Erguotou *baijiu* (sorghum liquor) at their Nantoka Bar, and we would join them by video call. All of the proceeds would go to an underground bar in Wuhan called Wuhan Prison.

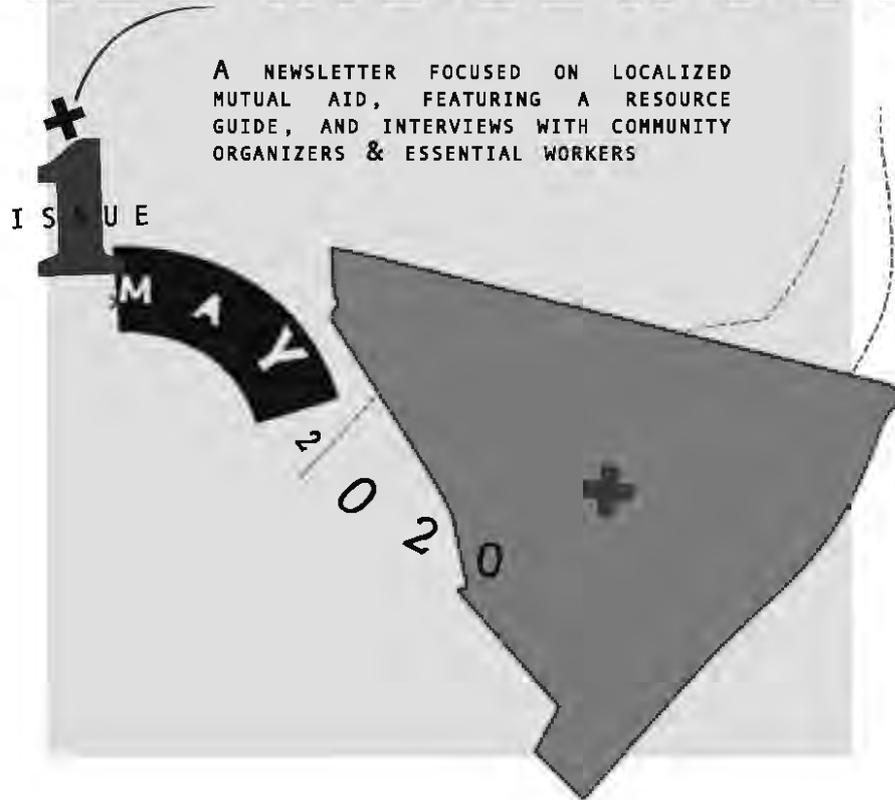
9 通宵营业卖了5,000多，Hajime把钱给咚咚和Wuhan Prison填酒吧的租。

The bar stayed open all night, bringing in over 5,000 yuan. Hajime gives the money to Dongdong and Wuhan Prison to help pay rent for the bar.

10 16号早上，解除封锁后，姑姑出门转了一圈。

On the morning of the 16th, after their in-house quarantine is over, auntie leaves the house and goes for a stroll.

FREE RIDGEWOOD



A NEWSLETTER FOCUSED ON LOCALIZED MUTUAL AID, FEATURING A RESOURCE GUIDE, AND INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS & ESSENTIAL WORKERS

ISSUE

MAY

2020

AN INTRODUCTION

On Friday, March 27th, we started running a food pantry at our space at 1882 Woodbine Street, in partnership with Hungry Monk. Together we distribute vegetables, bread, fruit, prepared meals, and pastries on Wednesdays and Fridays at 10am. It was clear last month that this crisis would mean a growing need for food in the community, and this is still true as we enter May.

Almost immediately after the crisis struck, Hungry Monk opened up a pantry at 68-59th Lane, and they continue to distribute food on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 10am. Every Saturday they also distribute groceries at Ridgewood Veterans Triangle, at the intersection of Myrtle and Cypress Avenues, starting at 11am.

Friends and neighbors have been sewing and distributing free masks for the community, and we are trying to keep up to date on all the resources available right now for people in Ridgewood. For anyone currently experiencing coronavirus symptoms, or who is unable to pick-up on-site, we can arrange home-delivery in Ridgewood, get in touch.

This newsletter is an attempt to share the information and resources we have and know about, as well as hear some stories and ideas from organizers, essential workers, and others on the front line about what's currently happening and what they think we should prepare for as this crisis goes on. We're including an info guide about food and state assistance, as well as the contact information for all of our elected officials so we can continue to ask them what they're doing to help our community get by. And there's some interviews we did this week.

None of us has ever faced a crisis quite like this before. Many of us remember the last times the city was brought to a halt—Hurricane Sandy, the financial crisis in 2008, and 9/11. The corona pandemic reminds us of all of them, but it is also completely new.

We are a group of friends and neighbors that have maintained this space at 1882 Woodbine Street since 2014. We came together after Hurricane Sandy to better prepare ourselves for disasters that might hit us in New York City. We don't want to just sit home waiting for the government and economy to figure it out, we have to self-organize for each other. We want to hear from you about what you think and what should be done.

INTERVIEWS

FATHER MIKE LOPEZ,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HUNGRY NOW

On Saturday there were over 600 people at our food pantries, almost double what we normally do. Many initially had some money, payroll, a paycheck, and now they are seeing their resources depleted. People are now more dependent than ever on pantries, food banks, and other social services.

Right now we're at the pinnacle of our outreach, we are doing more work than ever before. There's been a 100% uptick in the amount of people coming in weekly. This is day 45 for us, we initially anticipated doing this for about two months, but it's probably fair to say we'll be running through June, as we finally start coming down on the curve.

We should prepare ourselves to be in a major fiscal deficit as a community, and we have to continue operating the needed social services. Those who have some ability should start thinking about how to help their neighbors, and those in need have to know about the resources available in our community.

Right now we are hyper-focused on how to sustain and maintain the work we're already doing. I live among the poor, these people are always gonna be the underdog. The only focus I have is people in need, and anyone who could help should be sharing their helping.



MARIA HERRON,
MEL WUNDOS/BESHWICK MUTUAL AID

Mel Wundos is a bilingual bookstore and community center that celebrates Black, Latinx, and Indigenous heritage. Our one year anniversary was on March 15, right as all this madness began. We are based in a Spanish speaking neighborhood, but there were two spaces that seemed to be for us. We are actually negotiating developers' plans to gentrify the neighborhood, and I'm very proud of the crew that has brought together the pride of any way that we can help the community right now.

After Beshwick Mutual Aid (BMA) started at the beginning of the pandemic, Mel Wundos transferred the bookstore into a mutual aid depot. When we got involved the amount of missed calls that were coming in to BMA's Spanish line was feeling staggering. I was like "Holy shit." Over the last few weeks we've divided up the work into three primary roles: intake, disaster, and funerals.

The Mel Wundos crew started returning calls to families that called for help, helping them fill out the request form. This requires a fluency not just with the language, but with the culture. There were a bunch of calls in Quechua, where even Spanish is not their first language. Stories were coming in like, "I have a family of eight, I am willing to work, I want to work to battle collecting, but can't do that anymore." We don't know what's coming next, but right now we're paying attention.

When you're at our depot or doing deliveries, as people realize you are here again, they start to come up to you. Every day we are hearing stories like, "My son won't do his classes because we don't have a computer in the house. How do I get a computer?" or, "I am undocumented but I need more, can you help me find work?"

Many of the families we are delivering to are also asking how they can help. For a community member whose NO used to be to stay off the radar, now offering to be visible because they want to work together, the weight of this cannot be understated. Getting people involved is the critical difference between charity and mutual aid.

Nobody knows what is happening, and that's okay that nobody has any answers. A massive wave of defaults on rental leases is coming, and there will have to be a radical re-envisioning of what public space looks like for the community, and a reassessment of what quality of life New York has to offer. I'm excited though that so many people seem willing to re-assess all this with us.



JILLIAN PRIMIANO,
ER NURSE, WYCKOFF HOSPITAL



A lot of people call the hospital the front line, but I actually think of it as the last line. We are trying our best to save people's lives, but we can't stop them from getting sick. As a nurse I support the movement of essential workers to keep themselves safe in their workplaces. Many are not being offered sick time, they're not being offered PPE, and they don't have a socially distanced workplace.

Too much of the conversation right now is about individual behavior, not we should be really talking about people being put at risk by their employers. The way we've done that over for so long now, but people are still getting sick at work. They're working because their job has been deemed essential, but if they were essential, they should be working safely. They are working in unsafe conditions because they don't really have a choice. They still need to pay rent, and they need access to healthcare that is associated with their jobs, while politicians are getting tax cuts and corporations are getting bailed out.

I really don't know what's coming, but we need more public education about the variety of symptoms, and more support for all essential workers. All just health care workers, we need mass production of all the supplies by the federal government. What now they are at. Having corporations to sell these supplies to the highest bidder, rather than making sure they go to the areas where they're most needed.

People should know that a lot of symptoms can be related to COVID-19, not just cough and fever, but things like diarrhea, abdominal pain, pink eye, rashes, loss of taste and smell. It may even be related to clots that can cause strokes and heart attacks.

It would be great for every family or group of friends to get their hands on a pulse oximeter. This is what doctors or nurses put on your finger to test your pulse and oxygen level at the hospital. What is causing people to die, most of the time... is the viral pneumonia that COVID-19 causes. Many patients have "silent hypoxia": they do not feel short of breath, but when tested, their oxygen levels are very low. With other diseases you would be gasping for air, but with this disease you often don't know how low your oxygen is. With a pulse oximeter, people can check their oxygen levels at home and know whether they need to get to the hospital.

INTERVIEWS

"T", DOCTOR,
BELLEVUE HOSPITAL

I recently finished 6 weeks of working at Bellevue. The state and modern medicine are experiencing a major crisis of legitimacy, and we must strategize beyond their narratives. What we as healthcare workers are going through now is not unlike what we saw in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, in Greece after 2008, and in so many other countries facing austerity: a surge in demand for healthcare needs in an already broken healthcare system, where workers don't even have the most basic resources to provide care.

Imagine how we felt last month as celebrities and athletes were tweeting about their test results while our coworkers were being carried out in body bags, without even being tested prior to their passing. And now we're finding out that tens of thousands of healthcare workers are being fired, and more hospitals are slated for closure. And even if we had facemasks, testing kits, and a miraculous medication or vaccine, would it be given equitably to those who are suffering the most now: to the uninsured, unemployed, and undocumented?

Neither the state nor modern medicine will get us out of this, just as they have abandoned communities of color for centuries. Until we are liberating and sharing knowledge about this virus, and about collective care, prevention, or herbal remedies, we'll continue to be victims played by rhetoric announcements from the CDC, surgeon general, Cuomo, Trump, Dr. Oz, and Bill Gates.

In the next months we'll see hospital closures, healthcare workers bucking out from PTSD or being fired, and politicians rushing us back to work. The next waves of infections will be worse since we'll have fewer healthcare workers, and more precarious bodies working longer to catch up with past due rents, mortgages, and debt.

What we need is a strike. This is the vaccine. Rent strike, debt strike, and other mass exits from the economy. The challenge is how to recuperate our networks and communities around mutual aid, militant research, care for our sickening, and to liberate foreclosed homes and farms. How do we nurture preventative practices, like making facemasks, alcohol, or virus testing, using open-source methods to protect our communities while reclaiming so many of the spaces that are essential for us, what knowledge should we share around herbs and vegetables that enrich our immune systems while rejuvenating the soil and habitats they are cultivated in? How can alternative currencies reduce our dependence on money?

Many are being dispossessed as we speak, paying rents without any paycheck. We will be forced to work even longer hours once the restrictions are lifted, unless our strikes and alternatives can give us an opening. "Business as usual" is now, literally, a death sentence.

It's optimistic because there are so many incredible networks and collectives that have been reclaiming time, space, and so many other critical spheres for us to live autonomously. But we must deepen networks globally, and collectivize with our neighbors and coworkers sooner than later.



BOB ROBINSON,
HOUSING ORGANIZER

I am formerly homeless, and that experience transformed me. It made me look at the world differently. Living on the street in Miami, spending 30 months in a New York City homeless shelter, I kept hearing the word gentrification. I could see luxury towers going up and sitting empty, so I went to the library to read what it meant, and that launched me into housing organizing.

I never saw my lived experience as something to be ashamed of. I learned from it and want to share that, especially to others going through it. I became homeless as an adult. I had working, I had a college degree, I was never diagnosed with mental illness. I never had a chemical addictive.

Right now my work is around canceling rent and mortgages. Folks with low-income mortgages, Black and Brown people, are all adversely affected by COVID-19. When you say you can't work for 3 months, but you expect us to pay back rent? This is a moment right now to organize. First it was the moratorium on evictions, but don't expect us to pay back rent after 3 months, we need to cancel rent.

This is gonna be a huge fight, can't pay May, I can't pay, I'm allowed to be on Social Security Disability, but I didn't pay April, I won't pay May, and I won't pay June. I'm encouraging folks to help the money in their pocket, to not spend a dollar, don't go further into debt. There are some that are afraid, I understand that, but I can pay and I won't because I want to inspire people. You don't have to be against your landlord, you can force the government to act. Lina Ocasio is sponsoring a bill which would make the federal government responsible for relieving us of rent and mortgage payments, and makes funds available to landlords.

People should know they're not alone, we're organizing around the city, the state, and the world. The pandemic offers us an opportunity to organize like never before. It's a level playing field. This is a moment for major change another crisis is possible. If we take action, we can shape the world to come out of this. The only way to change it is to organize and rebel, folks need to be talking to each other and acting.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

IS 093 at 66-56 Forest Avenue is offering free "Grab and Go" meals Monday-Friday, between 7:30-1:30 (adults pick up from 11:30-1:30)

Woodbine is running a food pantry at 1882 Woodbine Street, Wednesdays and Fridays at 10am. For those who are currently experiencing coronavirus symptoms, or who are otherwise unable to pick-up on-site, we can arrange home-delivery in Ridgewood: woodbine@riseup.net

Hungry Monk is running a food pantry at 68-59 60th Lane on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays between 10-2. Also Saturdays at Ridgewood Veterans Triangle, at Myrtle/Cypress. Their 24/7 hotline is (347) 592-5423.

Please visit our website for links to more resources about food delivery; the Economic Impact Payment; Unemployment Insurance Claims; applying for SNAP (food stamps), Medicaid, and Cash Assistance; and the rent strike: <https://www.woodbine.nyc/mutualaid>



Agape Christian Center at 59-02 Summerfield Street is hosting a food pantry on Saturdays, 10-11:30am, (718) 635-0674.

Ridgewood Tenants Union is organizing a volunteer mutual aid initiative, text "I need support" to (929) 251-5044.

NYC Food Delivery Assistance, call 311

NYC Department for the Aging for home-delivered meals, personal care, and home visits for senior citizens, (212) 244-6469.

Unemployment Insurance Claims, (888) 209-8124

Invisible Hands is offering food and supply deliveries, (732) 639-1579.

Bushwick Mutual Aid is offering support and deliveries, (848) 229-1747

Met Council on Housing has a tenants rights hotline, (212) 979-0611.

RIDGEWOOD ELECTED OFFICIALS

- *Queens Community Board 5.....(718)366-1834
- *City Council District #34 Antonio Reynoso.....(718)963-3141
- *City Council District #30 Robert Holden.....(718)366-3900
- *Queens Borough President Sharon Lee.....(718)286-3000
- *Mayor Bill de Blasio.....(212)NEW-YORK
- *State Assembly District #37 Catherine Nolan.....(718)784-3194
- *State Assembly District #38 Michael Miller.....(718)805-0950
- *State Senate District #12 Michael Gianaris.....(718)728-0960
- *State Senate District #15 Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.....(718)738-1111
- *Governor Andrew M. Cuomo.....(518)474-8390
- *US Congressional District #7 Nydia M. Velazquez.....(202)225-2361
- *US Congressional District #6 Grace Meng.....(202)225-2601
- *Junior Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.....(212)688-6262
- *Senior Senator Charles E. Schumer.....(212)486-4430
- *President Donald Trump.....(202)456-1111



We don't think things will be returning to normal anytime soon. Whenever Cuomo and de Blasio decide to ease the social distancing measures, we will be stepping foot into a radically different environment. Even if the medical crisis is managed, the economic effects will last years. Millions of New Yorkers are out of work and unsure how they will pay their rent. This is just the beginning.

While this is a difficult time for everyone, we can still see some hope. We can finally imagine something different to do with our days, our neighborhood, and our city. We are trying to organize ourselves to get through this, and hope to find others who want to do the same. Not only to weather this storm, but to prepare ourselves for the struggles ahead.

Please write us about Issue #2, any ideas, responses, updates, interviews, resources, offers, etc: woodbine@riseup.net

PRO ARTS COMMONS

Newsletter | Workshop Edition



On September 25th, 28th and October 30th 2019, Pro Arts Gallery & COMMONS hosted three workshops that provide context for the work we do here in Oakland, CA to build a just creative economy, in which sharing takes center stage in the art market exchange and value creation.

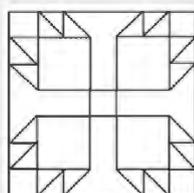
As we continue to experiment with how Pro Arts COMMONS organizes and operates within a sharing economy, we are also focusing on building a common knowledge platform that addresses the political imaginary of contemporary art. This platform has currently taken the shape of a string of political education workshops, facilitated by artists and cultural activists who align with our vision to reframe the capitalist mode of value production in the arts by transitioning from a capitalist to post-capitalist, commons-centric model, one that re-organizes the means of production. The common thread among these workshops is their reimagining of a post-capitalist art world in which the distribution of power and wealth is intrinsically linked to universal emancipation principles (often omitted when describing art), and community empowerment.

Workshop | Towards a Solidarity Economics Conduction System

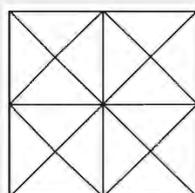
Marshall Trammell, led our first workshop in this series, entitled Towards a Solidarity Economics Conduction System for Improvisers. Trammell is the experimental percussionist and critical ethnographer known as Music Research Strategies (MRS). This identity began as a critical ethnographic framework, bridging obsessions with strategic, compositional, improvisational strategies that organize improvisation, impacting street- and global-level, social justice, organizing. MRS navigates the global economy as a touring musician, performing research and political education nationally and internationally through a battery of modular, social science based systems. His investigations produce bodies of work for fellowships, residencies and festivals.

Towards a Solidarity Economics Conduction System for Improvisers is part of a Trammell's series of Insurgent Learning Workshops. This project performs political education through creative, intercultural, participatory interventions that mobilize knowledge into a conduction method for creative music performance. The performance is synthesized as new language for Improvisation and social impact assessment, built into the very structure of the performance. Participants gain the experience of resourcing historical and cultural-bearing arts and anti-hegemonic practices into innovative performance for experimental music and produce new narratives and languages of resistance.

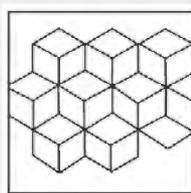
Marshall Trammell conducted this workshop as community engagement. It is an open rehearsal, inviting musicians and community members to engage in call-and-response improvisations of a global solidarity economy rendered as a collective, music conduction. Much of the workshop was devoted to introducing an array of Underground Railroad freedom quilt codes, a visual language of resistance and communication used to navigate the Underground Railroad – the network through the United States and into Canada of “conductors”, meeting places, and safe houses for the passage of African Americans out of slavery (1680-1860.) Musicians and community members were then invited to re-imagine the cultural significance of these quilt codes in contemporary, post-capitalist terms. By reading their shapes and motifs into a new visual languages, they were challenged to create ‘new social safety nets,’ based in solidarity, mutualism, and cooperation.



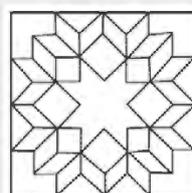
Bear Paw



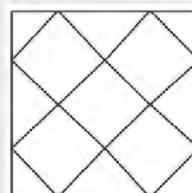
Bow Ties



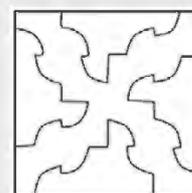
Boxes



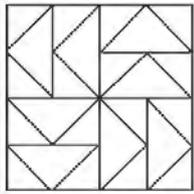
**Carpenter's
Wheel**



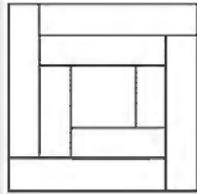
Crossroads



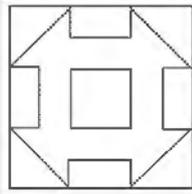
**Drunkard's
Path**



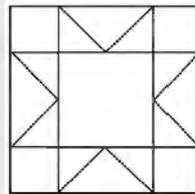
Flying Geese



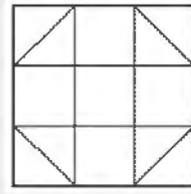
Log Cabin



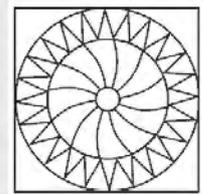
Monkey Wrench



North Star



Shoo Fly



Wagon Wheel



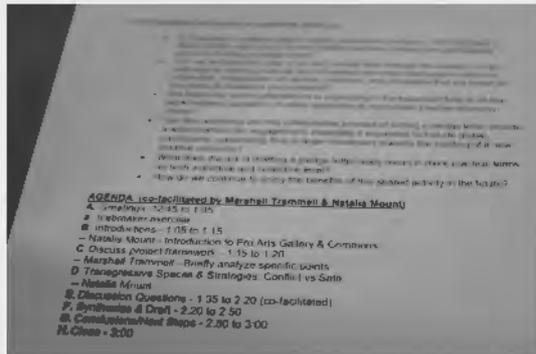
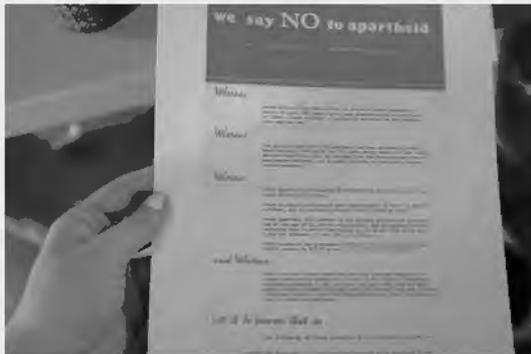
Participants re-coding Underground Railroad quilt blocks

Workshop | Towards a New System

A second workshop, on new models of organizing the means of production in the arts was held at Pro Arts COMMONS in September 2019. Facilitated by Natalia Mount (Pro Arts COMMONS) in collaboration with Marshall Trammell (MRS) the workshop addressed the role of the independent art space in a future art economy.

This workshop invited artists, cultural organizers, and culture-bearers to discuss polemics of the independent art space, and the emergence of new organizational formations like community commons. Natalia introduced the idea of the 'heterotopic' space, as defined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. The 'heterotopic' space is a space that functions as 'the other' – the in between' space; the 'counter-space'. It is a variant and ritualistic space that defies institutional categorizations, hierarchies, and art market speculation. It is a space that combines the mythical and the physical, creating subtle diversions, micro-cosmos, and normative disruptions. Heterotopic spaces are full potential, and are made abundant through conviviality and mutualized labor for the production of what can be called art. We followed this discussion with an examination of the spacial, transgressively artistic, and cultural organizing practices and strategies of Pro Arts COMMONS that, above all else, empower the community.

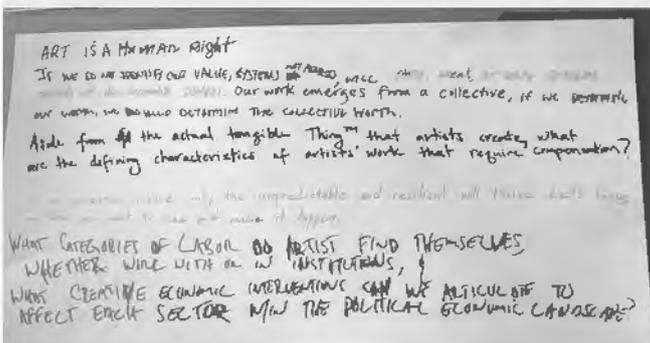
There are not many practical examples in America of commons-centric art practice and production. Perhaps this is because of the art market's strong hold over its participants, who seem to unconsciously opt into a rigid institutional system that proves very difficult to expand, challenge and change. Artists and art organizations are by necessity welded to authorship and yet ironically assert a claim on autonomy through their participation in the art market system (where, when convenient, they omit the 'market' from their arguments). Alternative spaces and other quasi-independent venues for art-presentation is likely where this claim on autonomy resides, but as we know, this is exactly how the patina of the art market system develops. This patina maintains the consistency of its superstructure. If we continue to operate on the premise of competition we will continue to create macro-enclosures.



Participants creating their own pledge letter for today's art world

Such macro-enclosures, i.e. museums, in turn create their own exclusionary hierarchies that reproduce through exploitive value creation measured by wealth transfers. However, these macro-enclosures are the reason for the emergence of micro-enclosures, i.e. independent art spaces as we know them, and their specific avant-garde programs that in turn provide a ground for anti-establishment practices. These spaces and the artists connected to them are by extension complicit in the creation of even more fragmented micro-enclosures, limited in their formations – i.e. people interested in experimental art, collectors' circles, groups based in identity politics, etc. This is one basis for individualized semiotics that are akin to social reform rather than revolution. What if instead of micro-enclosures we create radically open, commons-centric formations? Can we, through transgression, reclamation, and the re-envisioning of the system, broaden the value of social contributions and thus empower the community we serve? Can we reframe the value of art and cultural labor by creating new pathways for sharing material and immaterial resources that support collective production, independent art spaces, practices, and processes based in the ideas of resistance and solidarity? What are these alternatives to organizing in the expanded field of art that work besides, parallel or in direct opposition to the current creative economy model?

Participants in the second workshop tackled these questions. At its conclusion, participants wrote pledge letters with wishes for a post-capitalist art world, modeled on the visionary Anti-Apartheid “We say NO, A Declaration of American Artists” pledge letter, circulated by the American Committee on Africa (October 18, 1965.) We hope that this workshop and the collaborative process of writing pledge letters provides a model for engagement and subversion for a larger movement towards the building of a different creative economy.



ART IS A HUMAN RIGHT
 If we do not identify our value, systems not artists will strike, break, or make systems out of the normative system. Our work emerges from a collective, if we determine our worth, we help determine the collective worth. Aside from the actual tangible Thing™, that artists create, what are the defining characteristics of artists' work that require compensation? In an uncertain future, only the unpredictable and resilient will thrive. Let's focus on what we want to see and make it happen.
WHAT CATEGORIES OF LABOR DO ARTIST FIND THEMSELVES, WHETHER WORK WITH OR IN INSTITUTIONS, & WHAT CREATIVE ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS CAN WE ARTICULATE TO AFFECT EACH SECTOR W/IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE?

Workshop | Movement of Belonging

The third workshop in this Pro Arts COMMONS' series was held in October by our newest artist resident and commoner, Kate Spacek. Kate fosters belonging, creative agency, and collective ownership through design and facilitation. Her workshop launched her long-term, community-driven arts + social justice initiative, entitled the MOVEMENT OF BELONGING (MOB.)

MOB brings together local artists, cultural producers and activists, education leaders, and youth for a meaningful community dialogue and collective imagining sessions.

Invited participants learned about the MOB's othering and belonging concepts through movement and co-creative art experiments. Participants left the workshop with an awareness of how they can hone in their own unique belonging sensor to foster belonging around them, while also tightening their bond to the artist within. Key project phases and workshop activities included: (1) SPARKS: inquiry + multi-sensory awareness, story sharing, and movement, (2) ROOTS: collaborative arts-based investigations, and (3) RIPPLES: participant-driven public showcase and engagement.

The Movement of Belonging reveals all humans as creators with the potential to transform realities. As the project propagates, a Public Imagination Collective grows into a repository of activated projects intended to be adapted by other organizations, schools, community groups, and municipalities.



** Pro Arts Commons is a collectively-held space in Oakland, California that blurs the line among art, debate, experimentation, and collaboration. Through pulling together and sharing of material and immaterial resources, we reflect the Oakland's existing artistic and cultural fabric, while creating future landscape of other commons-centric spaces that encourage the economic and cultural power of the community. Our collaborative activities are rooted in mutual values and principles. Currently, we are experimenting with developing a new contributory system that allows for shared governance, participatory budgeting, and community-driven funding mechanisms. Pro Arts COMMONS is also focusing on the way we use language and space to define our mission and practice, specifically in the context of a sharing economy.*

**Pro Arts Commons Project is a global, peer-to-peer networked community, spearheading a movement towards a post-capitalist art economy. Working together, commoners and affinity groups aim to reframe the value of art and labor in the context of a sharing economy. We aim to disrupt the logic of capital, through sustaining those commons-centric spaces, practices, and value production models that aim to re-wire the broken connections between artist and community and art and everyday life.*

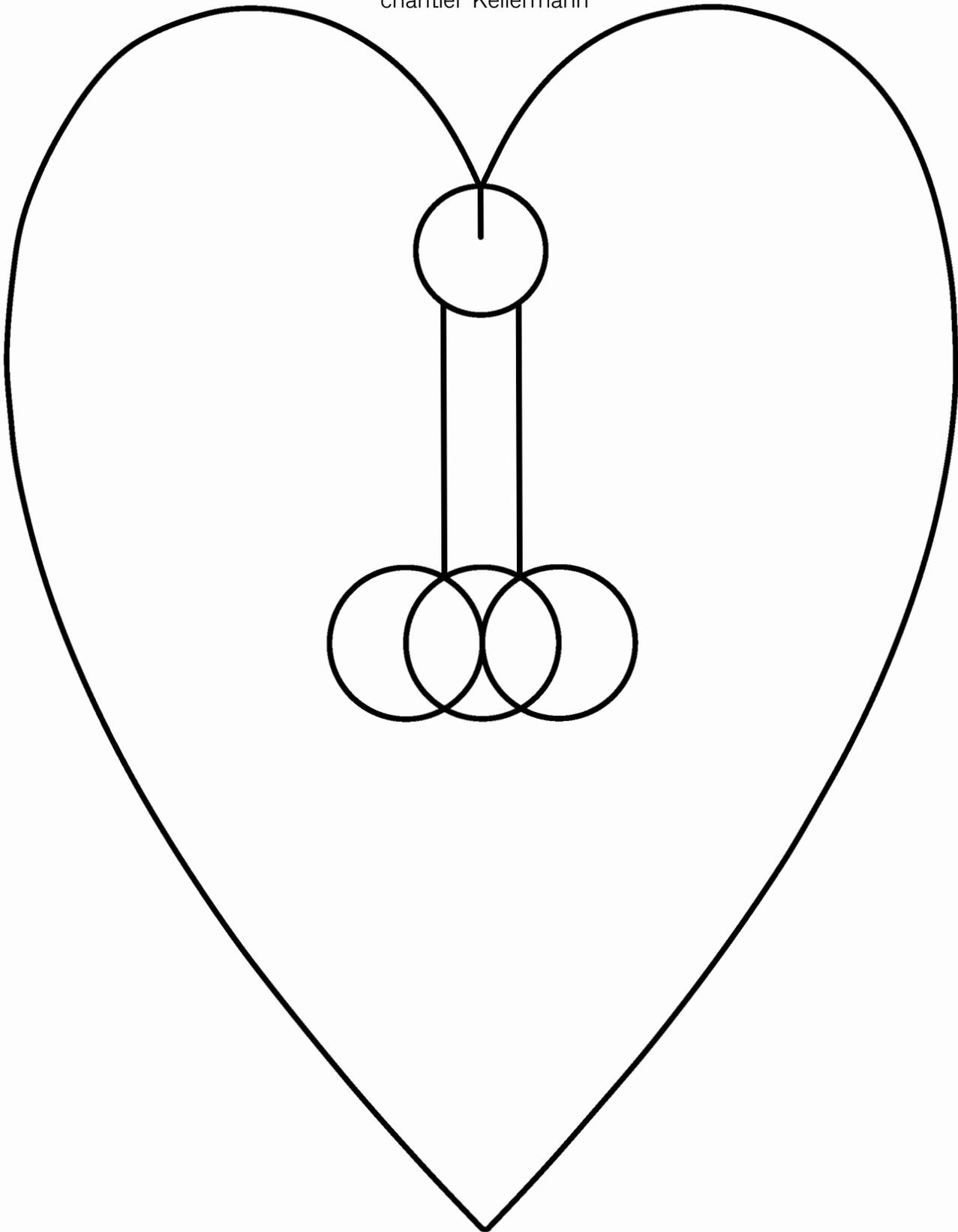
Marshall Trammell | Music Research Strategies
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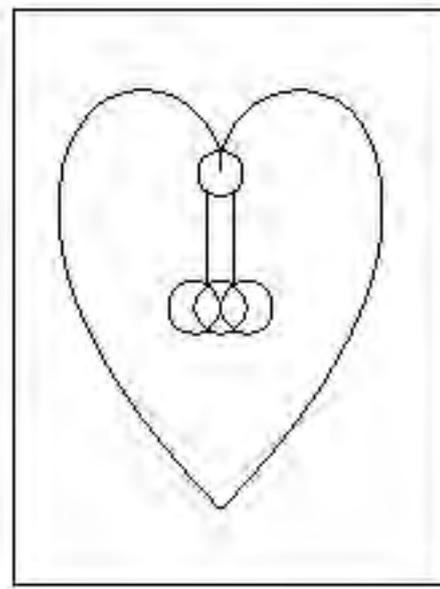
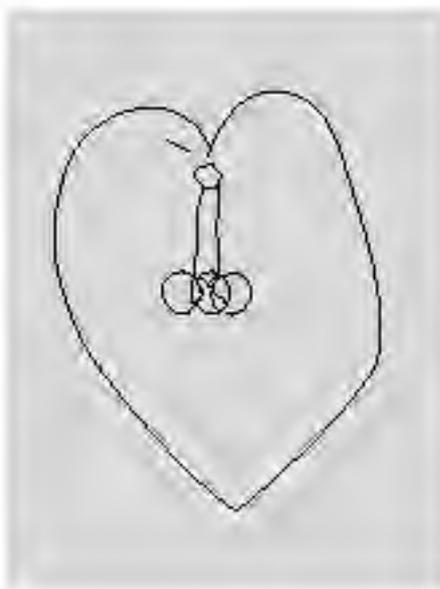
Transcripts of the two workshops will be published in the form of a reader by Project Kalahati in early 2020.

Zizi de Vitruve

Cynthia Montier & les ouvriers du
chantier Kellermann



How to turn random dick graffiti
into heraldick construction site drawing



Between 2017 and 2020, the construction site of Kellermann was implanted in the center of the city of Strasbourg, meant to be the future Primark fashion shopping mall.

With the complicity of the construction workers, we organised a different body of work within the future walls of the surrounding architecture: a clandestine and generous residency, between art and construction habits.

We debated about counter-institutional structures, about the room for manoeuvre and the existing vacant space for informal creativity inside of the functional economies of institutions.

The project we elaborated draws a parallel between salaried work in the field of construction and self-employment in the field of art; between construction processes and creative practices; between art gesture and labour power considered as performance; between authorship and exploited and dispossessed labour power.

Closing the loop of this experience as part of the editorial project *S.F.B. kit*—a corpus of collaborative self-publications archiving this non-commissioned work residency—*Zizi de Vitruve [Vitruve's Willy]* appears to be the last symbolic brick added to the erection of this building, as the Primark prepares to open its doors.

Zizi de Vitruve is an interpretation of a found sign both technical drawing and vernacular graffiti made by anonymous workers on the wall of the construction site just before the end of the structural work. After someone drawn a graphic annotation figuring a cross inside of a circle over the concrete wall with a building chalk, the originate drawing is turned into a dick peeing love by another hand—reminding by serendipity the anatomical drawing of the *Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo da Vinci.

This found sign is then transposed by Cynthia Montier into an instruction sheet as an invitation to reconduct this dick *détournement* as a viral gesture by turning any found dick graffiti into Vitruvian dick.

The theory of Vitruve embodies an emblematic allegorical symbol of Humanism and Renaissance, depicting rationalism through the relations between human body and architectural anatomy like a measurement and representation of the world and its architectures.

Zizi de Vitruve symbolizes the erection of constructions to the image of the institutions they carry. As an heraldic sign, it's a vernacular tribute to know-how, craft and manpower.

This protocole is open to appropriation and should circulate from hand to hand. It can be activated by the hand with any tool necessary.

Biographies

Newsletter contributors:

More information on the specifics of each autonomous editorial collective whose contributions are central to this issue are available on pages 30 to 33.

Essay contributors

Hammam Aldouri holds a PhD in philosophy from the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University (London) and a Helena Rubinstein Fellowship in Critical Studies from the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program (New York). He currently teaches at Moore College of Art and Design and Temple University (Philadelphia).

Out of the Woods is a transnational political research and theory collective, a loose grouping of decolonial, small-c communist, antiracist queer-feminist thinkers working together to think through the problem of ecological crisis.

Nick Thoburn is author of *Anti-Book: On the Art and Politics of Radical Publishing* (2016) and *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (2003). He writes about communism, publishing, housing, and social theory, and teaches in the sociology department at the University of Manchester.

Tools for Action is an artist group and collaborative platform to open the way for experimentation and poetic forms of engagement. We develop open source tools for collective leverage, catalyzing self-organization through skill-sharing and participatory making processes. Our practice oscillates between performance and protest, searching for new forms of public assembly and lines of flight in the face of oppression, exploitation and surveillance. Tools for Action was founded by Artúr van Balen (NL-HU) in 2012, who has continuously remained a core member of the group. Artúr van Balen and Tomás Espinosa collaborated under Tools for Action from 2017-2019. Current members include both Artúr and Shailoh Philips.

Editorial contributors

Claudia Firth recently completed a PhD in Cultural and Critical Studies at Birkbeck, exploring radical informal learning in relation to political histories, looking particularly at the reading group as a social entity. Other research interests include resistance and alternative organization and listening as a feminist practice. Claudia also has extensive experience of facilitating workshops across both cultural and activist sectors.

Marc Herbst is an editor, researcher, artist, writer with a broad and interdisciplinary practice. His cosmopolitical ethico-poet concerns influenced his recent co-editing of the book *Everything Gardens! Growing through the Ruins of Modernity* (ADOCS/NGBK, 2020). Currently he is looking at relationality, as expressed in and through bodies and their needs.

Robby Herbst is an inter-disciplinary artist, writer, and thinker. His work explores ways language can activate social and political movements. His art takes the form of drawing, publication, organizing, group-work, and object making. He instigates the geographically sited critical-landscape projects of the Llano Del Rio Collective. With Llano Del Rio Collective he's currently developing a socio-emotional guide to the politics of homelessness for the Skid Row History Museum in Los Angeles.

Amber Hickey is a Faculty Fellow in US Visual Culture (American Studies Program) at Colby College. Amber's research and teaching focuses on art activism, critical Indigenous studies, military visibility, and radical pedagogy. She is editor of *A Guidebook of Alternative Nows* (Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press, 2012). Recent publications include "Mikael Owunna's Photographs Show the Essence of Black Healing," *Aperture*, June 4, 2020, and "Rupturing Settler Time: Visual Culture and Geographies of Indigenous Futurity," *World Art* 9:2 (Summer 2019): 163-180.

📄 endnotes- peace out yo!

Journal of Aesthetics & Protest
11
2020

○, _
Culture, beside itself

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of seemingly wider reverberation. Yet with their foundational necessity to meaningfully appear, the space for critically intimate and vulnerable explorations and articulations of meaning and needs, and to account for difficult power dynamics may be lacking within them. There are things that may not easily translate to the institutional logics of our politicized culture, but that must be there in relation to them. Or beyond them. And certain political activity must occur outside of them.

ANALYSIS

What art historians call "the classical avant garde" were a disparate group of cultural and political practitioners whose era was concurrent with the apex of class solidarity against the agents of industrial capitalism. This avant garde was embedded within a wider social trajectory that provided them the space within which to autonomously explore, through aesthetic and critical means, other possibilities for human practice. Their activity was conceptualized as "autonomous" because of how industrial capitalism relied merely on the formal subsumption of labor for industrial profit, rather than on the atomizing rationalization of labor's individual cognitive, organizational and social capacities for profit's ends... through the mean and mode we commonly call post-Fordist capitalism.

Famously, Adorno described the capture of autonomous cultural production through the rationalizing industries of Hollywood and beyond. This journal has never fully bought into the death of the avant garde, recognizing the eruptions of all that can be associated with '68, Situationists, Yippies, the Panthers (etc...), as also leading toward other possible ways of being.

This Journal of Aesthetics & Protest comes out of the late 90's, when the collapse of the Soviet Union left

a vacancy in the left imaginary. This vacancy was quickly filled by anarchist-inspired movements and ways of doing. Then, this was concurrent with new technology's "radical" appearance and for some time they seemed to co-develop through the globalization movement- as both sought networked and autonomous ways of practice.

Jump forward to the arts and media practices of today - once 'radical' practice now seem to grind on alongside the functionalized cultural realm shuttling towards or guarding against anthropocenic death, or remain marginalized. In this marginal space in one step removed from these instrumentalized institutions, demands and poetics that engage with the cosmopolitical margin where the super-political and nonpolitical ways of being in and over time alone and together are formulated. Or they struggle for the space to simply be.

What seems to be avant garde could be curated into the Venice Biennale or aggregated onto anybody's laptop as clickbait. Within the current context of rising fascism and a surging right, experimental radical culture should clamour for space on the center stage BUT also nurture its own grounds within common and marginal life.

That is, autonomous work cares for the universal but also for the always particular cosmopolitical margin. This issue looks at that space, if only to begin engaging with more localized efforts on the topic. As a decidedly autonomous journal, we find ourselves both joining in and stepping back from the clear logics that drive meaningful cultural and political economies. We find ourselves asking for some human space while still keeping a sharp and ready focus on the struggles against rising fascism and its commodifying drive to extinction.



**UNDER THE
BURNING COP CARS,
(A WORLD WHERE
THE SAFETY OF
THE FEW IS NOT
AT THE EXPENSE
OF THE MANY)**