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in Contemporary Art
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BAK, basis voor actuele kunst
Postbus 19288
NL–3501 DG Utrecht
T +31 (0)30 2316125
F +31 (0)30 2300591
info@bak-utrecht.nl
www.bak-utrecht.nl
and
Revolver
Archiv für aktuelle Kunst
Bethmannstrasse 13
D–60311 Frankfurt am Main
T +49 (0)69 446362
F +49 (0)69 94412451
info@revolver-books.de
www.revolver-books.de

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Maria Hlavajova, Jill Winder, Binna Choi
Introduction

On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art presents a selection of newly commissioned and anthologized texts by a diverse group of artists, art historians, philosophers, and theorists who have engaged with thinking critically about the field of art as a site for the production of knowledge. Part of ongoing research, it is developed out of a discourse-based program (including meetings, public lectures, readings, presentations, screenings, and performances) entitled *Concerning "Knowledge Production" (Practices in Contemporary Art)* organized by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst in 2006.[1] The genesis of the project was the realization that terms that have become commonplace in the discourse of contemporary art—such as knowledge production, artistic research, and interdisciplinary practice—remain arguably as nebulous and contested as ever. Moreover, the "intellectualization" of the art field and the circulation of these ideas, palpable in the proliferation of discursive events (lectures, panel discussions, conferences, artists' talks, and the like) that have become a mainstay of contemporary art, often simply put knowledge *on display* instead of critically analyzing it. While conscious of adding another discursive exploration to this crowded stage, we felt it was essential to seize the critical opportunity to pause before this rich terrain of unresolved issues surrounding art and knowledge production.

"What is knowledge?" This was the intriguingly simple question posed to us by art historian and theorist Sarat Maharaj a number of years ago when he participated in a public performance called *The World Question Center (Reloaded)* at BAK.[2]

1 *Concerning "Knowledge Production" Practices in Contemporary Art*, developed by Binna Choi, Maria Hlavajova, and Jill Winder and organized by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, took place in the second half of 2006. Detailed information about the project, including a full list of contributors, can be found on pages 206–210 of this publication.

2 *The World Question Center (Reloaded)*, part three of the project *Now What? Dreaming a better world in six parts*, was a public performance after James Lee Byars, which took place on 1 November 2003 and was curated by Jens Hoffmann.

Given that a significant and respected body of Maharaj's work focuses on the discourse on art as knowledge production, this question sounds initially perplexing. But the definition of knowledge itself has been a matter of ongoing debate in numerous fields. We understood his response as a provocation that reminded us of the necessity of questioning our assumptions about knowledge anew. What is it that we know? Who authorizes what knowledge is? What are the uses of knowledge and how can it be manipulated? What (if anything), and how, do we learn from art? Or, as philosopher Eva Meyer and artist Eran Schaerf ask in their contribution in this reader: *What does art know?* Last year when Maharaj joined in an exchange with artist Sopawan Boonnimitra at BAK,[3] he referred to her research into the shifting notion of "home" in immigrant and refugee communities (expanded upon during her BAK Research-in-Residence stay) and pointed out how much Boonnimitra's approach differed from that of a sociologist or aid worker, asking what the "visual actually enables" vis-à-vis knowledge production in the visual arts. He considered the question of if, " . . . there is a particular standpoint from which an artist can begin an inquiry that is different from the narrative and analytical standpoints and the standpoint of inquisition taken up by other disciplines? So I think what one is trying to argue here is that there are some specific issues that fall through the net of academic thinking, of disciplinary thinking, of established departmental thinking, which can be picked up by art practitioners . . ." This alternative kind of inquiry does not shy away from difference or lack of clarity, leaving classical "scientific" demands for empiricism and purity aside. He continued, ". . . in asking what systems of knowledge do not ask, one is opening space for new knowledge and in the production of that new knowledge, there you see the role of the artist-researcher . . ." Elsewhere Maharaj has suggested the concept of the "xeno-episteme" (a combination of "xeno" meaning strange, foreign, or other and "episteme" meaning knowledge) as an alternative, propositional definition of knowledge production as related to the contemporary visual arts (Alejandro del Pino Velasco, Summary of *An Unknown Object in Uncountable Dimensions: Visual Arts as Knowledge Production in the Retinal Arena*, a presentation by Sarat Maharaj).

Here the initial question moves forward: what fluid forms and alternative methodologies might such an approach to knowledge production in art suggest? In *privacy + dialect = capital*, for example, writer and independent curator Clémentine Deliss considers a kind of knowledge that actively resists and rejects involvement with traditional institutions of learning as well as conventional modes of knowledge transmission. Such knowledge is highly ephemeral and difficult to control, often circulating covertly and informally among a limited participant-audience versed in the "dialects" and methodologies that characterize it. To be sure, the untranslatability and instability of knowledge, representations of knowledge, and creative production play a role in a variety of modes of artistic practice. Art historian and critic Sven Lütticken's text *Unknown Knowns: On Symptoms in Contemporary Art* takes the example of the "symptom" theorized by Sigmund Freud and George Didi-Huberman as an "inadvertent non-sign," and discusses how artists have made use of non-knowledge or repressed knowledge "symptomatologically" to expose the limits of the distinction between what is known and unknown and to prompt ceaseless reflection and readings. These limits

3 On 29 May 2007, Sopawan Boonnimitra, artist and guest of the Research-in-Residence program (RIR), presented her research and work in progress on the construction of immigrant identity in the Netherlands. Following the presentation, art theorist and art historian Sarat Maharaj engaged in conversation with the artist and audience. The full exchange is available for viewing via BAK's online video archive (www.bak-utrecht.nl). For information on Boonnimitra's research and PhD thesis in artistic research, see www.leavetoremain.com.

are ever shifting and in flux so that "enlightening" obscure knowledge with full and immediate clarity is not at all what artists aim for. Rather, in the words of artist Matthew Buckingham, "the unknown is more than an occasion for possibilities, it is a provocation that propels us on a journey, a route of unknowing, in which we experience many of the ways that we do not know something." In his text *Muhheakantuck—Everything has a Name*, which is the voice-over of a filmic work meditating on mobility and the passage of time, Buckingham weaves together a densely layered story with remnants of the oft-forgotten violent history of Dutch colonial misadventure and repression along the Hudson River in New York state. In this particular way, Buckingham positions himself in the line of historical inquiry but creates distance from normative narratives, engaging with an alternative reading of a particular history.[4] In another case, by revisiting and photographing certain sites seen in iconic images from the conceptual photography of the 1960s and 1970s and reporting on these "field trips" in his work *Histories*, artist Joachim Koester reveals, through prose and images, a particular approach to revelation, ruminating at one point: "It's about engagement rather than truth."

Such engagements and concerns range far from a limited, anachronistic understanding of "art's place" as functioning in a secluded corner detached from the world. They are also not concerned with territorializing gestures that protect artistic boundaries or limit art works to specific modes of address in the guise of the socially valorized term "knowledge." Rather, as art functioning in an "expanded field" and very much part of the real world, they can be read as critical and cautious responses—themselves under constant examination—to the dominant conception of what knowledge is and what role it plays within today's neoliberal political and economic environment as both a potential revenue source and possible locus of dissent. According to art and cultural critic Simon Sheikh, developments in the area of contemporary art practice—such as the "dematerialization" and linguistic-performative turn seen in art since the 1960s, and the recently burgeoning discourse industry in the contemporary art field—can indeed be viewed in relation to the economic development of the post-Fordist "knowledge-based economy" (*Talk Value: Cultural Industry and the Knowledge Economy*). This is an economy that values knowledge and its performative dimension as end products—pure commodities—and it is clear that art-as-knowledge production is already implicated in the neoliberal frame in which knowledge is equated with capital itself. With this in mind, artist and curator Marion von Osten addresses one of the paradoxes of the current economic paradigm: the dilemma between ownership as key to profit-making, and collaborative or interactive work as essential to the production of knowledge. In *Such Views Miss the Decisive Point . . . The Dilemma of Knowledge-Based Economy and its Opponents*, she writes about how creative "knowledge workers" manage to converge in the space of art and generate a new mode of knowledge production whose central principle lies in collectivity, transdisciplinarity, and transgressing the dichotomy of theory and practice.

In their contribution *Representations of the Erased*, artist and activist Ashley Hunt in dialogue with artist Natascha Sadr Haghighian points out the pitfalls for many activists in their efforts to struggle against existing categories of knowledge circulating in the public sphere. Because strategies for making

4 In terms of the particular history of Dutch colonial presence in North America, which Buckingham explores in his work, we should not forget just how unresolved this past is in the Netherlands today. Consider the fact that Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende has publicly waxed lyrical about the economic achievements of the colonial Dutch East India Company in recent years.

the "invisible visible" may themselves be instrumentalized or co-opted by the very forces that are to be opposed, Hunt argues for the importance of an approach that "folds in on itself, betrays you, and reveals itself as a construction" when describing his artistic practice of mapping-theorizing. Speaking of possibilities for dissent: an alarming instance of artistic work being thrust into the concrete terrain of hostility and suspicion is the case of Steve Kurtz, a member of artist's collective Critical Art Ensemble, who was arrested in 2004 for being part of a collaborative CAE "art-research project," which the government prosecuted as an act of terrorism. CAE's text *When Thought Becomes Crime* considers the real-world consequences of their "amateur approach to life science knowledge systems" and how their artistic work "disrupted the legitimized version of science as a self-contained, value-free specialization." In another instance of *indiscipline*, the artist-duo who established the Copenhagen Free University in their home in 2001 as a radical act of alternative self-institutionalization triumphantly announce its dissolution in the manifesto *We Have Won!* Committed to knowledge production that is "always situated and interwoven with desire" in opposition to the functionalist, neoliberal knowledge economy and the machinery of academic institutionalism, the project declares itself at an end in order to "take power and play with power but also to abolish power."

In considering the notion of criticality, in her text *What is a Theorist?* art historian and theorist Irit Rogoff writes that the theorist and artist alike emerge from a state of "without," from the insufficiency of disciplinary knowledge or systems of thinking for dealing with the urgent concerns of our time. She proposes that we should focus on taking part in "a field of complex and growing entanglements," which engages with questions of democracy and explores "what it means to take part in visual culture beyond the roles it allots us as viewers or listeners."

It is precisely this notion of "taking part," of participation in the urgent matters of the world in which we live that requires of art to be an act of public conversation. The texts collected here vary widely in the ways they choose to engage in such an act of conversation: from first-person narration and storytelling to artworks (and parts of artworks); from theoretical and art historical analyses to a modest but politically charged manifesto; from artists' self-reflection on their practice to a succinct summary of a lecture. We hope this heterogeneous yet complimentary selection offers a multiplicity of perspectives on and modes of critical speculation. We believe that this mixture unfolds different entry points and layers, unwrapping the (often) uncritically adopted notion of "art producing knowledge" and casting diverse views on the context, meaning, and potential of this understanding of art practices. We are aware, however, that this represents a paradoxical attempt at gaining knowledge about the nature of knowledge itself, a challenge even more complicated because the knowledge in question is produced outside, or on the margins of, established academic disciplines: primarily in the field of contemporary art. Yet, our aim is not to provide conclusive definitions or create new dogmas, nor is it to bring together and package "expert knowledge" on the issues. Instead, we would like to consider the body of contributions in this reader as a series of critical inquires, thought experiments, documents of practice, and tentative propositions about the status of producing knowledge in contemporary art.

We would like to see this reader as part of an ongoing collective effort to understand what is it that we engage with in art today and how can we make an attempt to unhinge the

understanding of knowledge produced by art from simplistic and quick conclusions. We have undertaken this effort with a warning in mind, to invoke Maharaj a final time, that this engagement remains "definitively inconclusive." Having embarked on such a journey, it seems to us a task worthwhile to pursue.

On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art is the second publication in the BAK Critical Reader Series, following *Concerning War: A Critical Reader* (2006). BAK Critical Readers explore and expand upon exhibitions, projects, and the results of artistic research, presenting significant writing by artists, curators, theorists, and other cultural producers.

Matthew Buckingham
Muhheakantuck—Everything Has a Name

The dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight seems to have first materialized in China in the form of a toy—a bamboo dragonfly that lifted straight up through the air when spun quickly.

The dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight is a dream of suspending time through distance—of cutting one's self off from ordinary measures of time—"surface time."

The numbers we use to count the years are like the codes we use when we send a letter or make a telephone call—arbitrary *and* systematic—invented and determined by those who lived in the past—maintained by authority—and only made meaningful because most of us agree to use them.

On September 11, 1609, Henry Hudson and his crew sailed into the mouth of the river that would later bear his name. He was not flying the flag of Holland on his ship, but rather the corporate flag of the Dutch East India Company.

Far from being the first, Hudson was one of the *last* Europeans to arrive before European colonization. Indeed there seems to have been little surprise when one of the first indigenous people he met on his voyage spoke to him in French.

If I draw a line on a sheet of paper in order to think of it as a street or a river I have made a place, a place where you can imagine another place. But the line also limits our imagination, keeping this place in one spot and not another.

When European mapmakers began to draw the image of the world as a globe, they found many solutions to the problem of placing a spherical form onto a flat sheet of paper. At least one cartographer mapped the world metaphorically in the image of

a male human head. Europe occupied the position of the "face." The Atlantic Ocean lay behind the head's right ear, Asia at the left. The so-called "New World" lay on the back of the head, directly in Europe's "blind spot."

Less anthropomorphized world maps also attempted to describe "what Europe couldn't see." Many were inscribed with a curious waterway. Although it appeared in various forms, it invariably connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, providing an easier way to sail from Europe to Asia. This waterway was called the Northwest Passage. No one knew whether or not it existed. Courts and monarchs in Europe wished for it to exist, so they commissioned maps that depicted it, so that more navigators would look for it.

Under the rule of the Habsburgs, Spain used the Netherlands as a warehouse and distribution center for Northern Europe. Amsterdam became an economic and cultural delta. When the Dutch merchant class became wealthy they rebelled against Spain, initiating years of war.

After taking over the Spanish trade infrastructure Dutch investors saw 400 percent profits. Business was so good Dutch traders agreed not to compete against each other and created a trade monopoly, the Dutch East India Company. Anyone in Holland could buy shares in the company on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange.

But out on the open sea Spain still threatened Holland's ships. Insurance costs were high, and arming the boats limited cargo space.

In 1609 after forty years of war Holland and Spain agreed to a twelve-year truce. At the same time the Bank of Amsterdam

was founded, and loan and credit systems were expanded. Taking advantage of the peace and financing, the Dutch East India Company hired Henry Hudson to look for a new passage to Asia.

Hudson wrote in detail about his voyage in his Captain's log. When he returned to Amsterdam the log became the property of the company. Two hundred years later it was sold, along with eighty thousand pounds of company records, as scrap paper and destroyed.

One of Hudson's crewmembers, Robert Juet, wrote down the depths of the waters they sailed through. After dutifully listing his findings each day Juet occasionally also narrated his own experience on Hudson's ship.

Robert Juet didn't know the names of the landmarks he and Hudson passed by. He did not know what name the people in this part of the world called themselves. Juet referred to them as "the people of the country." In his journal he didn't write down any of the words that were exchanged during the twenty-one encounters he and Hudson had with them. He *did* say that Hudson kidnapped three "people of the country" near the point now called Sandy Hook, New Jersey. One immediately escaped—the others a few days later—as the ship sailed past the mountains that would be renamed the Catskills.

Everything has a name, or the potential to be named, but who does the naming when the unknown is falsely assumed not to exist?

Tasting salt in the river 150 miles upstream, Hudson cautiously hoped he might have found the Northwest Passage.

When they were near what is now called the city of Albany, New York, Hudson invited several "people of the country" to board his ship. He gave them alcohol to drink. Robert Juet wrote that he thought the one woman in the group behaved the way he would expect a Dutch or English woman to behave in a place that was as strange to her. The alcohol made one of the people drunk, and the others felt uncertain and were concerned for him. They left and came back with numerous strands of beads, which they gave to him. The next day they came again, bringing more beads, and were relieved to find the man well again. That afternoon they gave Hudson a tour of their homes and their land.

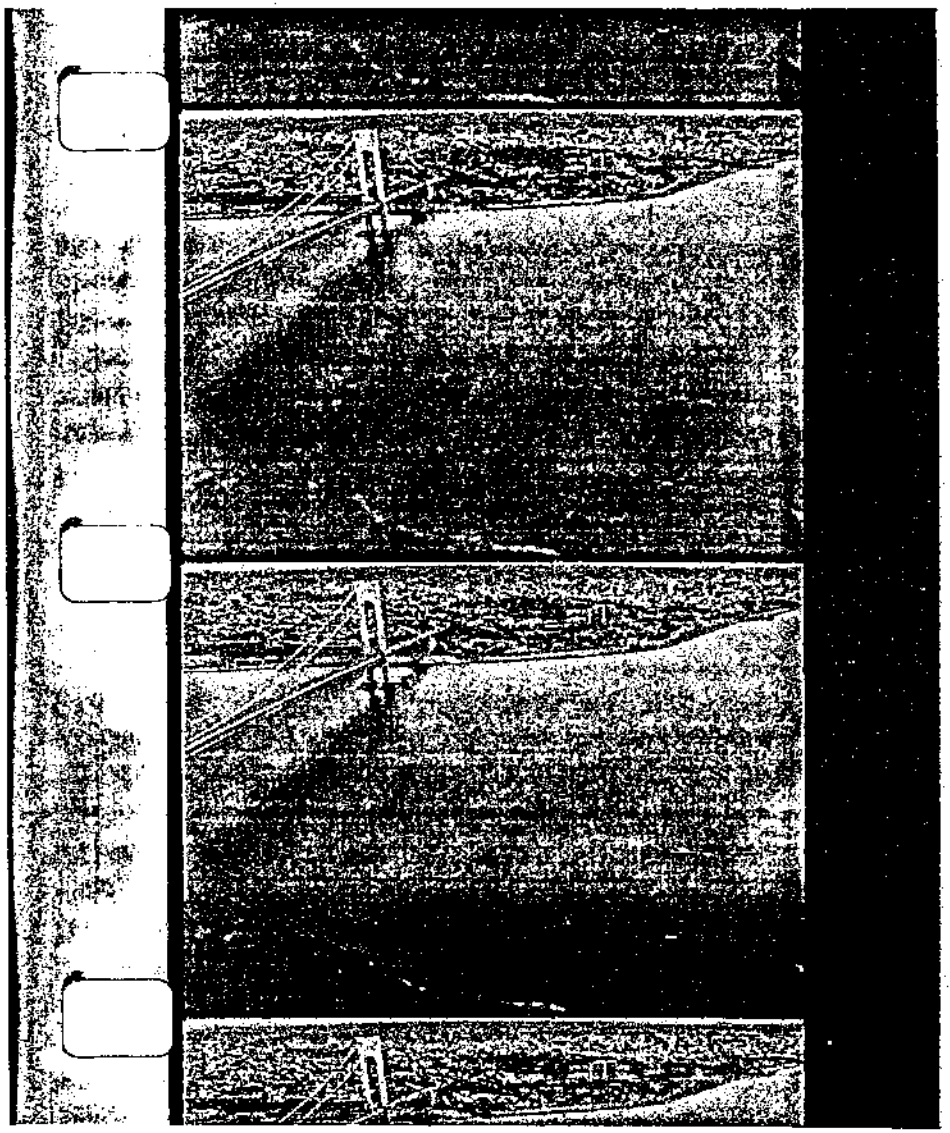
Meanwhile, a few men from Hudson's ship were charting the waters farther upriver. They returned that night with the news that the journey was at an end. The river was too shallow for the big ship to navigate. They had not found the Northwest Passage.

Robert Juet wrote that on the way back, downriver, one of the "people of the country" followed Hudson's ship in a canoe, climbed aboard, and took Juet's pillow and two of his shirts from his cabin. The ship's first mate shot and killed this man. Hudson sent out the small boat to collect the pillow and shirts. When another person of the country attempted to tip this boat over the ship's cook cut off one of his hands and he drowned.

The following day, before reaching the mouth of the river, one of the three people Hudson had earlier kidnapped reappeared, leading an attack on the ship. Juet and the ship's crew killed eight of these men.

In the following year Robert Juet joined Henry Hudson on another voyage in search of the Northwest Passage, but appears to have mutinied against him. Hudson, his young son,

Matthew Buckingham, *Muhheakentuck–Everything Has a Name*, 2003, double frame enlargement from film, courtesy of the artist



and loyal crew members were left to die in a rowboat in the icy waters then called Wiinipekw, now renamed "Hudson's Bay."

The river that became known as the Hudson was not discovered—it was invented and re-invented.

The point where the river joins the sea is both its end and a beginning. As fresh water empties out into the ocean, seawater surges more than 150 miles up the middle of the river.

"Muhheakantuck": the river that flows in two directions. The people who named it this call themselves the Lenape, or Leni-Lenape, meaning people, or common people, or real people. Europeans translated this name as "we the people."

We understand the world through our experience, and our experience of other people's experience.

Writing substitutes the eye for the ear. Writing substitutes the hand for the mouth. Colonizing language also colonizes memory and imagination.

Most of the Lenape who encountered Henry Hudson expected to exchange furs with him for European goods, and knew exactly which furs were in greatest demand in Holland.

As he searched for the Northwest Passage Hudson drew a map of the distant coastline he saw from on board his ship. The lines on his map describe, in great detail, the way the water meets. But behind these lines Hudson's map is empty.

Hudson did not know it, but there *is* a waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—it flows deep under the ice cap that stretches across the Earth's North Pole. The first ship to navigate these waters was the Nautilus, a nuclear-powered US Navy submarine.

Even though Hudson did not find a Northwest Passage, the Dutch East India Company was interested in the furs he purchased on his trip. Holland immediately claimed exclusive trading rights to the region behind the lines on Hudson's map, renaming the land of the Lenape "New Netherland."

Everything has a name, or the potential to be named.

When the Dutch floated into their world, the Lenape called them "Swannekins," or salt beings, or bitter beings, or "the salty people." Some Lenape say this refers to the Dutch arriving by sea, or to the bitter nature of interactions with the Dutch, or to an origin story for European people: that they were created from the foam of the saltwater lapping against the shores of Europe, and later floated west to the land of the Lenape.

The Dutch occasionally referred to the Lenape, in writing, as "Americans."

In 1613 the Dutch East India Company built a small storehouse on the southern tip of what they called Manhattan Island. The next year they established a twelve-person military garrison near the place on the river where Hudson turned around when he discovered he had not discovered the Northwest Passage. The company purchased furs at the garrison upriver, then shipped them down river and on to Holland. The Lenape's northern neighbors, the Mahicans, may have allowed the Dutch to establish the garrison on their lands because it gave them a trading advantage over their rivals, the Mohawks.

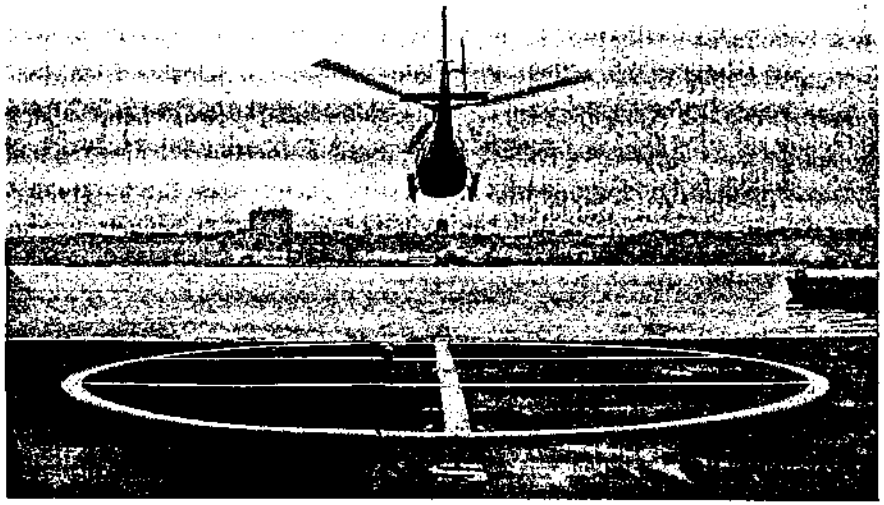
The beads that Robert Juet and Henry Hudson saw on their trip are called *wampum*—small tubular beads of white and purple shell strung together and sewn into belts. The patterns on the belts are memory aids, recording events and stories. Initially the Dutch did not understand the importance of wampum. Attempting to demonstrate Dutch power to the neighboring Pequot, the Dutch captured a Pequot leader and threatened to decapitate him unless a large ransom was paid. The Pequot gave the Dutch more than 800 feet of wampum. But, expecting payment in beaver skins, the Dutch killed their hostage and returned his body to the Pequot.

After the Dutch realized the value attached to wampum, the Pequot, Lenape, and others counteracted the fluctuating value of European trade goods by reconfiguring wampum as a monetary currency with a set value. In exchange for their beaver skins, the Lenape asked for exact payment in wampum. In order to pay, the Dutch first had to buy wampum from Lenape or Pequot manufacturers. Wampum production became a major industry for groups living along coastal waters and some Dutch attempted to counterfeit wampum.

—

Toy helicopters had become popular across Europe by the fifteenth century. Leonardo da Vinci designed a helicopter that would never fly. The dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight creates imaginary views of real places. The world is a place, but the globe is a reality that most of us will only ever experience as an image.

Matthew Buckingham, *Muhheakantuck—Everything Has a Name*, 2003, production still, courtesy of the artist



By capturing land on paper, maps always construct their worlds in the image of a society, placing the unobtainable within reach—drawing places in order to possess them.

Land, light, water, air.

In agreeing to share their land, the Lenape were asking the Dutch to join an alliance to protect the land together from common enemies. Being similar to light, water, and air, land was not considered a possession.

Despite opposing ideas of communal land versus private property both Europeans and Lenape believed they held land as custodians for spirit beings, and both used complex systems for transferring land rights, ritually exchanging valuable gifts to finalize deals.

Even the Dutch didn't think that they owned the air, but later, US property laws stipulated that landowners *did* legally own the space above their land "to an indefinite extent."

Airspace above the immediate reaches of the Earth was returned to "the public" when air travel became possible. Possession was then limited to what could be used in connection with the land and this airspace is still sold, rented, and traded wherever it has a market value.

So real estate, too, has its dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight—of repeating the same piece of earth over and over, above its original, in the form of tall buildings.

When the twelve-year truce with Spain expired, Holland went back to war, and back to profiting from war. Investors created a separate branch of the company, the Dutch West India Company,

and voted to establish a year-round colony in New Netherland to be used as a base for attacking Spanish trade and storing plunder. Thirty families, employees of the company, settled at outposts on Manhattan Island and upriver at the garrison. All private trading was forbidden. Eleven African slaves owned by the company were also brought to New Amsterdam. Company slaves built fortifications, and later walls, around the settlements to keep the British and Lenape out.

To say that New Netherland, or even New Amsterdam, was "Dutch" is a little misleading. The company was Dutch-owned, but only half of its citizen-employees were Dutch-speaking. The first thirty families were Walloon. They were joined by English, French, Irish, Swedish, Danish, German, Frisian, Italian, and Moroccan employees. Eighteen languages were spoken among a few hundred people.

Outside the colonies the indigenous people of North America were, at that time, speaking one-quarter of the entire world's languages.

The financial gain of stockholders was the sole objective of the company. The company had no religious motives and was more interested in profit than land. The company kept copious records of their internal business affairs, but only occasional disinterested accounts of their Lenape trade partners.

The Dutch catered to the Lenape's needs. When Lenapes complained that brightly colored European fabric drew attention and spoiled their hunting, the company gave them darker more camouflaged colors.

Holland consistently increased the volume of trade by exploiting this dependence on new European products. Anything the

Europeans introduced that proved useful to indigenous people could only be replaced through the fur trade. This encouraged overhunting and led to the extinction of fur-bearing animals. And, as the coastal fur trade collapsed, so did coastal indigenous political power.

In 1656, 80,000 beaver skins were exported to Amsterdam. By that same year the Dutch estimated that 90 percent of the Lenape had died from imported disease.

On Manhattan, more than 2,000 Lenape had died or left the Island, and the land upriver was described by the Dutch as being "empty" due to disease.

After 14 epidemics the number of Lenape living in what the Dutch called New Netherland was reduced from more than 24,000 to less than 3,000.

Today, 63,000 Native Americans live in what was once New Netherland; 10,000 in Manhattan.

When the company lifted the ban on private fur trading among employees, many colonists abandoned agriculture. Unable to feed and shelter the colonists, the company imported more and more slaves, eventually selling them to private buyers at subsidized rates.

When the number of colonists living in New Netherland reached 1,500 the population of neighboring New England was already above 20,000. The English made the same claim against New Netherland that Europeans made against Native America. They told the Dutch that it was a "sin" to let land lie uncultivated and seized so-called unused territories from the Dutch.

Long after the English had entirely displaced the Dutch, changing the name of the Land of the Lenape from New Netherland to New York, King George II placed a ban on westward European expansion in North America, forbidding colonists to settle west of the Ohio River. During the rebellion against the British, the US Continental Congress promised the Lenape that in exchange for remaining neutral during the war, the Ohio River would also be the permanent western boundary of the United States. But, at the same time, Congress was also promising to give colonists land in that region as payment for fighting against England.

Surviving Lenape were forcibly displaced and dislocated to destination after destination, to the places that would later be renamed Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Idaho, Montana, Wisconsin, Ontario. Each of these, in turn, was also promised to them forever.

—

Air, land, water, light.

Europeans finally experienced the dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight when they developed the lighter-than-air balloon, which was quickly adapted to military use. After the invention of the airplane, and controlled flight, the dream grew even stronger, resulting in the more precise and versatile flying machine—the helicopter.

In 1961 the US Army flew thirty Shawnee helicopters into the countryside west of Saigon, Vietnam, on a mission to destroy a Viet Cong radio transmitter. This was the first time helicopters

were used as assault vehicles. The helicopters had been given the name of the Shawnee people, one of the Algonkian-speaking groups that the Haudenosaunee pushed west during the fight over the beaver trade.

The maneuverability of the helicopter was a major factor in the US decision to go to war in Vietnam. The US believed the helicopter would give an advantage over the North Vietnamese that the French had lacked.

Instead, after being defeated, the US used the precise maneuverability of the helicopter to evacuate more than 7,000 embassy and military personnel from Saigon in the last 24 hours of the war as the North Vietnamese took control of the city.

The fiction of history is to imagine the real. History makes reality desirable. It has the illusion of "speaking itself" as if it simply happened.

Stories condense time the way maps miniaturize space. But somehow, condensing time seems to distance the past from us rather than bring it closer.

What unfolds in a story—what really *happens* in a story—is language.

Whenever something is said there is also silence.

One of the first steps in learning a new language is to hear the silence between the words.

Words are convenient and silence can be uncomfortable.

What feels familiar is actually unknown—because we think

we already understand the things that are familiar to us.

In every silence there is a presence. Silence is not passive.

New Netherland was controlled by a series of Governors General appointed by the company. The third of these, Willem Kieft, tried to levee a tax on the Lenape—a fee for, quote-unquote, "protecting" them. When intimidation failed, he ordered his soldiers to attack a group of Lenape living at Pavonia, now Jersey City, New Jersey. One colonist wrote that the details of the horror of this attack were unspeakable.

Six years later a pamphlet entitled *Broad Advice* appeared in Antwerp describing the event in great detail. The pamphlet was unsigned and published anonymously. Perhaps the writer who had earlier found the horror unspeakable rediscovered his own voice in anonymity.

The pamphlet was meant to discredit the Dutch West India Company by exposing its mismanagement of New Netherland. Intending to shock, the pamphlet gave a sensationalized secondhand account of dozens of Lenape infants, children, parents, and elders being stabbed, shot, immolated, or drowned in the raid on Pavonia. It said that the survivors did not know who had attacked them in the night, and that the Dutch let them believe their indigenous rivals were responsible.

Another dissatisfied colonist, David DeVries, returned home after failing to establish himself in New Netherland. He copied parts of this pamphlet, verbatim, into his own memoir, claiming the words of protest as his own.

Other colonists wrote, in their own names and in their own

words, that that same night Kieft's men had attacked another gathering of Lenape at Corlear's Hook, in Manhattan, near where the Williamsburg Bridge stands today. They wrote that the heads of eighty victims were brought back to New Amsterdam and put on display.

In response, eleven Lenape groups banded together in a confederation against the company. They destroyed numerous farms, killing many colonists. Colonists abandoned their settlements in what are now Jersey City, Westchester County, and upper Manhattan.

Willem Kieft then hired John Underhill to fight the Lenape. Underhill was well known for planning the English massacre of the Pequot—lighting their homes on fire while they slept, then shooting them as they tried to escape. Using these methods Underhill killed more than 1,600 Lenape at Pound Ridge, Westchester; Hempstead, Long Island; and on Staten Island.

But colonists thought Kieft's violent policies were bad for business and two colonists tried to kill him. The company eventually recalled Kieft but he died in a shipwreck in the false English Channel.

New Netherland existed for forty years. More than 23,000 Lenape died in that time. To European colonists accustomed to their own radically escalating arms race in Europe, this number may have seemed relatively small. During these same years 7.5 million Germans died in the Thirty Years War.

How do we know what we think we know? My thoughts consist of what I have seen, heard, read, spoken, dreamt—and what I've thought about what I've seen, heard, read, spoken, and dreamt.

Silence occludes the ordinary, the implied, the everyday, the unexceptional—everything not considered important enough to be mentioned. Yet the significance of past events appears in these ordinary moments experienced by people whose names we do not always know. That's why the quotidian becomes a limit of understanding—and a limit for speaking about the past.

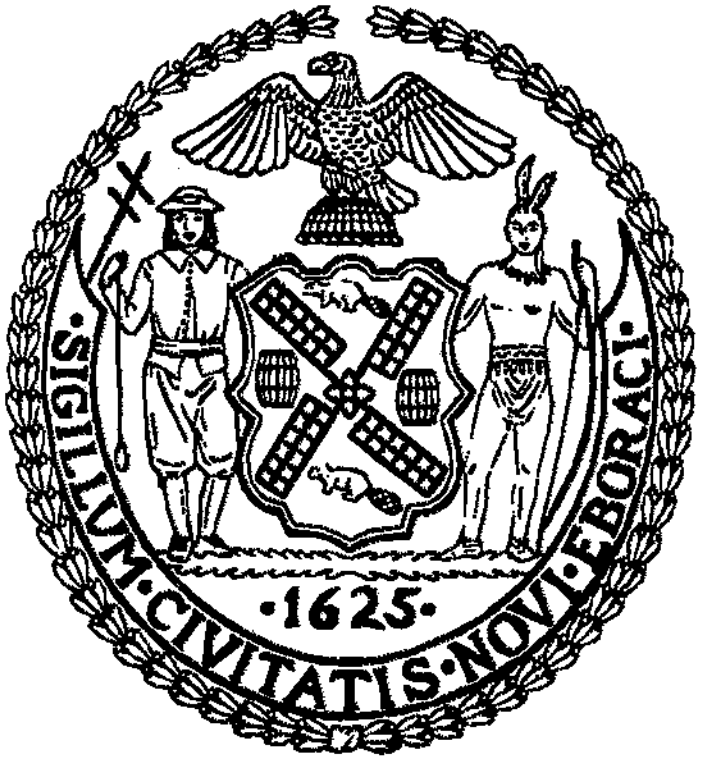
The unknown is more than an occasion for possibilities, it is a provocation that propels us on a journey, a route of unknowing, in which we experience many of the ways that we do *not* know something.

Our bodies are frameworks with which we create abstract thought and systems of categories. In the Lenape language there is no article corresponding to the English word "the." Speakers of Lenape reveal the position from which they speak and express their relationship to what they speak about. Without "the," there is no way to experience our world and not become part of it.

It's easy to forget that it is the eye that makes the horizon.

In the dream of vertical ascent and hovering flight we glimpse the cartographer's view: a fictional disembodied eye suspended high in the air. But as soon as we follow one line, or one river, and not another, a journey emerges, even if it is only a dream. And of course that journey unavoidably becomes a story. Spaces that have been abstracted, once more become particular places.

Seal of the City of New York, line dawing



This text is the voice-over from Matthew Buckingham, *Muhheakantuck—Everything Has a Name* (2003), continuous color 16mm film projection with sound, 38 minutes. The film was first exhibited in *Watershed: The Hudson Valley Art Project*, Beacon, New York, curated and organized by Diane Shamash and Minetta Brook. The text has also appeared in *Experience, Memory, Re-enactment*, eds. Anke Bangma, Steve Rushton, and Florian Wüst (Rotterdam and Frankfurt: Piet Zwart Institute/Revolver, 2005), and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

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Copenhagen Free University
We Have Won!

The Copenhagen Free University ceased its activities by the end of 2007 and in connection with the abolition of the institution we have written the following statement:

We have won!
In the spring of 2001 we demanded: All Power to the Copenhagen Free University. We had just opened a free university in our home in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen. This impossible demand was put forward in the form of a manifesto intended to provoke and unsettle the collective imaginary and open new potential paths of action. We wanted to take power.

The manifesto was written in a very specific socio-political context preceding September 11 2001. It was written in a mood of confidence. With the Copenhagen Free University we wanted to reclaim power and help undermine the so-called "knowledge economy"—a term used to describe the new economy that was consolidating around the turn of the millennium. The unrolling of the knowledge economy was a part of the neoliberal campaign for control orchestrated by the financial and political elites and the term made clear what kind of ambition was at the core of this campaign: the financialization of our brains, our nervous systems, our subjectivity, our desires, our selves.

In the midst of the unrolling of this economy, we intended to push the limits and develop new means to stem the invasion of our lives by the abstract calculations of capitalist valorization. It was our intention to picket the social factory, preventing an imminent and clearly hostile take over. We opened our flat as a space for social research and exploration within a context shaped by the hard material facts, fluctuating passions, and affective instabilities that characterized our daily life. We wanted to turn the tide.

We took power by using the available means: a mattress became a residency, the bedroom a cinema, the living room a meeting space, the workroom an archive, our flat became a university. Opening our private space turned it into a public institution. The Copenhagen Free University was a real collective phantom, hovering.

At the same time, many art workers in their hunt for a new function in society and new sources of income were getting involved in the corridors and boardrooms of the companies and corporations of the neoliberal economy. The artists acted as consultants and legitimators in branding and business activities relating to new ethical and social responsibility schemes and human resource management. The anger and hopes of the revolutionary avant-garde had been deemed naive and artists were adapting to a new landscape of immaterial production. This told a sad story about society's lost ability to dream.

When turning to the education sector we saw that universities across the globe were increasingly restructuring and adapting to corporate practices. Ideas of autonomy and independence in research were quickly falling out of fashion. Not only was the usability of the knowledge produced in universities becoming a contested area, the distribution of intellectual property was becoming a key lever in the new economy. The Copenhagen Free University made it clear that universities do not necessarily have to reflect the hegemonic structures of society; universities could be organized and based in and around the everyday knowledge and material struggles structuring people's lives. Universities could in fact counter the hegemonic structures. We tried to open a new front at least.

By reclaiming one of society's central means of knowledge production, the machinery of the university, it was actually possible to create spaces that were not based on capitalist valorization. For us "free" means gratis and liberated. Everybody can open their own university; it is a simple action. By self-organizing universities people can, in a very practical way, counter the free market restructuring of the official universities by re-appropriating the concept of the university as a place for the sharing of knowledge among students (as the first universities were defined). With the Copenhagen Free University we wanted to break into the university as one of the imaginary institutions of neoliberal society and create a new image and a new potential path of the possible.

Six months after we opened the Copenhagen Free University, 9/11 happened and the "war on terror" pushed the anti-capitalist movement onto the defensive, having to react to all the emerging wars unfolding in the following years. The global civil war was invading our lives and imaginations. This broke the back of the anti-capitalist movement right after the victories of London, Seattle, Gothenburg, and Genoa and turned it into the much more vague so-called social movement whose objectives became reformist and unclear. Despite this, arrays of decentralized and self-organized initiatives were still developing and proliferating at grassroots level. Swarms of projects engaging in developing alternative ways of life, building on friendship, extending networks and with clear cultural, social, and political aims, were still coming into being. These community-based initiatives were usually resisting formalization and avoiding the spectacularization of politics through the useless and pacifying academic seminars, art exhibitions, and publications that have increasingly characterized the mediation of critical culture in recent years. We also checked into this circuit occasionally and got a taste of the forces that are producing schizophrenia and resignation in us.

During our life at the Copenhagen Free University we have encountered the way in which the authority of the word "university" works on many levels. On a very practical level, people from across the globe started to write to us, applying as students and lecturers: people were using the Copenhagen Free University as a means of getting into increasingly privatized archives; people were using the Copenhagen Free University to obtain job references; people were using the Copenhagen Free University as a means to get into the fortified first world... These and other incidents make plain how embedded the authority of institutions is in the global imaginary. But it also tells us how fragile ruling power is when you play with its language and its basic definitions. The drive to self-determination despite the neoliberal knowledge economy was also demonstrated by all our sister self-organized universities that have mushroomed everywhere in parallel to our own development. It has never been about joining the Copenhagen Free University, or any other university, but about opening your own university.

One thing is the fact that a self-instituted university is messing around with the institutional power relations. But on a structural level the question is, what conceptions of knowledge are actually pervading the self-institution? Knowledge for us has always been something that is evaporating, slipping between our fingers. It is not something that we treat as a truth or a possession but something living, a relation between people. Truth is always the truth of the masters, the proprietary knowledge is always the knowledge that separates people into those who posses and those who don't. Knowledge for us is always situated and interwoven with desire. The kitchen, the bed, the living room made up our anything-but-sterile laboratories. Dreams, unhappiness, rage were all over the architecture.

Knowledge is at the same time about empowerment, making people able to understand and act closer to existence and despite the distortion of the spectacle. The research projects we initiated worked as invitations to share rather than drives to accumulate. There have been no singular end products; of importance were all the various experiences and conclusions that people carried into their own lives and networks after taking part in the activities at the Copenhagen Free University. This is why we haven't published papers or dissertations to wrap up the research projects that we have worked with. We found that the research and the knowledge spun at the Copenhagen Free University did not need a closure. But the institution did.

The Copenhagen Free University has never wanted to become a fixed identity and as a part of the concept of self-institutionalization we have always found it important to take power and play with power but also to abolish power. This is why the Copenhagen Free University closed down at the end of 2007. Looking back at the six years of existence of the Copenhagen Free University we end our activities with a clear conviction and declare: We Have Won!

This text, written by the Copenhagen Free University Abolition Committee of 2007 (Henriette Heise & Jakob Jakobsen), is reprinted here with the authors' permission.

Critical Art Ensemble
When Thought Becomes Crime[1]

How did it come to this?
Only a perverse authoritarian logic can explain how CAE can at one moment be creating the project *Free Range Grain* for the *Art at Your Own Risk* exhibition at Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, reconfiguring it for *The Interventionists* exhibition at MASS MoCA in a second moment, and then suddenly have a CAE member in F.B.I. detention.[2] The US Justice Department has accused us of such shocking crimes as bioterrorism, heath and safety violations, mail fraud, wire fraud, and even murder. Now, as we retool *Free Range Grain* for the *Risk* exhibition at the Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Art, the surreal farce of our legal nightmare continues unabated.

Of course, we always knew that cultural interventionist work could have serious consequences. And over the years, predictably, CAE has been denounced (and threatened) by all varieties of authority: cops, corporate lawyers, politicians, all types of racists, and church groups—even the Archbishop of Salzburg. But to be the target of an international investigation that involves the F.B.I.; the Joint Terrorism Task Force; the ATF;

1 The set of theses presented in this document were collectively developed through a series of lectures given by the CAE Defense Team. Contributors include Doug Ashford, Gregg Bordowitz, CAE, Natalie Jeremijenko, Claire Pentecost, and Lucia Sommer. Special thanks to Karen Schiff for editing.

2 Editorial note: The following information on the background of this case is taken from the CAE Defense Fund website (www.caedefensefund.org) (accessed 16 March 2006): "In May 2004, the Joint Terrorism Task Force illegally detained artist and SUNY Buffalo professor Steve Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble (CAE). They seized documents, computers, and equipment used in four of CAE's projects, including scientific equipment used to test food for the presence of genetically modified organisms. The seized materials included a project that was to have been part of an exhibition and performance at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) and three other projects that had been safely displayed in museums and galleries throughout Europe and North America. The New York State Commissioner of Public Health determined that the materials seized by the F.B.I. pose no public safety risk. All of the materials are legal and commonly used for scientific education and research activities in universities and high schools, and are universally regarded by scientists as safe. Nevertheless, today Steve Kurtz and Robert Ferrell, Professor of Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health, face a possible 20 years in prison in what has become increasingly clear is a politically motivated attempt to silence an artist and scientist whose work is critical of government policy."

the Department of Homeland Security; the Department of Health and Safety; numerous local police agencies; and even Canadian, Norwegian, and German federal investigators goes far beyond the pale. As of this writing, CAE member Steven Kurtz, and one of our longtime collaborators, University of Pittsburgh geneticist Robert Ferrell, are fighting the insanely real threat of being sent to federal prison.

So how did we create such a vortex of Kafkaesque legalistic repression? In the *Free Range Grain* project, for instance, CAE simply used molecular biology techniques to test for genetically modified food in the global food trade. We want(ed) this interventionist performance to demonstrate how the "smooth space" of global trade enables the very "contaminations" the authorities say it guards against. Now we, along with our colleagues on the CAE defense team, have been trying to understand why the authorities have taken such a reactionary positioning regard to our art practice. We have come up with many reasons; we can address only a few in this brief article.

The first reason, we believe, involves the discourse in which we framed our project. By viewing the scientific process through the lens of the capitalist political economy, we disrupted the legitimized version of science as a self-contained, value-free specialization. The powers that be would have science speak for itself, within and about itself. This insularity is akin to Clement Greenberg's idea of letting art history explain the production of art, or Emile Durkheim's use of "social facts" to explain the social. But any discourse exists within larger historical and political contexts. It seemed self-evident for us to place competing discourses in conversation, and to show the socio-economic ideologies at work in food production. From the perspective of authority, however, we were being subversive, defiant. For those who wish to preserve the autonomy of

science, citizens can discuss scientific structure, method, materials, etc., as long as they do not refer to the political or economic interests that impinge on scientific research. A biology club can talk about cells, but if it goes beyond the institutionalized boundaries of the life sciences, look out for the feds.

The second challenge we posed came from our amateur approach to life science knowledge systems, experimental processes, acquisition of materials, etc. An amateur can be critical of an institution without fear of recrimination or loss of status or investment. An art professor, for example, will probably not tell students that art school is a pyramid scheme into which they will pour a lot of capital, feed the higher-ups, and probably get very little if anything in return. That criticism is more likely to emerge from outside the power structure (or from disgruntled ex-students). In science, where the financial stakes are much higher, any criticism of resources may well result in funding cuts—a situation one can ill afford in such a capital-intensive discipline. So it takes an outsider to science—a creative tinkerer—to rattle the cage of the discipline's most dearly held assumptions and practices.

With special regard to the institutional financing of science, the amateur reveals the profit-driven privatization of a discipline that is purportedly—mythologically—open to all. By undertaking research as if science were truly a forum in which all may participate according to their abilities and resources, CAE angers those who manipulate scientific activity through capital investment. The financial stakes are so high that the authorities can imagine only one motivation for critical, amateur research, particularly if it is conducted at home outside of systems of surveillance/discipline. If that research intends to expose, disrupt, or subvert the metanarratives that put scientific

investigation in the service of profit, the amateur investigator must want to produce terrorist acts.

In the paranoid political climate of the United States, American authorities leap all too easily from ideological criticism to terrorism. Moreover, CAE's legal battle reveals that the government has made thinking into a crime: a citizen can be arrested without having committed any act of terror or without having done anything illegal at all. Former US Attorney General John Ashcroft has unofficially reformed law enforcement policy and practice according to the Bush administration's idea of "preemptive war." He has argued that if indicators—any type of dissent in relation to the interests of the investing classes or "national interest"—suggest that a person or group could do something illegal, then they should be arrested, detained, deported, or otherwise persecuted with the full resources of all repressive state agencies. Apparently, the US Justice Department is now trying to make CAE into an example of what can happen to citizens whose only "crime" is having thoughts of dissent enacted within the sphere of legality and with the alleged protection of constitutional rights.

For experimental art, political art, tactical media, and independent media in the United States (and to some degree in other nations), the implications of Steven Kurtz's arrest are profound. The repressive forces of the state are directly targeting producers of cultural interventionist work. In past decades, policymakers have often leaned on political artwork through financial penalties such as rescinding artist's grants, folding federal arts programs, and economically squeezing out the spaces that exhibit subversive work.[3] Now, these shifts on civil grounds have undergone a horrific paradigm shift, and individual artists are being charged with criminal activity. The persecution works slowly and insidiously, through silencing

artists, looting their work and their research, and constraining their movement. We are no longer seeing cultural conflict in action, but a proto-fascist attack upon open source management of expression itself.

This text was published as Appendix I in Critical Art Ensemble's latest book, *Marching Plague* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2006) and appears here with permission of the authors.

3 The New York Council for the Humanities recently rescinded a grant awarded to the City University of New York for its series on academic freedom because Steve Kurtz was one of the invited speakers!

Clémentine Deliss
privacy + dialect = capital

"If art is said to produce knowledge, to what kind of knowledge do we refer?" BAK

The kind of knowledge that I wish to discuss is not one that is easily aimed at a large audience, nor is it validated by mass appeal or readily available through wide-scale distribution. The production of knowledge that concerns me, and that forms a central part of my work in art as a researcher, curator, and publisher, is *initiate*. By that I mean that it is selective and accessible only unto a few. It takes time to find out where it lies, and who holds the key to it. It is encoded in such a way as to prevent easy reading, and it contradicts or aggravates the production and consumption of art practice as part of a cultural and educational industry, be this through the standardization of certain theoretical tendencies, topical concepts of artistic research, or frameworks for artistic visibility. This area of knowledge production may be considered problematic because it defies accountability or because it is responsive only to the people who are fluent in the languages and methods that characterize it. In this sense, we are looking at producers of knowledge over and above the more abstract discourse of knowledge production, people who articulate a *dialect* or translate between dialects. As a curator that is my role: to mediate and translate laterally the dialects proposed by artists and researchers working in different locations, contexts, institutions, or disciplinary faculties. The receivers of this process remain artists and researchers and only on a secondary level am I interested in accommodating or brokering for a broader non-identified audience.[1]

1 For years, I did not want *Metronome* publications to have a presence on the web. Only since 2005 when the collaboration with Thomas Boutoux began and we established *Metronome Press* in Paris has it been possible to acquire information on *Metronome* and to order issues through an on-line sales portal (www.metronomepress.com). Prior to that, all circulation operated through the participating artists and writers and, on a very reduced scale, through two or three bookshops in London that chose to carry the most recent issue.

I would like to propose that there are interesting frictions currently taking place in the relationship between individual producers of a style of knowledge that is private, sometimes even secret, and occasionally anonymous, and the parallel desire for the construction of new shared spaces, collectivities, or even institutions within which this currency of production can be evaluated, bartered for, and exchanged. As background, I will refer to *Metronome* productions (No. 3, No. 9, and No. 10), to a recent Think Tank in Tokyo that I curated and that forms the basis for *Metronome* No. 11, and to Future Academy, the research collective I initiated four years ago. In addition, I will make reference to the maverick polymath and ecologist Gregory Bateson, the work of nuclear scientists at the Livermore Lab in the US, and to a case of anonymity and collectivity in art with *neurocam.com*.

In 1998, I curated the *Tempolabor* for the Kunsthalle Basel. For just under one week, thirty-five artists and art mediators gathered behind closed doors in Warteck, which has studios and exhibition spaces, to try to exchange some of the heavy, unresolved questions they were facing. Significantly, the participants came from more than one continent, and included activists from India, members of the Senegalese artist groups Huit Facettes and the Laboratoire Agit'Art, alongside artists and curators from both Eastern and Western Europe and the US. I hoped to animate a form of knowledge production that reflected libertine philosophical tropes: fiction, disguise, retention, and the use of language and translation, such as to open up the process of metaphorical thinking in a private and sensitive context. For *Metronome* No. 3, I edited the twenty-odd hours of recordings from the *Tempolabor* into a play and the publication itself was modeled on the folded and sealed soft-cover books still common in France. I should add that to hold a meeting behind closed doors in a public gallery was,

in 1998, quite exceptional. To shift the funding parameters and expectations of an exhibition into a gathering that would remain predominantly covert was a challenge that both Peter Pakesch (then director of the Kunsthalle Basel) and I were keen to engage with, aware of the blind spots both in intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue.

In a more recent closed meeting that I organized in Tokyo, I asked each of the sixty-five participants (artists, architects, scientists, and designers from Japan, the UK, the US, Australia, and Europe) to propose an image that would represent a new faculty of knowledge.[2] Imagining that we were developing an institution—something similar to an art college in its most experimental layout—my question revolved around what our shared knowledge base might be founded upon. What faculties would we define for this new institution and how would we visualize these? Could we briefly move away from writing up a proposal for knowledge production in text form, and with our extensive education in visual culture, relay the intentions of this faculty through a photograph, illustration, schemata, or plan?

The result is a grouping of nearly 140 images of artworks, details of artworks, stylized situations, places, and people doing activities from fishing to surfing, car washing to shooting blanks in an abandoned space. The titles of the faculties are significant in themselves: "the faculty of anonymity; of self-subversion; of trust; of humanity; of physiognomic perception; of fetishism; of magical thinking; of stairways and labyrinths; of political conflicting, self-administration, governance, and sadomasochism; of misunderstandings; of navigations; of

2 *Metronome* Think-Tank Tokyo, 16–17 September 2006, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, in collaboration with *documenta 12 magazines*. See *Metronome* No. 11, Tokyo (2007).

floating; of noise . . .," and many more. To my surprise, very few participants adopted the definition of a *faculty* as that which is represented through the power of an identified individual or a group of people, the faculty of a person who bears knowledge, has an ability or skill, and is by extension a live repository of learning; someone that can be named there and then and who can become a member of a group, a *faculty of faculties*. Instead, these faculties of knowledge appear sanitized, de-personalized, given long substantive-led titles, and made to appear as part of our popular mainstream understanding of images, images gleaned either from art-historical materials (including earlier interdisciplinary references to geology or material culture) or swiped from web banks, "googled" through keywords, and abstracted into an area void of inter-subjective responsibilities, where even an institution today is able to survive. The experiment remains unfinished, but the questions it raises are paramount to the issues surrounding knowledge production in art: how to name knowledge, its methodologies, and the individuals who work to produce and transfer it in such a way as to remain inclusive, permeable, and yet precise.

Looking at ways of acquiring knowledge is another method for testing out just how far we are ready to conceive of knowledge production as the conception of methodologies that are based on subjective exercises and can deliver new ways of seeing and understanding. Roger McDonald, co-director of Arts Initiative Tokyo emphasizes the process of knowledge acquisition rather than the finality of knowledge production as a central component in the ability to translate, move across borders, and be flexible and open to different semantic readings. He suggests that there are four main methodologies that help us to acquire knowledge and that activate the mobility of ideas and representations. The first is spiritual learning—consider pilgrims for example—an education that is

interpersonal, perhaps not so very fast, and that requires the mobilization of the near totality of an individual's experiential realm. The second approach to learning is through mimicry and copying, a method well practiced in the Japanese context, which if used to control and repress can also produce a subversive position.[3] The third is through ingestion—via drugs for instance—that can confer both individual reach and provide users with the potentiality of an experience of confluence and of union. McDonald refers to raves as having been central to his personal acquisition and understanding of knowledge as a student. Finally, he speaks of error and waste, the process of learning through mistakes, misfiring, and failure as active constituents of the articulation of thought. What appears here to be a relatively outmoded set of categories in which the teacher, guru, professor, or older artist informs and initiates the disciple or student into ways of learning and eventually produces knowledge, takes on a curious and somehow less anachronistic slant if pitted against certain current perceptions of artistic research, in particular those linked to art college reforms.

If the "discourse industry" (to quote BAK) affects the foundations for the production of knowledge, then where better to begin than with art education and the art college? In its idealist construction, this location for knowledge production resembles a university: it should enable every person who is part of the institution to learn and acquire knowledge, whether they are a first-year undergraduate, an older artist, a theoretician, or an emeritus professor. All parties are engaged simultaneously in developing methodologies and finding ways of producing

3 McDonald says: "A fundamental aspect of most traditional arts of Japan including ikebana, tea and various martial arts, through copying a master, one becomes slowly imbibed with certain codes and forms. The practice of drawing from life and plaster casts (which still continues as a method of entrance examination in Japan) also relates to this kind of knowledge acquisition. Copying can be used to control and repress, but it can also be an effective tactic of resistance and camouflage." Quoted in *Metronome* No. 11, Tokyo (2007).

knowledge "without condition" (Derrida)[4]. Jacques Derrida notes that the Oxford English Dictionary defines "professor" from the verb *to profess* as "to take vows of some religious order" and therefore this activity is of sorts *performative*. However, this earlier vision of empathic learning and praxis that recognizes the agency of the teacher and the interdependency of levels of competence, as well as implicit, even tacit forms of transfer that require no formal validation is no longer in favor. It has been downgraded as a reflection of the master-slave condition, criticized for the power relations it can yield and abuse, and made redundant on the basis of its unaccountability: in mundane terms, the artist-professor that never shows up; the lack of course structure; the grey zone without clear cut outcomes and well designated objectives; the need for proof that the knowledge learned will be applied and transferable if necessary. Knowledge production in the majority of UK art colleges is something that you have to pay for and for which you may receive a diploma, certificate, or degree that has academic and bureaucratic value, at least all over the European Union. Therefore to *legally* attend art college today requires a vast symbolic investment on the part of the student and an equally considerable financial commitment, more often 99 percent debt-based. By extension *research*—a term only really exploited in the field of science since the first half of the twentieth century—may be the current buzzword in art circles, but in science it has always been tied to the institutional division of labor. If research produces no visible outcomes, then we have a crisis.[5] As a result, the language of research in art is, to a significant degree, standardized into prose, outlines, and reports and in certain cases bolstered with ideologies of sustainability or continuity. But we all know that a PhD certificate will not make you an interesting artist, nor will it get you into the latest art circuit; all it can do is provide an expensive alibi for spending longer *inside* the particular environment that once

defined the academy: privacy, collegiality, and a heretic inclination towards certain forms of knowledge production.

I have worked *inside* since 1998. I have never formally taught a course. Instead, in this closed semi-anonymous environment (where artists—if not vigilant—quickly become reduced to teaching staff), I have managed to develop an idiosyncratic platform from which to produce and process my work under the guise of *Metronome*, and more recently Future Academy. None of this work, which I regard as curatorial, could have been done through the museum, mainly because it retains an idiosyncratic style of investigation. The editions of *Metronome* that have been produced in this way are perhaps an extended form of that which Gregory Bateson has called a *metalogue*; in other words, they encourage *recursiveness*, knowledge looping back onto itself as a form of "ecological epistemology." Bateson writes: "A metalogue is a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem, but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also revealed to the same subject. Only some of the conversations achieve this double format." Most issues of *Metronome* attempt to introduce a *metalogical* condition and means of transmission. This explains why they adopt different formats according to the investigation at hand, and are produced in different cities. However, this system of recursiveness is doomed to produce hermetic knowledge, self-reflexive perhaps, but nevertheless knowledge

4 Jacques Derrida, *L'Université sans condition* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2001).

5 At a recent research panel in Geneva, physicist Jean-Marc Lévy Leblon insisted that in the past you "did science" not "research" and that this more recent phenomenon is intrinsically linked to the development of employment posts and national government funding of science in universities. Paradoxically the excitement around research in art, argues Lévy Leblon, comes at a time when there is actually a crisis in the concept of scientific research. Projects have been scaled down and made short-term as opposed to the mega-scientific investigations of the past. This is to ensure that they do produce some kind of outcome. (Conversation with the author, Geneva, October 2006)

that needs to be decoded with the formulae that generated it; or otherwise placed in proximity of other metalogues in order to incite a dynamic process of interaction and revelation.[6] Two issues are important here: first the question of transmission and orality evoked through the reference to conversation, and secondly, the nature of the human environment in which this transmission is produced.

In his analysis of the Livermore Laboratory, the US's second largest weapons lab founded in 1952 for atomic and hydrogen bomb research and production, the anthropologist Hugh Gusterson presents the strange phenomenon of a quasi-medieval form of knowledge production and circulation.[7] Unlike scientists in academia whose incentive lies in winning recognition through stockpiling published articles, the scientists who enter Livermore are not under any pressure to publish. Instead credit is established through face-to-face encounters, gossip, and formal oral presentations but never through written documentation (and there is, thankfully, no academic journal that specializes in nuclear weapons research). The Livermore scientists' research belongs to the state. It remains so private that they cannot produce curriculum vita—just a blank sheet—and when they retire, they acquire no written version of their work. All that is left is their memory and whatever inscription on the Earth's surface their *events* (jargon for nuclear tests, sic) have traced. In one of the most ultra-modern environments in the world, we find that informal orality is the medium through which knowledge is produced and circulated. As Gusterson points out, "ironically nuclear contemporary weapons scientists worry that the high-tech oral culture they communicate through will die with them when they retire, when memory is lost, and that therefore substantial parts of their science too will die out. Here weapons science has more in common with medieval craft apprenticeships than computerized scientific disciplines."

As a result, there are now "nuclear salvage theorists" (Gusterson) who compensate for this absence of authorship by producing mid-brow and sometimes erroneous or fictitious interpretations of individual's contributions to great scientific discoveries.

Livermore is a community of highly advanced scientists, yet the knowledge economy it operates within is founded on the retention of these scientists' names and identities. According to Gusterson, anonymity is so extreme that one scientist recounted how a colleague of his had won the prestigious Lawrence Award for his work, but that he was never able to find out what this person had done. When I asked my colleague Guy Billings, the computational neuroscientist who coordinates our *Future Academy Studiolab* in Edinburgh, what he made of this situation, he replied that Gusterson's argument, while relevant, had not responded to another central problem in research, that of incentive: finding an alternative means of expression that fuels a scientist to produce an argument in research that he or she can trade with and thereby transmit to more than one fellow interlocutor. To understand how to construct an alternative community of scientists and respondents whose knowledge production is not reliant on the circulation of an established and increasingly corporatist university discourse is one of the incentives that brought Billings closer to Future Academy and by extension to art practice.

6 Bateson sees this as an ecological issue: "Let me state my beliefs that such matters as the bilateral symmetry of an animal, the patterned arrangement of leaves in a plant, the escalation of an armaments race, the processes of courtship, the nature of play, the grammar of a sentence, the mystery of biological evolution, and the contemporary crises in man's relationship to his environment, can only be understood in terms of such an ecology of ideas." Gregory Bateson, *Towards an Ecology of Mind* [1972] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

7 Hugh Gusterson, "Secrecy, authorship and nuclear weapons scientists," Peace Studies Program, Cornell University, Occasional Paper no. 23 (1999).

Future Academy is an experimental mutating collective that I set up in 2002 following five years of research in art colleges all over Europe.[8] In its present form it gathers together approximately fifteen young artists, architects, and scientists (mathematicians, programmers, games specialists) from Japan, Iceland, Germany, the US, and the UK. We meet regularly, participate voluntarily (no fees are paid, no debts are formed), and as we begin to build a relationship, we also try to produce knowledge together. Currently we are developing a computer program that will enable a multilingual oral library to be constructed with input by telephone from all over the world. Working without the usual visual cartography of a website brings us closer to the navigation of a blind person, providing no visible identity through the skin color or gender of the speaker, and to an area of computing that still remains prototypical and unresolved. The backdrop to this form of knowledge production is the construction of a community of *initiates* and the experience with Future Academy has shown just how complex this process can be. For participants have to wish to build an intermediary platform through which to communicate with one another. New hypotheses specific to their individual disciplines or cultural backgrounds require a point of transmutation, and the nurturing of this common ground has to be founded on trust, coupled with both a recognition of the complexity of each other's fields, and a lucid, quasi-political approach to the management of one's creative time. The relationship between specialist knowledge and the formation of a new community that searches for a renewed sense of autonomy in knowledge production brings us back to the need for codified currencies of exchange that may not be compatible with the more populist strains of the cultural industries or programs for the public understanding of science.

I admit I feel of two minds about the frontiers between insider and outsider positions. Ultimately, I hold a preference for the formality and artificiality of private structures such as laboratories, bureaus, salons, lodges, think tanks, and independent publishing organs as well as the dialects that accompany these. My acts of deconstruction take place in the *transvesting* procedure I try to set in motion: transferring one context into another field, or sidetracking artists into realizing a new production that responds to the intimate conceptual framework within *Metronome* and draws them into a new arena of identification.[9] Nevertheless, I realize how ambivalent this can appear. I am fascinated by the same kind of environment and devices that are implemented in acts of resistance, secrecy, and espionage, and which provide the base of knowledge production for intelligentsias that would not wish to be disclosed. I do not regard this as a "fad" within artistic production no different from the multiple vocations and opportunist structures proposed by the labor market of the new economy, but as a central defining point of art.[10] In Dakar I worked for many years with a group of artists for whom the term *communicational abstinence* was the most appropriate way to define the ways in which they handled dialogue with outside curators and historians.[11] With *Metronome*, circulation is restricted to those who know about it or work with it, and the few who stumble upon it. This predilection recently led to two productions of *Metronome* that contrast greatly in the ways in which they deal with concepts of anonymity and private knowledge and subsequently take on very

8 See www.futureacademylab.net.

9 See Clémentine Deliss, "Transvesting within Institutions," in *Curating with Light Luggage*, eds. Maria Lind and Liam Gillick (Frankfurt/Munich: Kunstverein München and Revolver, 2004) and Clémentine Deliss, "On Conceptual Intimacy," Anthology of Art, http://www.anthology-of-art.net (accessed 30 April 2007).

10 I am referring here to an article by Lane Relyea ("Your Art World: Or, The Limits of Connectivity," *Afterall*, No. 14, (2006)) in which he speaks of the "re-emergence of collectives and fictive identities" in art, and argues that these multiple and pseudonymic positions cannot be considered as oppositional.

11 See Clémentine Deliss, "The Parallax Affair," in *Afterall* No. 1, and *Metronome* No. 4-5-6 (1999).

different formats: No. 9 could be described as a cryptic under-the-table promotional review, and No. 10, a pragmatic under-the-ground survivalist zine.

In 2004, the French critic Thomas Boutoux and I began analyzing the work of the notorious Parisian, Maurice Girodias, who founded Olympia Press in the early 1950s. Girodias, the much maligned maverick of beat publishing, brought out the writings of William Borroughs, Vladimir Nabokov, Jean Genet, and Alexander Trocchi together with a consistent stable of pornographers. The books published by Olympia Press in Paris were printed in English and most authors appeared under pseudonyms, some possessing up to four or five depending on the style of their texts. The reasons were fairly concrete: McCarthyite censorship laws in the States and post-war vigilance and austerity not only bred the new genre of beat poetry and sexual revolutionary prose that Girodias published, but it also subjected it to ongoing interrogation and suppression. Boutoux and I wanted to understand what would bring an artist or writer today—just over fifty years later—to withhold their name. Why would an artist opt for a pseudonym or in some cases complete anonymity? Which visual representations, forms and meanings in language—in short, knowledge production—would necessitate the retention of their identity today? The research, which took over one year, was linked to our desire to develop a new context for production with a group of operators who might include an architect, a sociologist, an iconographer, a writer, a filmmaker, and several artists. Boutoux and I hoped to develop some sort of society analogous to Girodias's infamous troupe, with its hotel and club both sadly doomed to bankruptcy—perhaps the only aspect we were less convinced by! The result is *Metronome Press* in Paris molded on an interpretation of the halfway house and *maison de passé* and with it two sets of

publishing activity: a paperback collection of novels written by artists and *Metronome* No. 9, *Le Teaser & Le Joker. Metronome* No. 9 contains short extracts of fiction alongside image sequences that have been recast by artists from the pages of striptease included in a promotional pamphlet published by Girodias in 1953.[12] Significantly, over one third of the contributors in *Metronome* No. 9 opted to write under pseudonym. This decision was not founded on the vanity of a *nom de plume*. Rather, it was about enabling the producer to construct tangential forms of knowledge, primarily unto themselves and in relation to their construction of selfhood. The darker side to this maneuver is apparent in one or two of the six volumes that together build *Metronome* No. 9, but ultimately, the danger invoked by the process is closer to the transgression of one's own security system and identity as an artist than it is to questions of prurience or public disapproval.

The subsequent issue of *Metronome* produced in Oregon in 2006 and co-edited with artist Oscar Tuazon could not be more diametrically opposed in terms of visual imagery, format, and content. Here we have a survivalist zine recast to transmit the results of four years of Future Academy activities in Senegal, India, Edinburgh, and wherever members and collaborators have moved to or worked from. *Metronome* No. 10, *Shared, Mobile, Improvised, Underground, Hidden, Floating* follows the written style and visual format of *Dwelling Portably*, a slim mechanically typewritten and mimeographed journal that has been produced by a couple who have lived and operated *un-house* in the depths of Oregon's woodlands for over thirty years. Under the names "Bert and Holly Davis"

12 These new image sequences are by Adresse Anonyme, Documentation Céline Duval, Didier Fiuza Faustino, Philippe Grandrieux, Guillaume Leblon, and Pierre Leguillon.

they produce two to four issues of *Dwelling Portably* a year, sending these out to a community of over 1,500 readers through a convoluted postage operation that requires accessing a Philomath, Oregon post office box at night, and archiving materials in dug-out stores in various parts of the forest. Communicational abstinence is high here. Last year, together with Tuazon and two members of Future Academy (Guy Billings and Marjorie Harlick), I traveled in an RV (residential vehicle) across 2,000 miles of Oregon forest and logging roads in order to find Bert and Holly, but in vain. They do exist; they are not some ironic joke created by an over-imaginative Hollywood producer. Only, secrecy is part of their survival and the foundation of their knowledge production, a dialect spoken by a group that wishes to remain invisible. To disclose their identity is an act that potentially places their work and therefore their capital in jeopardy. Until they make contact, the mystery surrounding their activity and their production remains unrevealed.

A quite different case of an anonymous collective can be traced in the *neurocam.com* phenomenon, initiated by an Australian artist from Melbourne. Two years ago a billboard in Melbourne was posted with the slogan "Get of your mind. neurocam.com" inciting people to sign up to the site. Since then membership has increased considerably with numbers nearing 20,000. Each of these subscribers undergoes intrusive background checks, may not reveal their true identity, and is told to take part in "assignments," which can vary from training exercises, passing on documents, or soft forms of spying to being abducted and taken to unknown locations. The *neurocam.com* site includes a lengthy disclaimer suggesting that it is neither a product, nor service, dating agency, cult religion, game, study, terrorist training organization, nor other thing or activity listed in a lengthy realm of possibilities. One vital omission exists in this

disclaimer: that *neurocam* is not an art project. Concerned that the "operatives" of *neurocam.com* now wish to fund assignments and sense that they are part of something bigger, the artist who began *neurocam.com* explained to me that he was keen to return this unmanageable situation back into the art world context.

The question of knowledge production when combined with notions of communal practice and identity, especially anonymity, is bound to lead to a series of quite different formulations. Here I have focused on the position of the producer of knowledge, trying as far as possible to intersect different backgrounds from science to alternative living and art in order to emphasize those modes of thinking and investigation which require covert environments and which process knowledge through the implementation of methods and platforms that remain unstable and blurred to outside perception. As night is to day these conditions do not preclude circulation. When they do travel it is sometimes without sufficient contextualization and as such, they have the ability to encourage the extravagance of heterodoxical signification.[13] I believe that today the most extreme aspect of this is located in orality, the spoken passing of knowledge from one person to another, with all the mis-understandings and travesties of signification that idiomatic languages contain. If taken further, the use of memorization for subsequent relay can provoke the notion that interpersonal translation is an essential feature of the production of knowledge in art in the twenty-first century, its capital, so to speak.[14] Therefore the polymathic ability to operate across borders of cultures, languages, and disciplines can ultimately engender more effective conditions for knowledge production

13 See Boris Gobille, "Blurred Knowledge," in *Metronome* No. 11, Tokyo (2007).

14 See Matthew Stadler's discussion of interpersonal media in *Metronome* No. 11, Tokyo (2007).

without necessarily negating the desire for privacy and dialect. For art institutions, the inclination towards theory and intellectual discourse need not be transformed in any extreme sense, for we should always support spaces that encourage reflection and discussion between people. Instead it may be helpful in these institutions to encourage a sharing of those scenarios and activities that tempt representations of that which is not yet known, and—as the *metalogue* so neatly proposes—build new forms of knowledge production around them.

Joachim Koester
Histories

I have decided to title this work *Histories*. There are at least two. That of conceptual photography, and that of the places and events depicted. The histories are evoked through the juxtaposition of seminal works from the 1960s and 1970s with recent shots from exactly the same locations.

Take for example the house Ed Ruscha photographed in 1965 as part of his series *Some Los Angeles Apartments*. Right above the main entrance there is a sign, "Now Renting." In my photo taken forty years later a slightly bigger sign says, "Now Leasing." The house seems to be haunted by vacancy. But the subtle difference of wording reflects a change in society. Renting is considered less and less attractive.

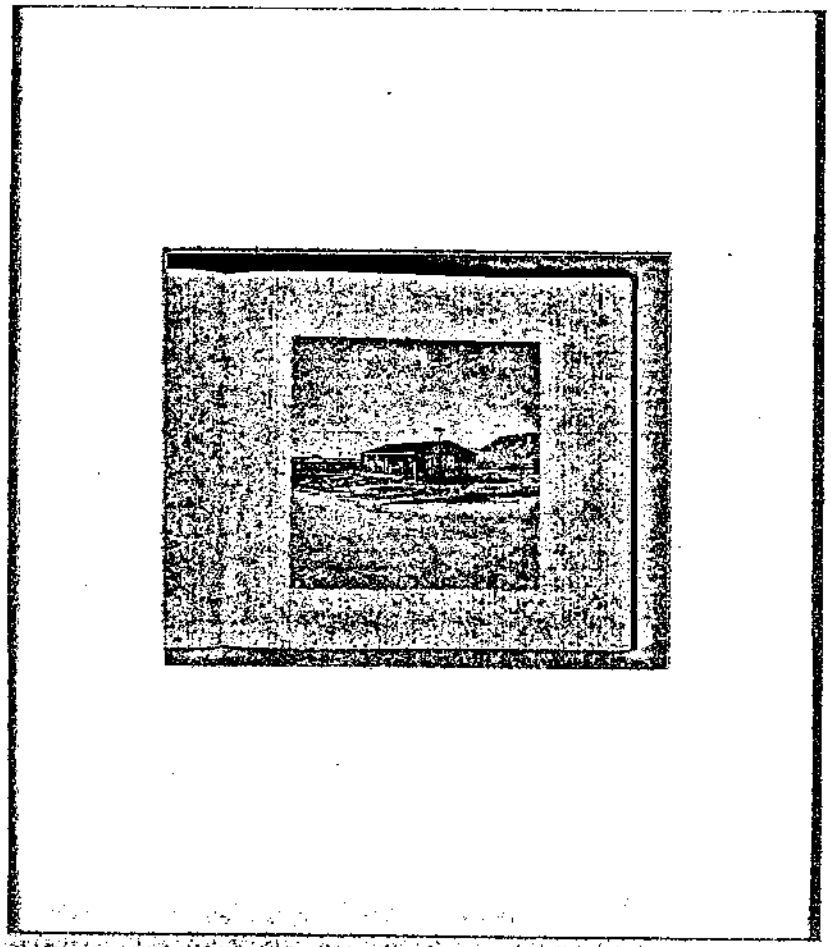
Robert Adams's image from Darwin Place in Colorado Springs in 1969 points to time and history as material. Trees have grown up over thirty-something years, while the house has fallen into decay. A sediment from the entropic tide that continuously washes the suburbs further out towards the horizon. In the background is the contour of a mountain, a time so slow that it falls outside the category of history. A vast reservoir of years "where remote futures meet remote pasts."

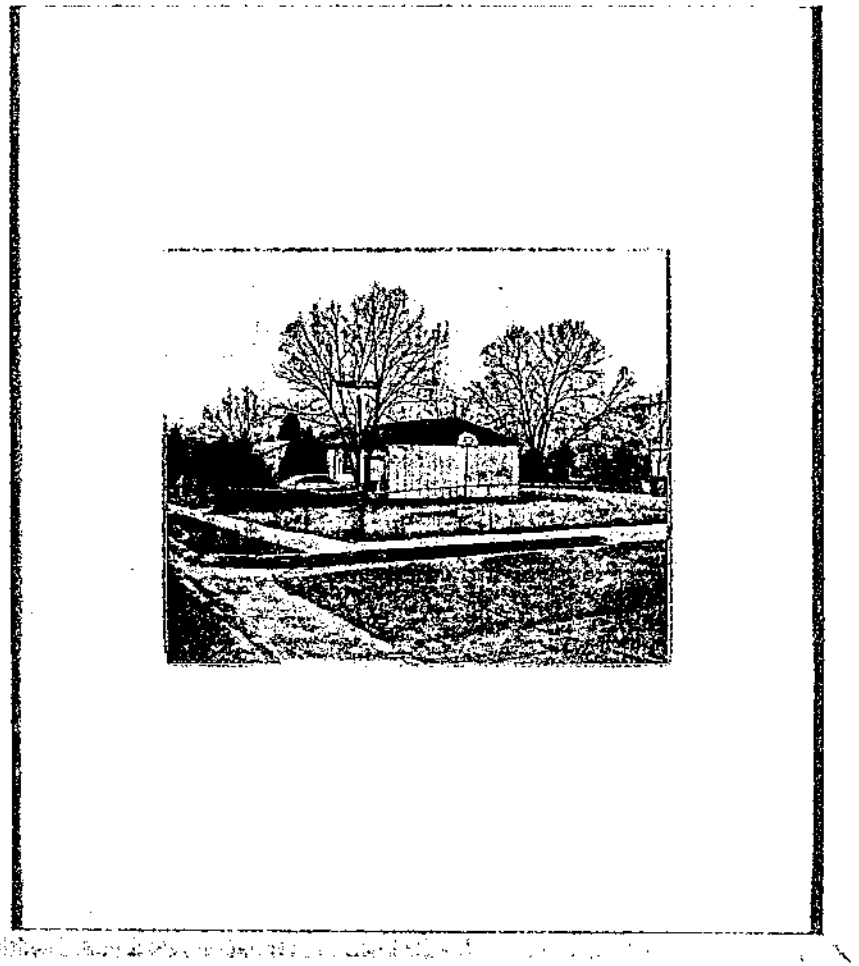
On September 30, 1967, Robert Smithson paused on his walk through Passaic, New Jersey to have lunch at the Golden Coach Diner and reload his instamatic. From the window he had a view of Passaic center, which Smithson described as a "no center," "a typical abyss or an ordinary void. What a great place for a gallery!" The theater and the diner from Smithson's photograph have now been replaced by a Dunkin' Donuts and a McDonald's drive-thru, emphasizing the sense of "void" or non-place.

The images and text in this contribution comprise Joachim Koester's work *Histories* (2005) and appear here with the artist's permission.

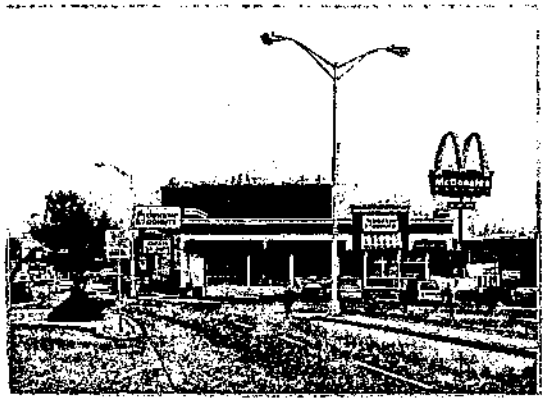
Ed Ruscha, 6565 Fountain Ave, Los Angeles 1965, 2005, 2 black and white photographs, 39,6 x 45 cm (each)

Robert Adams, Darwin Place, Colorado Springs, 1969, 2003, 2 black and white photographs, 39,6 x 45 cm (each)





Robert Smithson, Golden Coach Diner, Passaic, New Jersey, 1967, 2004, 2 black and white photographs, 39,6 x 45 cm (each)

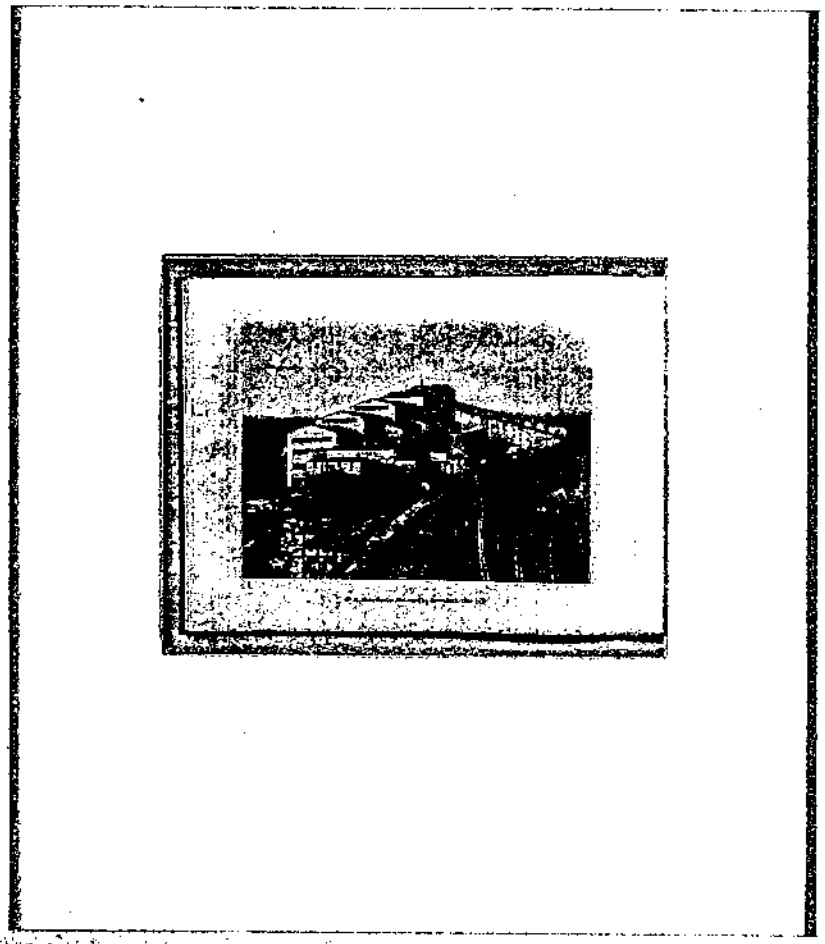


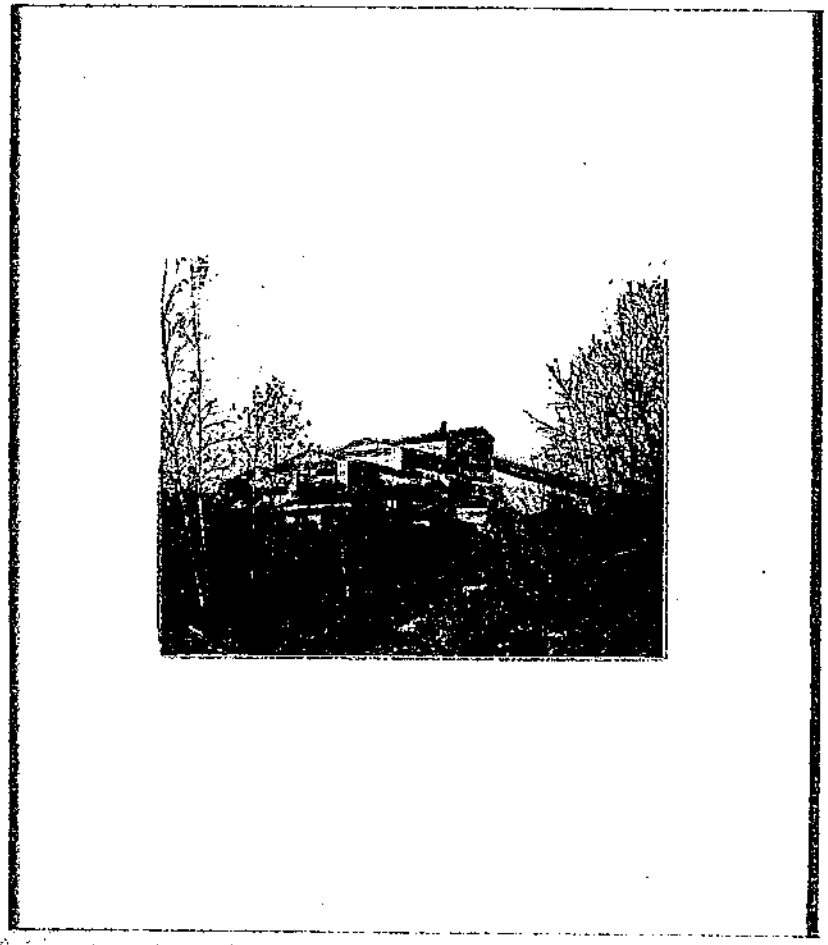
"In the industrial sector history speeds by, a dragonfly that lives for one day and undergoes its entire development in this short period," say Bernd and Hilla Becher. Industrial architecture becomes obsolete much faster than other architectural structures. Its future happens at double speed. St. Nicholas Coal Breaker was the world's biggest in 1931. Today it is a ruin. The industrial era is already so distant that residents of the small, depressed towns of Pennsylvania fear they will be left with nothing but the wooded mountains of coal cinders that engulf rivers and roads everywhere.

There is something ambiguous about the photo, credited to Gordon Matta-Clark, in Pamela M. Lee's book *Object to Be Destroyed.* For a while I thought it was the subject matter: a stretch of curb Gordon Matta-Clark bought and documented in 1973. Every time I looked through the book I startled at the image, wondering what was so intriguing about this mundane street in Jamaica Queens. Eventually I went, and something did seem odd. Time was out of joint. Gordon Matta-Clark's photograph felt less distant than it should have. Perhaps it was actually taken in the late 1980s. Not that it really matters. Matta-Clark's *Fake Estates* is like an instruction piece, a manual or a recipe to follow. It's about engagement rather than truth.

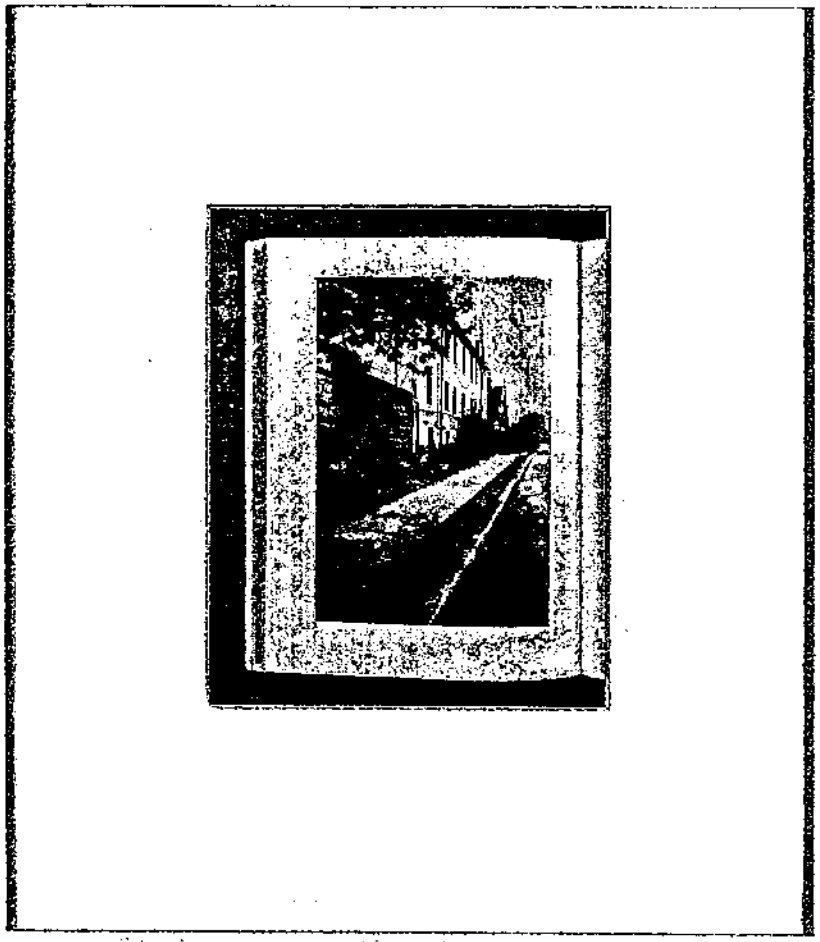
In 1971 Thomas Messer, Director of the Guggenheim Museum, stated that he had to fend off "an alien substance that had entered the art museum organism." The substance referred to was Hans Haacke's work *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971.* Hans Haacke's exhibition, uncovering real estate speculations, was canceled. Walking through Lower East Side on a summer day in 2005, I wondered whether the houses themselves were perhaps the alien substance. Only one of the low-rent tenement buildings that Haacke documented on 3rd and 4th street is still standing.

Bernd & Hilla Becher, St. Nicholas Breaker, Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, USA, 1975,
2005, 2 black and white photographs,
39,6 x 45 cm (each)

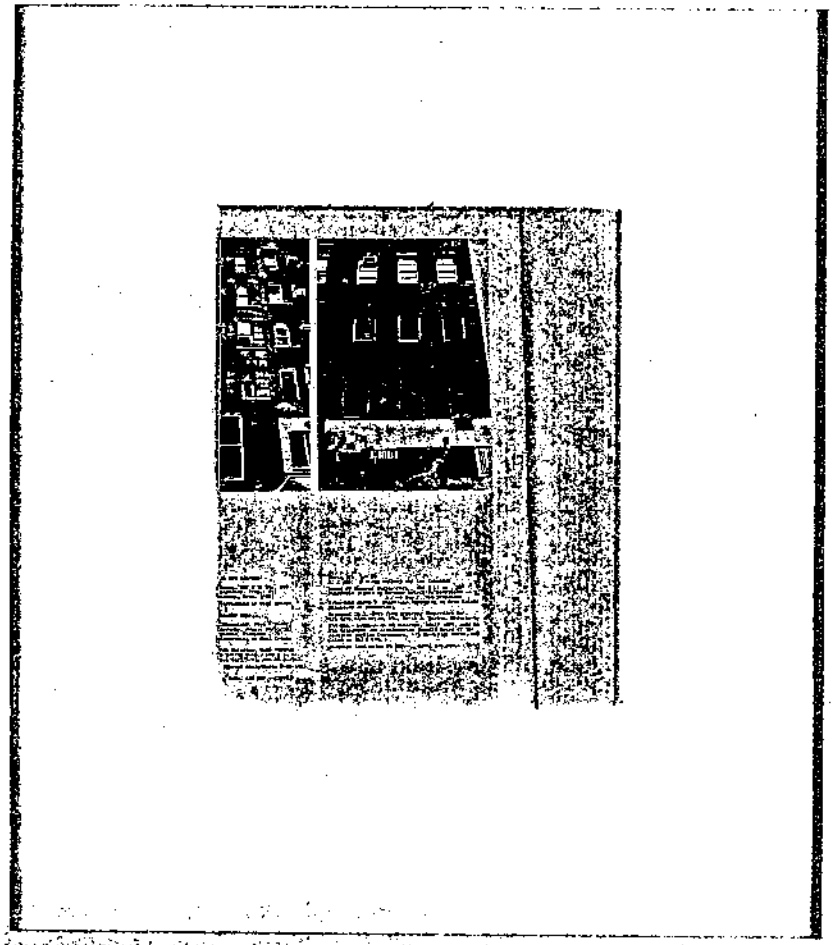


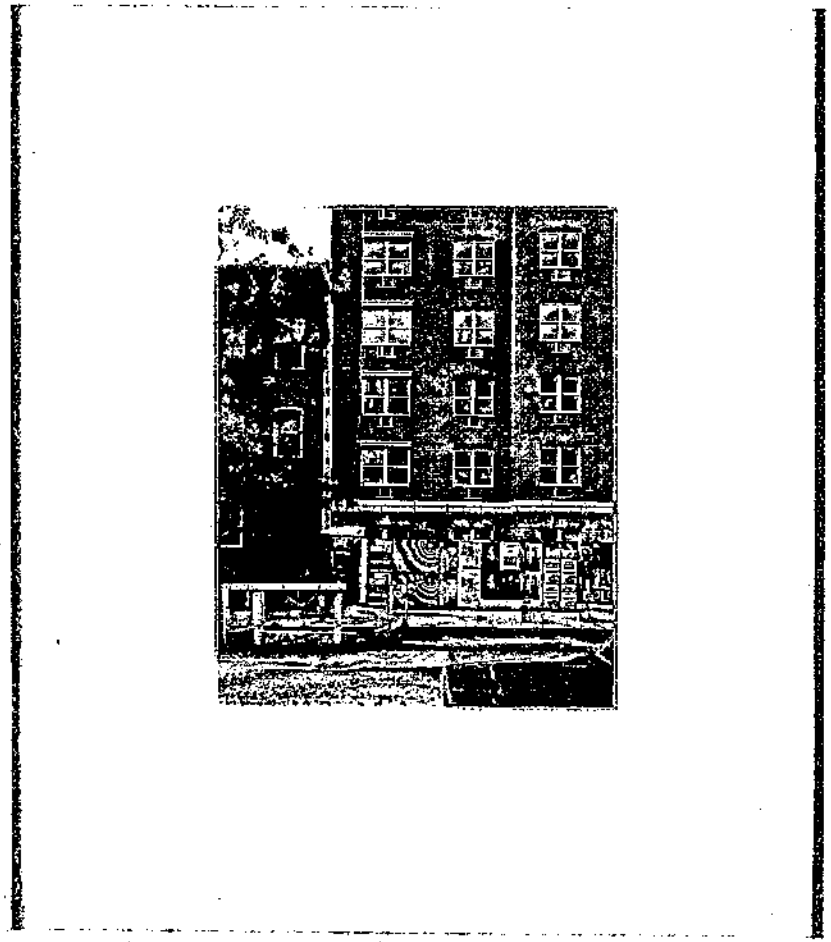


Gordon Matta-Clark, Fake Estates ("Jamaica Curb," Block 10142, Lot 15), Jamaica Queens, 1973, 2006, 2 black and white photographs, 39,6 x 45 cm (each)



Hans Haacke, Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971. 312 East 3rd Street, Manhattan, New York, 1971, 2005, 2 black and white photographs, 39,6 x 45 cm





Sven Lütticken

Unknown Knowns: On Symptoms in Contemporary Art

Knowledge production is a profoundly administrative and technocratic affair. Scientific and scholarly knowledge is produced and guarded by disciplines that may be extremely valuable, but which also—as Simon Sheikh put it—inscribe their subject "within tradition, within certain parameters of the possible."[1] In today's knowledge economy these parameters are increasingly not those of a discipline's tradition but those dictated by policymakers under the guise of "social relevance" or "valorization." Relative autonomy is abandoned in favor of a conception of knowledge as a tool for social engineering; this neoliberal regime discourages the questioning of its parameters even more than the academia of old.[2] It also attempts to make art more accountable and "productive," but the discourse of knowledge production in contemporary art is largely a matter of rhetoric, of branding. In practice, knowledge production in art often amounts to little more than simulation—the "research" in question being little more than advanced browsing that yields hackneyed results.[3] In this sense, artistic "research" functions as a parody of instrumentalized academic knowledge production, falling short of even its eroding criteria. However, this may not be a bad thing, at least not entirely. The failure to meet a questionable standard always holds the potential to erupt into a questioning of that standard.

In this respect, it is interesting to note the place held by the *symptom* in what passes for artistic knowledge production. While the rhetoric and practice of artistic knowledge production can themselves be seen as symptomatic of the social constraints to which autonomous art is subjected, the work of some artists actively engages with the symptom as an alternative to the

1 Simon Sheikh, "Spaces for Thinking: Perspectives on the Art Academy," *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 62 (June 2006), p. 195.
2 I refer to the situation in The Netherlands, which is in some respects extreme, but similar developments are taking place elsewhere.
3 See also Sven Lütticken, "Theory and the Sphinx: Art Between riddle and Research," *Jong Holland* 22, no. 4 (2006), pp. 54–59.

empire of signs created by academic disciplines—as pointing both backwards and forwards in time, beyond the current order of things. By definition, symptoms are unintentional and uncontrollable, unproductive and even counterproductive—the result of repressed drives seeking an outlet. Recent practices that stage physical or linguistic symptoms can be seen as undermining the sham logocentrism of contemporary discourse even while taking advantage of the symbolic status of theory and research. Such approaches need to be distinguished from historical modern art, especially Expressionism and Surrealism: if these movements simulated symptoms, it was because they valued symptomatic scribbles and movements as authentic and autonomous expressions, and sought to liberate the symptom from a clinical or analytical context. By contrast, today's artists are not so much interested in using the symptom as a model for a quasi-symptomatic, expressive, and convulsive art, but rather a reflexive *symptomatology* that produces dubious knowledge about knowledge's other.

Building on a famously rambling epistemological statement by Donald Rumsfeld, in which the then US Secretary of Defense mused about the "known knowns," "known unknowns," and "unknown unknowns" in the war on terror, one could say that such practices articulate the "unknown knowns" of society —its ideological unconscious, its repressed knowledge.[4] Such active symptomatology is in contradistinction to the theoretical tendency to read art's formal characteristics as symptoms of the conditions and contradictions of artistic production, revealing more about society than the artist may have realized.[5] Symptomatological approaches in recent art depend on an actively critical role for the artist; however, it is important to remember that critical intentions have their own unconscious, their own unknown knowns.

Tabulating/liberating symptoms

Nineteenth-century art history was attentive to involuntary aspects of works of art. Giovanni Morelli realized that automatic traits in the works of the old masters could help identify a work's author; if a hand or an earlobe is painted in a certain unique way, it must be a work by Sandro Botticelli. A reader of Morelli outside the field of art history was attentive to the wider implications of this procedure: to Sigmund Freud, Morelli had forced an entry into the realm of *symptoms*.[6] When an artist paints certain details over and over again in an identical manner, these automatic repetitions are *refuse* comparable to neurotic tics or "Freudian slips" insofar as they are unintentional and uncontrollable. In some ways, Freud's own approach to art was conservative: imposing the Oedipal structure on works from Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* itself to Leonardo's paintings and Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva*, Freud effectively treated these works as sets of symbols to be deciphered according to this master narrative.[7] However, Freud's concept of the symptom may still have a radical potential for art history, as Georges Didi-Huberman has shown.

4 The "unknown knowns" are of course precisely the category that is (symptomatically?) absent from Rumsfeld's list: "Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know." Quotation from the US Department of Defense news briefing, 12 February 2002, www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2002/t02122002_t212sdv2.html (accessed 10 June 2007).

5 For a recent plea for a formalist symptomatology of art, see Fredric Jameson, "Symptoms of Theory or Symptoms for Theory?," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004), pp. 403–408.

6 See Freud's acknowledgement of "Ivan Lermolieff" (the pseudonym used by Giovanni Morelli) in "Der Moses des Michelangelo" (1914), in *Der Moses des Michelangelo. Schriften über Kunst und Künstler* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1993), pp. 68–69. See also Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 96–125.

7 See also Lütticken, "Theory and the Sphinx."

Didi-Huberman wages war on the Kantian-Cassirerian idealism inherent in Erwin Panofsky's iconology and its decoding of symbols, which reduces works of art to transparent, readable entities entirely subsumable to the concepts of "humanistic" reason. Minimizing the affinities between Panofskian iconology and Freud's own Oedipal decoding of works of art, Didi-Huberman focuses on Freud's work on symptom, that refuse neglected by those who strive for identity and synthesis. The symptom is an inadvertent non-sign, "local catastrophes," explosions in the realm of meaning.[8] Symptoms, in other words, undermine the idealist readability of symbols even if, in Freud's work, they are constantly being made amenable to reason and to readability. In his early book *Invention of Hysteria* (1982), Didi-Huberman analyzed the attempts of the Salpêtrière clinic's medics and photographers to impose a temporal and visual order on the hysterics' convulsions.[9] Different poses and phases were categorized; not only were episodes of hysteria captured in individual photographic tableaus, the individual tableaus were also integrated in another kind of tableau, in *tables*, diagrams that organize these visual data and "dissolve symptoms into signs."[10] The "iconography" of the Salpêtrière clinic under Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot thus transformed the theater of symptoms into something not that far removed from classical French painting's indexing of human expressions, as exemplified by Charles Le Brun.

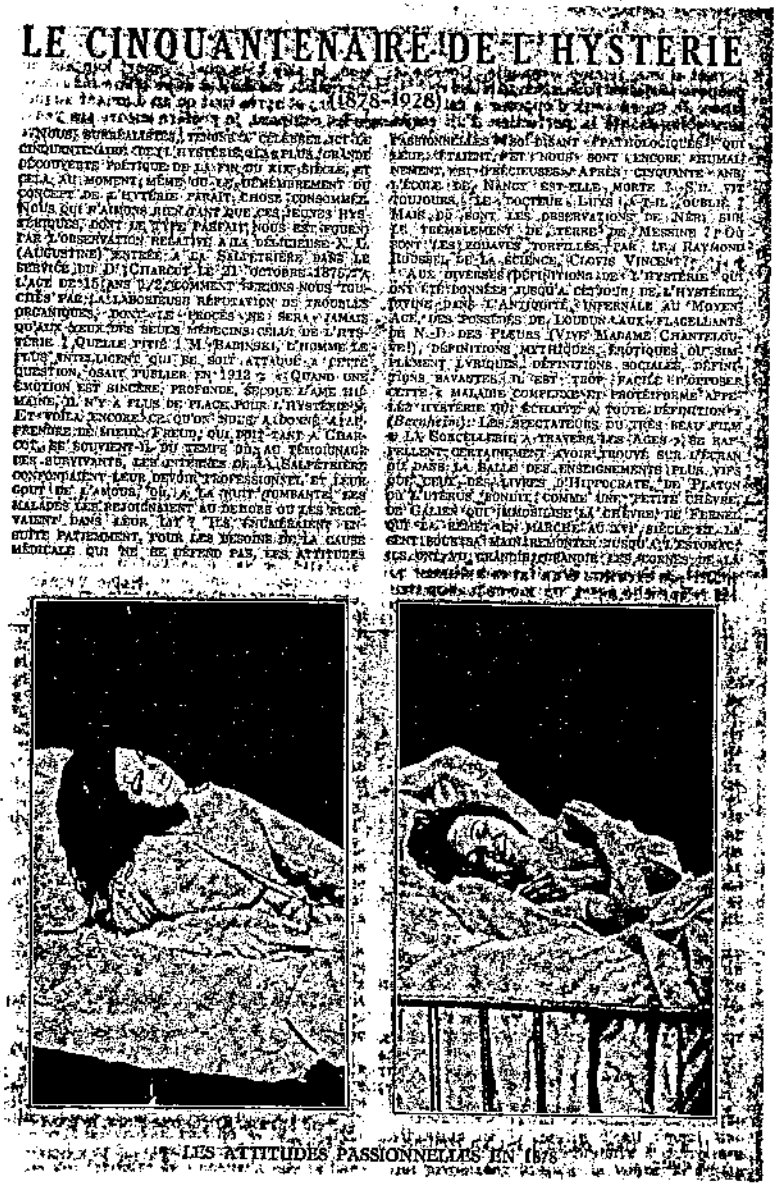
The visual culture of the Salpêtrière was appropriated by Louis Aragon and André Breton, who celebrated the "Cinquantenaire de l'hysterie" in *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1928. Calling hysteria the greatest poetic invention of the late nineteenth century, Breton and Aragon sought poetic justice for "the so-called pathological *attitudes passionnelles*."[11] The Surrealist authors argued that hysteria was not a pathological state but a supreme means of expression that subverted the normal

relationship between the subject and the moral order (seduction being an integral part of it). Publishing various photos of the most famous Salpêtrière hysteric, a woman referred to as Augustine, Aragon and Breton leave away the "iconographic" attempts to make the states legible, transparent to reason; they become autonomous symptoms mocking earlier attempts to codify *attitudes passionnelles*. Thus modern art engaged in a liberation of the symptom and its celebration of a form of expression that constituted an attack on social constraints; the contemporaneous discovery of the "art of the insane" by Expressionists and Surrealists turned patients' scribbles into valid expressions that transcended their status as putative symptoms of schizophrenia, hysteria, or paranoia. As Arnulf Rainer would later put it: "A lot of so-called pathological symptoms should be regarded as attempts at creating forms (*Gestaltung*) and communicating."[12]

Rainer considered the expressive use of the body to be a crucial "art of the insane," and attempted to liberate his own "psychopathic talents" in his photo pieces of the late 1960s and 1970s. He also called on psychiatric patients to use photography and film to record their catatonic statements and "actions."[13] In this way, Rainer effectively called for an appropriation of photography by the patients in order to celebrate rather than tabulate their expressive, explosive movements and gestures. In his own photo-based works, Rainer depicted himself in various "pathological" poses that usually remained within the idiom of *attitudes*

8 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image* (Paris: Minuit, 1990), p. 204.
9 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Boston: MIT Press, 2003) [Originally published in French, 1982]
10 Ibid., pp. 24–26.
11 Louis Aragon and André Breton, "Le Conquantenaire de l'hystérie (1878–1928)," *La Révolution Surréaliste*, no. 11 (15 March 1928), pp. 20–22.
12 Arnulf Rainer, "Euthanasie der Kunst" (1969) in *Arnulf Rainer: Hirndrang*, ed. Otto Breicha (Salzburg: Verlag der Galerie Welz, 1980), p. 85.
13 Rainer, "Euthansie der Kunst," p. 86, and "Face Farces" (1969) in *Arnulf Rainer: Hirndrang*, pp. 102–105.

Montage of "*attitudes passionnelles*" from *La Révolution Surréaliste*, 1928



passionnelles, although he emphasized the poses' gestural component by drawing and painting over them, suggesting lines of movement that point beyond the classical image. Rainer's art is the gloriously anachronistic culmination of the early twentieth-century project of a liberation from stifling artistic and social conventions by means of the symptom; another late version of this dream is Paul Sharits's double film projection *Epileptic Seizure Comparison* (1976), for which the artist doctored clinical footage of epileptic patients in such a way as to produce a hypnotic flicker that might put the viewer in a similar state of symptomatic "ecstasy." Such work differs crucially from symptomatological practices that emerge in the context of the Conceptual art of the late 1960s and early 1970, which treat symptoms not as means to effect a *liberation* from power and violence, but as their *product*.[14]

The optical and the social unconscious

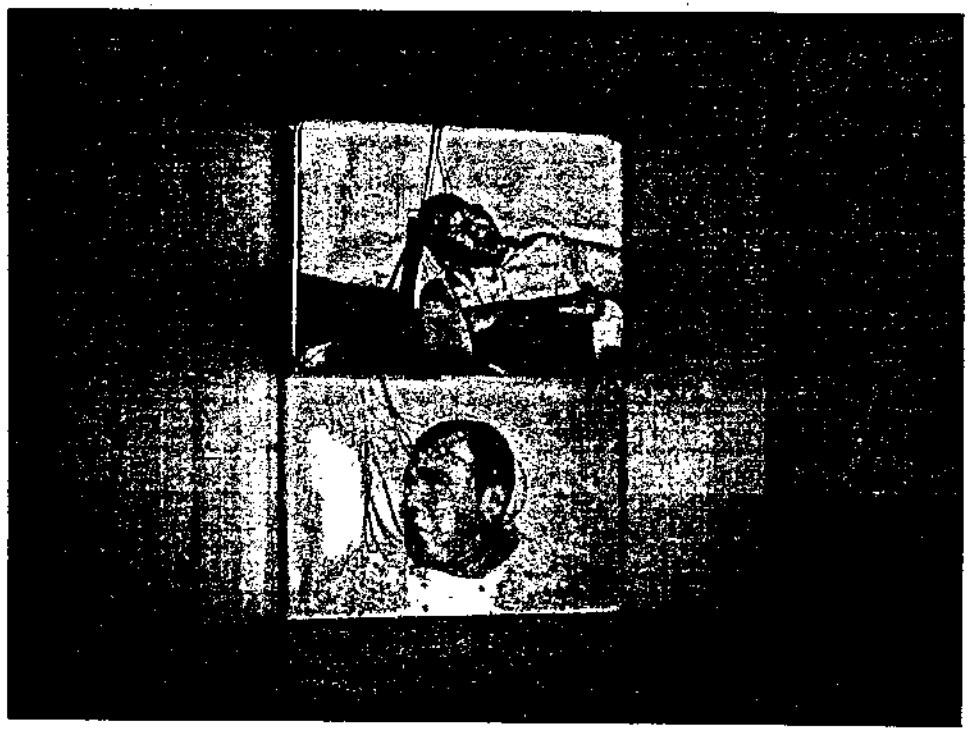
Paul Régnard's early Salpêtrière photographs were hampered by the long exposure times required by the photographic equipment of his day. The photographer had to take his pictures when the subject had taken on a static pose; another option was heavily reworking (painting) the blurry pictures of a restless subject.[15] In the 1880s and early 1890s, shutter time was radically reduced, influencing photographic practices at the Salpêtrière and elsewhere. Salpêtrière photographer Albert Londe devised a camera that enabled him to photograph successive moments of a movement; there was hence less need for quasi-classical poses, and more opportunity to show minute symptoms perhaps not even accessible to the naked eye. A few decades later, Walter Benjamin famously claimed that snapshot photography and film revealed an optical

14 With its wired-up patients (the footage derived from a study of brain activity during epileptic seizures), Sharits's *Epileptic Seizure Comparison* reflects the institutional context, yet seeks to transcend it in the flicker as a potential source of liberatory symptoms.

15 Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, pp. 87–88, 107–108, 113.

Arnulf Rainer, *Série Face Farces*, 1970–1975, mixed media and photography, © Arnulf Rainer, courtesy Galerie Lelong, Paris

Paul Sharits, *Epileptic Seizure Comparison*, 1976, installation view, TENT, Rotterdam, 2008



unconscious, parallel to the psychic unconscious explored by Freud.[16] The camera could show sights not registered by the human eye—barely noticeable or fast movements, microscopic details, unusual angles. It is suggestive, to say the least, that Freud had ample opportunity to study the use of photography at the Salpêtrière when working under Charcot as a young man in 1885–1886. Morelli was not his only master when it came to the detection and decoding of those obtuse, failed, potential signs—known as symptoms.

However, Charcot himself could not really integrate the new possibilities afforded by photography into his practice; after all, revealing (aspects of) symptoms invisible to the naked eye threatens to destroy the readability of the tabulated tableau. A photo grid by E.J. Marey's collaborator Georges Demenÿ may serve to exemplify this new form of tabulation, in which "typical" poses or stages have been replaced by more or less random stills from a continuum: the sequence shows how a magician makes an egg disappear, the camera eye thus demonstrating its superiority of the human eye. Tellingly, this laying-bare of the optical unconscious stills needs considerable explanation; the sleigh of hand is not really obvious from these pictures, disappearing between the pictures rather than being fully present in them.[17] It is perhaps not accidental that few strictly medical or psychiatric image sequences appear to have been taken with Londe's multiple-lens camera, which seems to have been used more for studies with nude athletes and other models.[18] In the endlessly multiplied slices of chronophotography, the symptom is multiplied and diluted until it goes the way of Demenÿ's egg.

In recent art, Jeff Wall has reintegrated the bewildering lack of clarity produced by early chronophotographic experiments in seemingly traditional photographic tableaus, mounted as large color transparencies in light boxes. An early work such as *Milk* (1984) is resolutely anti-anecdotal. The image shows a man

seated on the pavement, apparently squishing milk out of a carton in a fit of rage; at any rate the milk is squirting into the air. There is little or no narrative motivation for this local catastrophe, which does not have the legibility required by actions in a classical tableau. The same is true for the action in Wall's *Man with a Rifle* (2000), in which a man mimes shooting a gun on the pavement of a street filled with parked cars, while a female passerby is walking along. In both cases, there are plausible explanations, possible motivations; we can speculate about the psychological damage these people have accumulated. Up to a point, the symptomatic expression is thus integrated into a readable tableau, yet the precise staging of these symptoms, which retain a gratuitous and abrupt character, in the end undermines the tableau itself. In works such as *Milk* and *Man with a Rifle*, Wall questions the western tableau by staging eruptions of an obtuse visuality without a code while *suggesting* a symptomatological reading of these eruptions.[19]

In 1898, Londe shot ten films at the Salpêtrière; the arrival of film made the increasing discrepancy between Charcot's "classical" impulses and the optical unconscious shown or suggested by mechanical reproduction even more obvious than chronophotography. Staging films seemed to allow for a certain clarity to be regained; in *Neuropatologia*, a 1908 film by Camillo Negro, the masked hysterical woman who is being observed and treated by a pair of doctors is clearly acting the

16 See for instance Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk in Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit (Dritte Fassung) (1926–1939)," in *Gesammelte Schriften vol. 1.2: Abhandlungen*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 498–500.

17 Alfred Binet, "La Prestidigitation," *L'Illustration* 53, no. 2707 (Saturday 12 January 1895), p. 30.

18 André Gunthert, "Experimental and Versatile Photographer," in *huis Marseille. Stichting voor Fotografie* (Amsterdam: huis Marseille, 1999), p. 14.

19 Another interesting case of photo-based post-Conceptual symptomatology is a joint project by Thomas Struth and the psychoanalyst Ingo Hartmann from the mid-1980s, in which Struth and Hartmann analyzed photographic family portraits donated by various people. So far, the results have not been made public.

Georges Demenÿ, chronophotographic sequence in *L'Illustration*, 1895

Jeff Wall, *Milk*, 1984, transparency in lightbox, courtesy of the artist

part.[20] Yet the "classical" poses now remained elusive moments in the slippage of time; Douglas Gordon emphasizes this in his video installation *Hysterical* (1995), which is a double appropriation of *Neuropatologia*: on one screen the material is projected mirrored and in slow motion, as if to facilitate a close study of the staged symptom and the optical unconscious. In the process, however, these symptoms only become more opaque and ungraspable, their readability lost in endlessly shifting movements. While frustrating a purely medical or psychiatric symptomatology, Gordon's piece, like Wall's works, suggests a social one.

Hysterical's emphasis on the staged and simulated character of hysterical symptoms suggests that they are produced or at least shaped by the institutions seeking to cure them. Such a social and political reading of symptoms was still part of Didi-Huberman's early work on the Salpêtrière. *Invention of Hysteria* is perhaps the closest Didi-Huberman has ever been to today's artistic symptomatology: this book was, in part, a Foucauldian analysis of the clinic as a disciplining institution producing a theater of cruelty. The analysis of the symptom's tabulation was thus still grounded in social reality, but Didi-Huberman has increasingly moved away from specific pathological symptoms to a generalized notion of the symptom as undermining the realm of legibility, frustrating the reduction of the visual to decodable tableaus or essential symbols. This tendency to use the symptom as a weapon against iconological or idealist readings of images has brought Did-Huberman in increasing proximity to the modern—Expressionist and Surrealist—project of the liberation of symptoms and their use as uncodified expressions.[21] If such "unmoored" symptoms are seen as *resisting* power, Wall and Gordon have inherited the conceptualist reading of symbols as inadvertently *articulating* power.

Symptom-images and linguistic slips

A prime example of this approach is Martha Rosler's video *The Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), in which the artist introduces various kitchen utensils in alphabetical order, mentioning their names and then making motions with the tool in question. However, the motions are mechanical and halting, and not necessarily functional or typical; a knife is stabbed into the air, *Psycho*-like. Instead of gracefully demonstrating how the objects are used, in the style of a cooking show on TV or a commercial for a household product, Rosler engages in behavior which is so disturbingly inadequate that it can only be seen in symptomatic terms; a sign failing to function in accordance with a code, a flawed sign signifying something else, something repressed. If Rosler's video performance references the convulsive movements made by hysterics and the compulsive behavior of neurotic patients, it is obviously not to glorify such modes of behavior as expressive statements, à la Rainer; rather, Rosler suggests that the kitchen is an institution of Foucauldian discipline in which women are subjected by the signs of domesticity.

As shown by Robert Morris's Panofsky-mocking 1964 performance *21.3*, artists in the 1960s and 1970s questioned the way in which Panofskian iconology reduced works of art to readable narratives or symbols, yet the simultaneous discovery of semiotics suggested a new way of making images "readable"—in keeping with the linguistic bias of much Conceptual art. By enacting her domestic alphabet in a hysterical way, Rosler stages symptoms that invite decoding in social and political

20 Ramón Reichert, "Das Kino in der Klinik: Medientechniken des Unbewussten um 1900," in *Kino im Kopf: Psychologie und Film seit Sigmund Freud*, eds. Christina Jaspers and Wolf Unterberger (Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2006), pp. 25–26.

21 Even in *Invention of Hysteria*, Didi-Huberman delights in the creativity of symptoms (p. 171). For his later, more purely art-theoretical and art-historical approach, see the section on "l'image-fantôme" in Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Minuit, 2002), pp. 273–514.

Martha Rosler, *The Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975, video still, courtesy of the artist

terms. Staying within the conceptual paradigm even while pointing to its limitations, its own managerial cult of readability, Rosler's work is actively symptomatological rather than merely a possible subject for a symptomatological analysis. Rosler here focuses on compulsive and convulsive movements, but even while the role of language is here reduced to that of pseudo-objective linguistic identification, the alphabetical recital nonetheless makes it clear that conceptual symptomatology is not exclusively, or even primarily, a visual one.

Andrea Fraser likewise engages in symptomatic behavior in her performances and videos. In *Little Frank and his Carp* (2001), a woman played by Fraser responds to the Guggenheim Bilbao's audio guide she's listening to in an excessive way, eventually humping one of the building's sinuously curved walls. Fraser's symptoms are above all indicative of the ways in which art world structures and power relations are a lived reality for its denizens. More than physical, these convulsive moments are linguistic; in Fraser's work, language itself—the very medium of *logos*—becomes convulsive. In what amounts to a kind of neoliberal glossolalia, Fraser's 1997 performance *Inaugural Speech* makes the ideological fantasies that drive the opening speeches of cultural events a tad too explicit: "We're home to many internationally respected institutions, to Nobel Prize winners, authors, artists, celebrities, custom ocean-view homes, boutiques, luxury, charm, sophistication, and jet-setters from around the globe."[22] These words are spoken by a museum trustee, one of a number of characters all performed by Fraser; the next speaker, a politician, is announced by the trustee persona as "a man who was elected and overwhelmingly reelected by a small minority of the voting-age population," a staged slip-up

22 Andrea Fraser, "Inaugural speech" (1997), in *Andrea Fraser. Works: 1984 to 2003*, ed. Yilmaz Dziewior (Hamburg/Cologne: Kunstverein Hamburg and DuMont, 2003), p. 273.

that reveals the threadbare legitimacy of the American political caste.

In the earlier *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (1989), Fraser famously dissected the ideological pull of the art world as a charmed sphere of ennoblement and uplift; her museum guise character, Jane Castleton, whose words are lifted from a variety of sources, seems to suffer from an elitist kind of Tourette's Syndrome when denouncing, "scattered brick houses . . . dreary warehouses . . . blank walls and junk yards . . . drab, enclosing . . . sometimes blue . . .". To escape from poverty and banality, Castleton fantasizes about becoming a work of art herself: "I'd like to live like an art object. Wouldn't it be nice to live like an art object . . .? . . . How could anyone ask for more. Graceful, mythological, life-size . . .".[23] Fraser's work stages symptomatic *Fehlleistungen* (Freudian slips or blunders) as a form of performative ideology critique, symptomatic non-knowledge being readable as a manifestation of repressed contradictions.

Symptoms of past futures

The symptomatology of contemporary art seems akin to the Freudo-Marxist analysis of Wilhelm Reich, who read neuroses as being a product of the repressive social conditions of a patriarchal and capitalist society—conditions whose crippling effects on human sexuality, and the psyche as a whole, would eventually give rise to fascism. However, it would be wrong to assume that artists see symptoms only as the symptoms of the repression of "universal" drives by capitalism; some also hint at the repression the emancipatory potential in specific historical events. In his two-channel video *Godville* (2005), Omer Fast has painstakingly reassembled monologues of staff members of a "living history" museum word by word, creating a hallucinatory form of speech in which elements that are repressed by the speakers' normal discourse are brought to the surface.

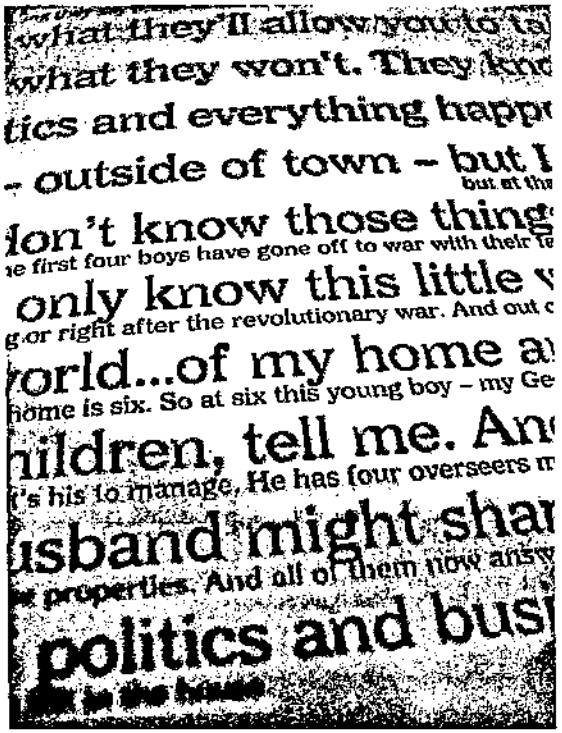
The speakers are "interpreters" at Colonial Williamsburg, where visitors can experience life around or just before the time of the American Revolution, complete with interpreters in period dress. Fast filmed these interpreters, and their re-cut monologues became an orgy of slippages. The monologue of black man, Will, whose role is—unsurprisingly—that of a slave, ends in an extended rant on God: "God is the performance, without someone to present it. God is not knowing the facts. God is perhaps a lack of knowledge. . . . God is something. That four-letter word! God is white. God is working class. God is American. God is taking over. God get beaten all the time."[24]

Characteristic of *Godville* are the all but imperceptible transitions between different modes of speech and ideologies: it is hard to establish whether the speaker is talking about the late eighteenth century or the present, about Colonial or Imperial America. As a militiaman, Jack, says: "And you have to understand that we're not really trying to inflict our will on the people. It's basically just trying to get the impediment to the people's will under control. By attacking soldiers. Military targets. But also things like government employees. And newspapers. And political correctness. And affirmative action and government taxes. And popular culture and schools and hospitals and movies—and with the Internet, it makes it even easier! You know, locking up entire villages and churches and setting them on fire. You know, blowing theme parks and hotels and tourists."[25] Jack and the other speakers are seen on one side of the double projection that is *Godville*; the other side shows images from Colonial Williamsburg, and at times images from other locations, such as contemporary gated communities or shopping malls. Both image and text consist of constant ideological slippages,

23 Andrea Fraser, "Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk" (1989), in *Andrea Fraser*, p. 246.
24 *Omer Fast: Godville* (Minneapolis/Frankfurt: Midway Contemporary Art and Revolver, 2005), pp. 58–59.
25 Ibid., pp. 30–31.

Omer Fast, *Godville*, 2005, production still, courtesy of the artist

Detail of Omer Fast, *Godville*, book designed by Manuel Raeder, published by Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis and Revolver, Frankfurt, 2005



turning linguistic and visual signs back into symptoms—symptoms that in turn suggest readability in social and political terms. However, their transformation into signs stops somewhere halfway, resulting in half-finished semiotic ruins.

Insofar as the slippages in *Godville* suggest a symptomatic reading, what are they symptoms of? The obvious answer would be: of the repressive and paranoid conditions of American society in the "war on terror." But here it may be worthwhile to take cues from Eric Santner and Slavoj Žižek, who have both developed a reading of symptoms as "defense formations[s] covering up the void to intervene effectively in the social crisis."[26] In other words, both individual neurotic symptoms and outbursts like *Kristallnacht* can be seen as indices of "past failures to respond to calls for action," to intervene in an oppressive order. For Žižek—who, like Santner, had adopted and adapted Alain Badiou's notion of the truth-event—these failed attempts are not so much small-scale and individual, as they are for Santner, but past revolutions (or attempts at revolution). In this sense, are not *Godville*'s slips symptomatic of the unfinished and—in this sense—failed character of the American Revolution, its curtailment and ideological abuse as a pretext for neoconservative imperialism? It is not the symptom itself that is liberating, as the Surrealists or Rainer posited, but the symptom is a trace in time of lost liberatory moments that may yet be reactivated. Badiou, whose work is an important point of reference for both Santner and Žižek, identifies knowledge with a regime of transmission and repetition, and opposes it with the revolutionary truth-event, which shatters the order of knowledge; *Godville* shows how such an event is reinscribed into the order of knowledge while also creating instabilities within that order, creating persistent symptoms that show the event to be still an unfulfilled promise rather than a historical episode archived once and for all.[27] The "fidelity to the event" demanded by Badiou can thus be characterized as fidelity to symptoms.

Symptomatological practices in contemporary art acknowledge that it is not enough to celebrate the symptom as non-knowledge, as the non-identical that escapes the grip of the concept or the symbol. Rather, they treat the symptom as that "unknown known" that can serve to question technocratic knowledge production—as a quasi-sign that enlightens by obscuring and obstructing. They turn the main weakness of much artistic "knowledge"—its complete lack of academic rigor or accountability—into a strength, critiquing the rhetoric of knowledge production while beginning to fulfill the promise betrayed by it. However, does this have any effects in a society that seems to arrange itself with its symptoms quite nicely? "Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we": the media dutifully mock and even analyze symptomatic gaffes by George W. Bush, but they remain without major political consequences.[28]

A symptomatology without effect risks becoming a pastime on par with crossword puzzles or trainspotting. Are not symptomatological projects in recent years themselves symptomatic in their utter marginality? However, the doubtful efficacy of symptomatology, artistic and otherwise, should not be an excuse for passivity and defeatism. In these times of triumphant knowledge, a patient loyalty to the symptom is more important than ever.

26 Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 23, quoted by Santner in "Miracles Happen: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Freud, and the Matter of the Neighbor," http://www.cjs.ucla.edu/Mellon/Santner_Miracles_Happen.pdf (p. 14) (accessed 27 July 2007).

27 Badiou's event theory is expounded at length in *Being and Event*, translated by Oliver Feltham (London/New York: Continuum, 2006).

28 "President Signs Defense Bill," 6 August 2004, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040805-3.html (accessed 10 June 2007).

Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf

What Does Art Know?

Art has its own mode of knowledge. This idea is ancient, at least as old as the so-called quarrel between poetry and philosophy and Plato's notorious expulsion of the poets from the city in the Republic. The haunting effect of this famous decision has been an implicit but consistent association of the poetic act with a peculiar, mysterious, and even dangerous sort of knowledge. Moving forward to more recent days we find Peter de Bolla looking at a Barnett Newman painting in the Museum of Modern Art in New York and deciding that the usual critical questions—what does this painting mean, what is it trying to say—are the wrong ones, because beyond them "lies the insistent murmur of all great art, the nagging thought that the work holds something to itself, contains something that in the final analysis remains untouchable, unknowable." He then arrives at the following question: what does this painting know?

We too are interested in the murmur of great art as well as of small art, and we want to put the question to text and film rather than to painting. Our question is: what does art know and will not tell us directly? This phrasing may sound like an odd personification—art is not a person and cannot know anything, only artists and readers or viewers can—but for the moment we would like the question, and the figure of speech, just to cross our mind, like an epigraph or a haunting melody. Against this background music, we can reexamine how we define knowledge—knowledge by experience or personal acquaintance, knowledge as awareness of facts, knowledge as an understanding of patterns of relations—and realize that art insists, knows that there is more to it than we can ever know about it.

It was Henry James who wrote, in relation to the publication of Gustave Flaubert's letters, of "the insurmountable desire to know," and who thought, in that context, that "some day or other we shall surely agree that we pay more for some kinds

of knowledge than those particular kinds are worth." And it was Michael Wood who reminded us, on the occasion of his meanderings through James's novel *The Wings of the Dove*, to read these words and to think of the knowledge at issue. Once we have started on the question of knowledge, the obvious move is to research how many kinds of knowledge there are, how much work the words "know" and "knowledge" are asked to do, and how varied that work is. And to realize knowledge's own dangerousness, which needs to be reassociated with the poetic act in order to avoid its reductive economy of exchange.

In his preface to *What Maisie Knew*, James writes of the appeal for the novelist of a child's "confused and obscure notation" of a tangle of adult relations, namely the goings on of her divorced parents and their changing companions. It intrigued him that Maisie should see more than she understood. "Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them," he says, referring to Maisie, who "has the wonderful importance of shedding a light far beyond any reach of her comprehension."

But the novel itself is more ambiguous, precisely because of the strong and multiple valences of the word *know*. Do Maisie's perceptions shed "a light far beyond any reach of her comprehension?" Well, perhaps not beyond any reach. Just beyond the reach we are likely to assign to it. But is that the right reach? The novel is not called "What Maisie Saw," or "What Maisie Failed to Understand." The marvelous ambiguity of the thing is that we can never really know what Maisie knows. Right at the end of the book the governess Mrs. Wix gives Maisie a piece of information about the whereabouts of two of the errant adults. Maisie says: "Oh, I know." James then writes: "Mrs. Wix gave a sidelong look. She still had room for wonder at what Maisie knew."

We too still have room for wonder at what we may know without knowing it conventionally or directly. This is by no means a concept of happy ignorance. By looking closely at the knowledge in question in James's novels that is often fully available but entirely unwelcome, we come to see how rarely people want the knowledge directly, because it takes so much away from them. When, for example, in *The Golden Bowl*, the wife's temporary safety rests in avoiding a confession, in particular from her husband, her reserve concerns both the compensatory quality of knowledge as well as the economy in which it is considered, in order to accept the excess of meaning in relationships, even if it is deception or adultery.

She does not ask: How could you? And what do you intend to do now? A "thousand times better" than denying and confessing is the fact that her husband does what "he would do." And a "thousand times better" than to act on the certainty that he deceived her is her will to do what has no reason and is thus free and indirect. She forces herself to refrain from either accumulating or reducing knowledge and thus to take responsibility toward an absolute and irreducible reality—the reality of freedom which cannot be made into anything else. Since this responsibility usually manifests itself in our trying "to understand," her refraining from talking "about it" might not only be morally shocking, but also a scientific carelessness. Yet this indeed is part of her "lighter and larger but easier form," which does not submerge itself into a specific matter, but by its own power keeps it above ground. She does not add up pieces of knowledge that would destroy her, because they only make up a story of distrust and disbelief. Instead she is excited by "the possibility, richer with every lapsing moment, that her husband would have on the whole question a new need of her, a need which was in fact being born between them in these very seconds." She not only corresponds to him but duplicates,

as it were, her "value" by becoming, beyond her "intrinsic" value, a "compositional resource, and of the finest order" inasmuch as it relates to the incomparable. It is "the labor of this detachment" and at the same time the labor of "her keeping the pitch of it down," which now holds her and him together in "an intimacy compared with which artless passion would have been but a beating of the air."

We feel this quality in her as a virtue, and neither an epistemological uncertainty nor a moral relativity, and so we find ourselves perceiving more than we can translate. Since we cannot know it we have to believe in it. More precisely, we must engage in a willed and systematic indirectness, which helps us to actively believe in it. It is only the fear of having to accept something unacceptable that makes knowing so much more acceptable than believing, until we realize that this is just an escape from reality into its reparation.

But to "actively believe" means to believe for no reason and beyond any comparison. To be sure we can argue whether her attitude is right or wrong, while the attitude itself is of an informative quality. It does not calculate with needs and yet speaks their language so as to go beyond the terms of exchange and turn uneconomical relations into the "sublime economy" of art. Although this economy is not recorded on the "map of social relations," it has a geographic marking called "fundamental passions." It demands that we choose, for a given potential, another one, but not just anyone, so that a difference between potentials and not between meanings can evolve. I feel, I even know, that in this difference lies the multiplicity that resonates in all relationships, without the other being traced back to the one or the one leading to the other.

Since this economy is a form of patience that refrains from jumping to conclusions, and since it is a matter of bringing something incomprehensible into the world, it may well be that it is "gradually produced," as Heinrich von Kleist describes it. He is not concerned with uttering an already produced thought, but with language as a means of forming a thought. "But because I do have some dim conception at the outset, one distantly related to what I am looking for, if I boldly make a start with that, my mind, even as my speech proceeds, under the necessity of finding an end for that beginning, will shape my first confused idea into complete clarity so that, to my amazement, understanding is arrived at as the sentence ends. I put in a few unarticulated sounds, dwell lengthily on the conjunctions, perhaps make use of apposition where it is not necessary, and have recourse to other tricks which will spin out my speech, all to gain time for the fabrication of my idea in the workshop of the mind." Kleist's description of this process is reconstructed by Hans Heinz Holz on a grammatical level: the use of a causal clause, qualified in a dependent relative clause, the separation of the main clause's verb from the subject by an ambiguous subordinate clause, which—only because of this separation—can be understood both conditionally and temporally. And the main clause shall connect only piece by piece with the subordinate clause and so push on—gradually but irresistibly—the production of thoughts. Hence the irresistibleness is syntactic, for a beginning has to have an end. Yet let us not forget the gradualness with which conjunctions cut things to pieces, conjunctions whose different dependencies and links can by no means be replaced by a string of juxtaposed main clauses. And let us also not forget that the thought which takes shape in language and can thus be expressed with precision is not only assisted by that thought that flares up internally in a "convulsive movement" and is itself incapable of being uttered, but also by a movement of Kleist's sister suggesting that she

wishes to interrupt him, for this external attempt to grab the floor excites his "already hard-worked mind" even more and raises its powers "a further degree."

Hence the end of this modulation is unexpected and sounds like a beginning. The dialogue between the interior and the exterior takes on the character of a citation that is released from every form of perspective, whether it be conscious or unconscious. Indeed there is a "dim conception" as a point of hallucination in Kleist's thinking, and in the striving of his innermost being after enlightenment, "he gazes into the lamplight, as into the brightest point," yet by doing so he realizes no other people or things than the words themselves. Yet these words are conjunctions that are activated into relations. They are then varied without varying the conceptions themselves, for ultimately it is the circumstances, actions, and affects that allow the relations to change. It is in this experience that art finds its thread. It reintroduces that splitting between language and speech which—faced with a still undefined horizon of references—constantly establishes new relations. Slackening as well as quickening, they take off beyond what can be defined as knowledge. It is the transition from the restrained demonstration of subjectivity to the possible presentation of time in free indirect discourse.

It has long ceased to be an issue of the successful or unsuccessful translation of a conception into language, because the "gradual production of thoughts whilst speaking" has to do with the montage of clauses in language. The conception which triggered everything is ultimately reformulated in the desire to find a representation for it: "For it is not we who know things but pre-eminently a certain condition of ours which knows." Kleist finds its only adequacy in this: in the respective consistency of a condition or state, which is below consciousness

and above myth, meshing historical and present-day signs of the world. It is neither metaphysical nor religious, but profoundly realistic and even quotidian. Jacques Lacan's observation that "it" (*ça*) only possesses reality in language, that it is in itself language, is useful here. "It" is certainly not a psychological reality whose expression might be language, nor is it an inaccessible and incessant "stream of consciousness." From both the interior and the exterior, "it" assists us in the third person, and with it we arrive in the double reality of discourse and art. This is the multiplicity that resonates in all relations and gives them a new direction. It dissolves what happens in language into what is gestural in language, setting it in motion with the aid of ever fewer words of embellishment and ever finer syntax. It dares to experiment in constantly different contexts and set ups. This maybe shows a poverty of imagination, but it is a way of looking the world's complexity in the face.

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These stills might give the impression that they represent what the camera recorded. In as much as they do so, they are misleading, since it was not known during the recording what exactly would take place in front of the camera. The scenes were not staged following this or that idea of an image that would represent them; the conditions of the recording under which a variety of such images would appear were staged/chosen. Until a scene was recorded, one could only assume where the objects or the subjects would appear in relation to one another or to the frame. The camera did not "record" in the sense of visually describing or stating what was written and directed beforehand; rather its movement set a dynamic in

motion, which resembled the dynamics of a speech act, constituting its subject while speaking. Whereby the authority of the speaker—from which the speech act retrieves its power—does not remain untouched. The authors of these scenes do not claim the knowledge that the scenes, once recorded, enact. Inasmuch as the speech act constitutes the speaker's authority, these recordings constitute the camera as a non-verbal speaker (which does not coincide with the author's view) and themselves as indirect speech acts. If these images represent anything, then it is the unforeseeable—a contradiction. In other words, these images denounce what they show. Different than the intentionally produced and authorized choice, the excess of possibilities remains non-representable.

Here the car serves as a moving tripod, driving within a fenced immigration camp. The guard allows us to drive around, but expresses doubts since actually this is not allowed—"It is only a transit camp, not permanent housing." The driver begins to drive and the camera operator begins to record before the guard can change his mind. They don't exchange any information concerning the route, neither did they before entering the camp. The route is pretty much determined by the center-oriented camp plan with its circumventing road. For the kids living in the camp the foreign car is an event. They would like to run parallel to it, yet realizing they can't, they take shortcuts between the barracks in order to reach the car wherever they assume it will be next on the circular road. The car-camera and the kids get involved in a choreography of circling and zigzagging, directed—to a certain extent—by the camp's plan. Yet the camera doesn't know the kids' route in advance. It performs the route and in doing so, co-produces the zigzag that it records.

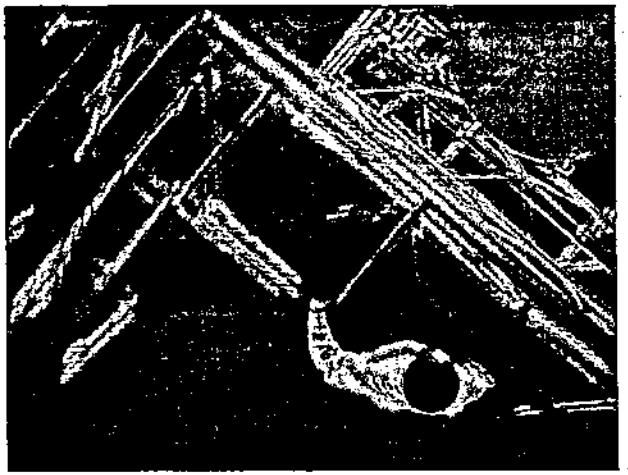
Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, *Documentary Credit*, 1998, film still

Record: I Love You (1999) makes a theater space equipped with a steering mechanism into its narrative device. The moveable ceiling's elements, usually employed to adjust stage lighting, are attached with mirrors. A couple is dancing while one of the two holds the camera in direction of the ceiling. While they dance, the ceiling's elements move continuously up and down. There is no eye behind the camera—only the knowledge that the camera will capture the dancers whenever their steps bring them beneath one of the mirrors. When a mirror is low, the dancers are seen full screen; when it is high they seem to be far away or not in the picture at all. In other words, the ceiling zooms in and out on itself. The camera is reduced to its recording function. It doesn't follow the dancers, but accompanies them. The operator of the steering mechanism does not see the dancers; at the same time, the dancers neither see him nor themselves in the viewfinder or in the mirror.

Here a camera is placed in the middle of the control room of a recording studio, turning mechanically on a tripod. The architecture of the studio imagines the director's position in space as one that would guarantee him or her a view—access to the adjacent rooms. The camera is placed in this imagined position and turns continuously in a 360-degree radius. Performers were given directions for actions within and between the rooms. Because of soundproofing and partially mirrored glass, they do not see what room the camera is directed at. They perform their action in loop, at their own velocity. The camera is in a control position but it doesn't know what it controls. It captures fragments of the action-loops, and misses others. The recording is an edit of fragments, not of the complete action. Two endless movements, at each moment of crossing each other, compose the frame.

Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, *Record: I Love You*, 1999, film still

Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, *Flashforward*, 2004, film still



Marion von Osten

Such Views Miss the Decisive Point . . . The Dilemma of Knowledge-Based Economy and its Opponents

In the face of neoliberal educational policies and the debate on intellectual property it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain that knowledge is common property and that its production and distribution may not be possessed by a certain group or individual and their or his/her interests. Attempts to democratize the access to knowledge, like for example the socialist people's house and workers' club movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, appear to have become historical exceptions in times when knowledge is being economized and patented and education is being privatized and standardized, when discussions on elite universities are on the agenda and copying is made a crime. Today, knowledge based on ownership rights is treated both nationally and internationally as a promising commodity. According to Yann Moulier Boutang, knowledge, as an economic good, must possess two features to establish itself as a commodity: the principle of exclusivity and of rivalry in use: "Exclusivity means that by belonging to one owner everyone else is prevented from utilizing the rights on this economic good. Rivalry in use means that it is not compatible with another use."[1]

However, for the reason that knowledge as a commodity is also based on cooperation and communication—value in the actual sense is attached to it only when used—the neoliberal paradigm gets stuck in a dilemma. On the one hand, knowledge is intended for unrestricted use, while on the other, it has to be consumed as a commodity to generate value. The utility value of knowledge, though, as a commodity as well, can never be completely controlled or measured due to its immaterial form. This is proven by the innumerable examples of "illegal" software and data use, alternative information channels, anti-globalization

1 Yann Moulier Boutang, "Neue Grenzziehungen in der Politischen Ökonomie," in *Norm der Abweichung*, ed. Marion von Osten (Zurich: Springer, 2003), p. 275.

newsgroups, and MPG downloads. The neoliberal paradigm gets into trouble because controlled access to knowledge goods and information not only creates new global differences in power, new forms of resistance, and subversive practices, but also entails that it becomes dependent on knowledge practices and forms of acquisition that cannot be generated and administered institutionally and that are not promoted or funded, but are instead distinguished by the fact that they organize themselves.[2] The much-hyped market of neoclassical theory thus proves to be precarious in terms of providing the necessary resources for producing knowledge, which it in turn needs for its competitiveness. The fact that the existing, aforementioned logic of ownership, which turns knowledge into a commodity, simultaneously hinders "innovation" constitutes a fundamental contradiction in the current debate on intellectual property. While it was always a problem for capitalist societies to protect private property, protection of ownership with regard to knowledge as a commodity now becomes an irresolvable and above all contestable paradox.

Parallel to the worldwide resistance against the economization of knowledge, the most radical educational reform since the introduction of compulsory school attendance is being carried out in Europe. Knowledge production and distribution at educational institutions is reorganized by the Bologna Declaration[3] and the bureaucratic apparatus and new structures of control (quality management, etc.) are being expanded. As a result, the situation of knowledge workers is becoming increasingly precarious, and pressure is put on students to adhere to new logics of time and efficiency. This means that institutes at public universities must themselves organize and finance their work entirely through third-party funding, while at the same time statements of achievement are published in glossy brochures, elite study programs are established, and new staff

is employed to enforce the policy of reform which is aimed at standardizing the ways in which knowledge is imparted. It also means that lecturers are fired and the duration of study is reduced. All this abolishes studies in the literal sense of the word, while certain fields of learning and knowledge production are outsourced.[4]

So the field of tension between ownership rights and common property is a conflictual one, not only for neoliberal argumentation or our ways of working and living, but also for knowledge production in traditional educational institutions. This conflict is becoming increasingly intense under the conditions of a knowledge-based economy, because what the neoliberal knowledge managers and education bureaucrats are trying to enforce against the resistance of students and the teaching staff is based on the assumption that knowledge can be produced like in a factory and can therefore be accelerated and optimized, and that access to knowledge can be controlled in a capitalistic sense by means of issuing patents and monetization and by exclusively being linked to a specific use.

2 The example of the often-cited "Neem Tree Case" makes the perspective and the consequences of issuing patents comprehensible. For centuries, peasants in India have reproduced the seeds of the neem tree and planted them in their fields. The tree has an antitoxic and insect-repellent effect that is harmless to other plants. But the plant is also used as building material, fodder, etc. If W.R. Grace and Company, a multinational chemicals corporation, could have patented the plant in 1985, the plant would have been restricted to a single use, thus triggering a whole chain of massive problems.

3 The meeting of EU ministers of education in 1999 in Bologna decided on new European standards for higher education and demanded "more effective" courses of study at universities. The background of this change is the constitution of the European Union and the associated standardization of degrees, as well as the dominant role of learning processes in the differentiation of markets and global competition.

4 Private marketers have established themselves on the education market today. They sell learning and training units for all age groups and all situations in life, ranging from computer science courses and language travels to esoteric seminars and creativity training. The demand for equal opportunities for all, as well as efforts—stemming from the reform movement—"to develop" the entire personality is replaced by an educational package that is customized to fit one's personal needs and can be com-pleted in a short period of time, albeit only by those who can afford it.

The production and distribution of knowledge, however, is ambivalent and contested not only since recently; it is closely connected with the question of class difference, access to education, and exclusions based on "race" or gender. The objective of the socialist-oriented people's house and workers' club movement in Germany in the early twentieth century was to secure access to bourgeois knowledge resources. For Herbert Marcuse, the socialist ideal of educating the people, of making available for the "masses" everything that had until then been created in culture in order to raise the "people's level of physical, intellectual, and moral education," meant nothing more than winning over these "masses" for precisely the societal order that was to be attacked. The democratization of access to the existing bourgeois knowledge complex thus missed the decisive point: "the supersession of this culture."[5]

In the battles of 1968 in Western Europe and the United States, the dominant Eurocentric knowledge cultures and their systems of order were radically called into question against the background of Cold War politics and postcolonial liberation struggles. Demanding one's own knowledge production expands and criticizes the "concept of provision" and refers to the fundamental critique of an institutionalized conception of democracy: Since the eighteenth century, and therefore also in the colonies, educational establishments have been able to assert the power of definition with regard to relevant knowledge and establish in the respective societies an order distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary knowledge. Knowledge originating outside academia, beyond the disciplines—indigenous, oppositional, or everyday knowledge—was at best a resource for bourgeois knowledge activities and their professorial authorships. A system of authorship thus asserted itself along these lines in the natural sciences and the humanities; but it is also clear that every "invention," discovery, or finding is

based on the research and insights of many. Although the collective and socially varied character of almost all knowledge is obvious, alternative and jointly organized forms of knowledge production were neither funded nor granted an appropriate status at the university in the West. What was demanded in 1968, then, was not only enhanced access to existing knowledge, but also collective forms of knowledge production in which not just upper-class students but the entire population was to participate, with the goal of generating *new* knowledge that would also reveal the power structures inherent to the traditional order of knowledge. Instead of pursuing the "transformation of the world into a gigantic people's educational establishment," emphasis was placed on a culture of jointly produced knowledge to which marginalized groups also contributed. At the same time, experiments in collective and self-organized forms of life and work took place that criticized the separation between manual and intellectual labor, between production and reproduction, and attempted to overcome these separations in everyday life. From then on, knowledge production could no longer be discussed as merely a university-specific affair, but also as a speech act and an act of self-assertion beyond the ideological state apparatuses. This perspective can be found in the research conducted by the Birmingham School (CCCS) as well as in the cultural studies of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) on workers' and everyday culture.

Today, studies on subculture, counter-publics, and social movements are part of the university apparatus (e.g. cultural or gender studies). In times of neoliberal educational reforms—

5 Herbert Marcuse, "Über den affirmativen Charakter der Kultur," (1937) in *Schriften*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1979), pp. 166–226.

and in a strange parallel to them—they are being set up at European universities increasingly as advanced qualification courses. However the inclusion of formerly delegitimized knowledge production does not remain uncriticized. At the conference *Cultural Studies: Now and in the Future* in 1990, the American theorist Michele Wallace already called for contemporary cultural producers, who are struggling with the conflicts of high culture in various institutions or with pop cultures and their increasing market orientation, to be included in the academic discourses and their practices.

This position propagates a politics of bringing together knowledge produced at universities with the social, cultural, and political players, instead of using (sub)cultural practices in a speculative fashion as formulas for theorizing. The transgressive, non-institutional knowledge practices and those conducting research along with their subjects of study should be set in a new relation, one that reflects an involvement in power relations as much as it does a participation in cultural and political emancipation movements.

However the critique of objectifying the subject of research or the assumption of a dichotomy between university knowledge and political practice, as well as the demand for including the players on which research is being done all miss the decisive point: the transdisciplinary, social, and collective character of knowledge production on the campus and elsewhere. The "subjects of research" have long since produced relevant knowledge themselves; some come from the university apparatus but have chosen a different career, because "their" issues were not discussed in academia or not reflected upon under the conditions of their social production, with regard to their consequences in everyday life or for political practice. Moreover, social movements such as feminism, the African-American liberation movement, or queer culture have created new contexts of knowledge and their own theoretically relevant and socially active discourses. The inclusion of political and popular debates and players in academia is only one of the many answers to the question as to who, under the prevailing institutional paradigm, participates in what way in producing which kind of knowledge under which circumstances and with which resources.[6] In addition, the building of bridges between (sub)cultures and science still appears to presume that the one side conducts research, while the other predominantly acts (i.e. "makes" politics or culture), without grasping the university practice as a space of action as well.

With the concept of the "plurality of intelligences," Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari described a multitude of knowledge forms as relevant and set them in opposition to the Cartesian dualism of thought and action. This approach is based on the notion that knowledge is produced, represented, and conveyed in a specific as well as general way—in affective, symbolic, societal, and action-oriented forms and not merely in scientific systems. The traditional university-specific concept of knowledge was regarded to a large extent as reductionist. What is important here is Deleuze and Guattari's reference to the production of art that includes various cognitive, technical, and sensory abilities and for this reason is a very special mode of knowledge production.

The art historian Irit Rogoff assumes that contemporary art and visual culture no longer makes available, illustrates,

6 The current European educational policies promote the opposite, because they neither guarantee the knowledge required in the new flexible labor markets—it is instead privatized in often dubious advanced training offers—nor do they provide the time and resources needed to develop social and communicative abilities that today count as qualifications. The knowledge-based economy *corrupts* life and social interaction in a parasitic way.

analyzes, or translates already existing knowledge through other means. Instead, art today is both a genuine mode of research and a means per se for producing knowledge.[7] So beyond the relevant forms of institutional critique, particularly in the field of art and cultural production, a new perspective on social, collective, and transdisciplinary methods has evolved which is also a point of reference for those participating in the 6th Werkleitz Biennale's *Halle School of Common Property*. Even though Rogoff's assumption describes the essential core of the new form of cultural production, it remains too general as it simultaneously obscures the actual context of this development. The paradigm change has not only occurred within art but in a dialogue with social movements, subcultures, and popular cultures and corresponding theoretical debates. After all, art itself is a diversified mode of production ranging from artworks created by individuals to collaborations between artists and cooperation with persons from the most diverse fields of knowledge. In addition, not all players involved in representation are equal in social terms or represented in the same way. Because even if cultural knowledge is produced collectively and socially, it is conveyed in a traditionalist manner via the figure of the individual author. In the shadow of this figure, a practice of collaboration has established itself over the past thirty years in the form of transdisciplinary, temporary groups and self-organized projects that are situated between theoretical, artistic, filmic, curatorial, and activist practices.

Paradigmatic projects like the New York exhibition *If you lived here* at the Dia Art Foundation (1989) opened up the gallery for debates, themes, and groups that formerly had no access, and included them in the joint content-related design.[8] The potential of alternative use of the art space lies in the origin of the institution itself: critical themes are not indiscriminately brought into the gallery; it is rather its character that constitutes

a certain form of knowledge and subjectivity (like the androcentric principle of authorship) in which the critical practice intervenes. Opening up the space of art for other social groups and involving diverse culturally, politically, and academically committed players not only shifts the hierarchy of disciplines but also facilitates new modes of knowledge production, which have been tested especially in feminist art projects since the 1970s. This practice takes up from gender-theoretical debates demands for establishing and empowering non-hetero-normative subject positions as well as questions pertaining to relations of production and collective authorship. In the process, the "white cube" with its artificial and semi-public character and the objectivity of legitimate knowledge are reinterpreted and questioned in the work on the respective object. Existing knowledge is not celebrated in the form of illustration or reconstruction; instead, new theses, methods, and formats are developed in a kind of applied theory and practice.

The alternative utilization of canonized spaces for debates, meetings, workshops, film programs, and community projects

7 Irit Rogoff, "Engendering Terror," in *Geografie und die Politik der Mobilität*, ed. Ursula Biemann (Vienna/Cologne: Generali Foundation and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2003), p. 33. [Editorial note: "Engendering Terror" also appeared in the first BAK Critical Reader, *Concerning War: A Critical Reader*, eds. Maria Hlavajova and Jill Winder (Utrecht/Frankfurt: BAK and Revolver, 2006), pp. 130–161.]

8 The exhibition *If you lived here* was initiated and organized by the American artist Martha Rosler. It can be regarded as a paradigmatic example of a socio-spatial artistic knowledge practice. The artist, who was dedicated in her works to the relationship between public and private, as well as to representation and representability, examined in this exhibition processes of gentrification and homelessness. The gallery was located in a part of Manhattan in which an upgrading of the neighborhood was accompanied by massive expulsion. The project addressed the neighborhood itself and sought to intervene locally in a social process by means of an exhibition. The audience was also assigned a new role, as it was also involved in this process in various ways, either as the new middle class trying to move into this neighborhood or as artists who still had a studio there and had to respond to the social conflicts. Rosler used the gallery not to produce representations of homelessness, but opened the space for self help groups, critical urban planners, and art projects that explicitly intervened in the politics and production of homelessness.

by groups of artists, leftist, anti-racist, and feminist collectives, and consumers has commenced and can be regarded, in the sense of Michel de Certeau, as the attempt to appropriate and redefine hegemonic structures—knowing very well that they will not just disappear. A corresponding transgressive and hybrid theory-practice in the academic field, provided with the appropriate resources, still remains an exception.[9] In contrast to the debates in the cultural and activist field, the restructuring and privatization of the educational system, as well as the notion of knowledge as an economic good of a so-called knowledge-based economy fail to recognize the transgressive dynamics inherent to all knowledge, be it elitist, indigenous, or popular: it changes and spreads through everyday readings, orally, through popular appropriation, and medial reinterpretation. It is altered through misuse and new interpretations, becoming a rumor or a lie; its meaning is increasingly shifted through contextualization or indigenization. Knowledge practices, then, that belong to the readers and not to the authors and the managers of the rights of exploitation produce new knowledge on a daily basis, knowledge that is linked to social relations and engenders new socialities. These forms of worldwide and often local knowledge practices were perhaps the most innovative long-distance runners in the history of knowledge production. In contrast, the fixation on authorship, notation, administration, and the monetary profitability of knowledge, which stands in a specific relation to precisely these forms of knowledge, harbors huge drawbacks that the current neoliberal regime is by no means willing to resolve.

9 For example, projects like Kunstraum Lüneburg, Critical Studies at the Malmö Art Academy, the project department D/O/C/K at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig, or the Institut für Theorie der Gestaltung und Kunst (ith) in Zurich. It is certainly not by chance that activities that conceive research and art production together are starting to establish themselves especially at art academies.

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Summary of *An Unknown Object in Uncountable Dimensions: Visual Arts as Knowledge Production in the Retinal Arena*, a presentation by Sarat Maharaj

During his presentation on the third day of *(a-W) art and wisdom*, Sarat Maharaj, who was a member of the Commission for Documenta XI (Kassel, 2002), approached the possibility of considering the visual arts as a mode of knowledge production that cannot be compared to the knowledge that logical-mathematical models and propositions of the so-called exact sciences provide us with. From a critical perspective, with the didactic methodology that is currently applied in art schools, Maharaj believes that there are three factors that have to be considered in exploring the type of knowledge and learning that is developed around the production and reception of visual artistic practices.

The first of these factors refers to the fact that the type of learning that art propitiates must be differentiated from what generates "economic knowledge." It is equally necessary, according to Maharaj, to bear in mind that present society must not only be considered as an age marked by the dizzying development of new technologies of information and communication, but also as a historic moment in which migratory phenomena—more and more complex, diverse, and intensive—are changing our concept of identity and our relationship with territory. Migratory phenomena make it possible to meet "the other"—strange, different— which causes, in his words, "the binary opposition between the foreign and familiar to break." This break often causes the arrival of the other to be perceived as a sort of diffuse threat to the established order, a fear that is reflected in the deeply connoted terminology that we use to refer to immigration (exile, expatriate, illegal, no papers, deported, returned, etc.).

Finally, Maharaj considers that our approach to the type of knowledge that plastic arts generate must assume that it does not deal with a *retinal* experience (the terminology of Duchamp),

because since the beginning of the twentieth century, most aesthetic creation has incorporated formal and discursive elements that escape from the field of action of the surface of the eye. "Something that contrasts," Maharaj explained, "with the intensive retinalization that contemporary societies have undergone, where the most extensive cultural practices (publicity, TV) have a heavy visual load."

Maharaj pointed out that the etymological origin of the term knowledge derives from the Greek word *gnosis* which, in turn comes from the Sanskrit word *gvana*, the same root as other terms such as genuflection, kneeling as an act of reference, or gnosticism, a primitive Christian current that did not separate the mind from the body (a distinction that Hinduism does not make either). "In *Finnegan's Wake*," Maharaj points out, "James Joyce also describes knowledge as a whole in which mind and body merge, diluting the Cartesian separation between the intellectual and sensory." This is a holistic notion that is shared by the Chilean Buddhist biologist Francisco Varela, authentic pioneer in scientific research on consciousness, who in works such as *El Árbol del Conocimiento* and *The Embodied Mind* combines concepts from the pure sciences with ideas and experiences linked to diverse technologies of introspection (such as yoga or meditation).

From this vision of knowledge as an integral system, Maharaj has started up a working group with his students at Goldsmiths College that observes daily life in Bloomsbury, an emblematic neighborhood of London cultural life (where, among others, Virginia Wolf and T.S. Eliot lived) which, at present, receives a large number of Asian immigrants. The growing immigration and the effects of globalization that this London neighborhood has experienced has made it become a de-localized space, a zone that has lost its original local idiosyncrasy to develop

a multiple, diffuse identity in the process of continual transformation. "Bloomsbury," Maharaj indicates, "has lost the homogeneity that gave it its historical identity to become a hybrid and multicultural scenario, where it is easy to find a Scottish shop, a Bengali restaurant, another with vegetarian food, an establishment for homosexuals, and several fast food stalls in the same street."

But these processes of delocalization are not new, especially in certain zones in England that have historically received many persons from other countries. A clear example is Cambridge, where at the beginning of the twentieth century a self-taught Hindu mathematician from a poor family, Srinivasa Ramanujan, revolutionized academic life on the campus with his extraordinary skill in solving complex operations in logic. Ramanujan, who arrived in Cambridge with the help of the British mathematician G.H. Hardy, assured that the formulas were dictated to him by the goddess Namagiri. "But what strange inspiration," wonders Maharaj, "what mode of non-knowledge did Ramanujan refer to when he spoke about that goddess who dictated the answers? And to what extent has that inspiration not also driven many other mathematicians?"

Faced with the concept of intuition—a term that is usually used traditionally to refer to the possibility of knowing something without going through a logical reasoning process—Maharaj prefers the expression "xeno-episteme." From the combination of the terms "xeno" (which means strange, foreign, other) and "episteme" (which means knowledge), this expression achieves integration of both the idea of specific cognitive production and the search for a type of knowledge that does not avoid contradiction and difference and is not consumed by rational and empirical criteria. Maharaj believes that this new mode of xeno-epistemic knowledge could be identified with the type of

cognitive experience that is articulated in contemporary visual arts (and also drama).

For T.W. Adorno, scientific knowledge has been incapable of approaching the extrinsic sense of words, and the only thing it provides us with is a sort of algorithm of the world, a controlled version of what is real (not a real experience) comparable to the shadows in Plato's cave. According to Adorno (in *Minima Moralia*), concepts are homicides; they murder the life of realities, designing to lock them up in the jail of signs and of codified systems. Maharaj gives another turn of the screw to this unmasking of the homicidal character of knowledge, and speaks of a sort of xeno-cide nature of concepts. That is, he conceives of rational knowledge as a binary structure of thought that is based on the confrontation of opposites (bad versus good, man versus woman, black versus white, compatriot versus foreigner, etc.) and denies the possibility of third vertices that break with the binarity.

It must be kept in mind that since René Descartes, western thought has developed from the distinction and separation between intellect and intuition. Even when some authors have tried to emphasize the limits of rational thought, the academic authority disparages their proposals, arguing that what they are doing is not philosophy or science, but literature or merely fraud. "This is what happened to Henri Bergson," recalls Maharaj, "when he proposed that the intellect, like the cinema, reconstructs reality through fragmentation and editing."

Already in the second half of the twentieth century, the Cartesian separation between mind and body has begun to crumble, and in the sphere of science itself, critical voices that question the supposed neutrality and universality of scientific rationality have multiplied. One of the most incisive and incendiary has

been that of Paul Feyerabend, an Austrian philosopher who in works such as his treatise *Against Method* emphasized that science should consider itself an anarchic activity. For him, if the scientific methodology assumed a certain dose of self-criticism and were more tolerant with the inconsistencies and anomalies that it comes across on its way, it could contribute more effectively to the progress of society. In his debatable proposal of an anarchist (or dadaist) epistemology, Feyerabend sees a cognitive production model in art that can serve as a reference for the development of scientific knowledge, since it incorporates elements of irony and entertainment and is not limited to following logical and rational structures.

The artistic projects of Thomas Hirschhorn would be, according to Maharaj, representative examples of the type of knowledge production that can serve as a model for the application of the anarchist epistemology of Feyerabend. Starting with the works of philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, Antonio Gramsci, and Georges Bataille, Thomas Hirschhorn attempts to make difference visible (the strange, the foreign) with proposals that articulate a plurality of voices and perspectives and incorporate elements of chance and entertainment. In Documenta 11, Hirschhorn went to a marginal neighborhood in Kassel, where immigrants (invisible beings) from forty different countries live, to try to start up a process of collective creation (open, entertaining, and intentionally unorganized) based on the thinking of Bataille. "The project," recalls Sarat Maharaj, "grew and expanded by chance and solicited involvement of the co-authors and of the spectators in a very different way from what usually occurs in art centers and galleries."

At present, the expansion and diversification of migratory processes oblige us to rethink cultural translation not as an extraordinary or exceptional phenomenon, but as something

ordinary and daily. Cooking customs, tourist dynamics, the media industry, or the dizzying expansion of the Internet are different cultural spaces where the continually growing presence of this cultural translation in contemporary society becomes evident. "But when the subject of translation is analyzed," Maharaj warned, "we cannot obviate the great ontological paradox that this human activity contains: it must generate something that is as much as possible like the original source, but if it fully achieves this, it can turn into that original and then it is no longer a translation." Therefore, any translation always has to be different from the original, and although it attempts to produce an effect of similarity and simultaneity, it is articulating a difference.

In a dialogue with the Englishman Richard Hamilton, Duchamp (who had a direct experience of otherness: he was an immigrant to the US) defined translation as a "monster of truth, a crystalline transubstantiation." For Maharaj, this phrase illustrates very well what any translation does: that is, it fabricates a monster that tries to imitate reality. "Furthermore," Maharaj assures, "the religious connotation of the term transubstantiation (which refers to the Christian rite of the Eucharist, by which bread and wine are turned into the body and blood of Christ) call on a mystic dimension (not simply a "non-rational" one but rather "something between the rational and its other") that makes us understand translation as a process of reconstruction (and not merely imitation) in which, at the same time, something of the original reference is lost, elements and meanings are incorporated that create a new reality." The impossibility of the translation being completely identical to its original reference—the "shadow of the untranslatable" in the terminology of Maharaj—confronts us with that which remains outside of rational comprehension and that cannot be approached from a regulated systematic knowledge.

In this sense, Maharaj considers that certain contemporary artistic practices have tried to capture this turbulence of reality ("semi-darkness of the untranslatable") that cannot be trapped by scientific knowledge. This is the case in the video installation *The Whisper Heart* by Toni O'Donell, where the linguistic code is destroyed and a proposal of knowledge that can do without grammatical regulation (similar to dadaism or stream of consciousness in narrative of Joyce) is possible. The liberation of the search for total similarity with the original source and use of syntactic and semantic units can lead to a situation similar to what noise causes (that which is not grammaticalized in the sound system), which Maharaj calls "Absinihilation of Etym," an expression that could be translated as liberation of the atom but with the innuendo that it also contains a play of words with the term etymology.

In the documentary *Out of the Blue* (2002), Zarina Bhimji shows us landscapes and architectures in Uganda where in 1972 General Idi Amin ordered tens of thousands of Asians and Africans to be expelled. The sound is not articulated in a specific narrative or dramatic speech, and the spectator never knows whether he is listening to recordings from the communities that were expelled and massacred, fragments from the radio that report on the genocide, or other types of imprecise "noises." The result is a sort of sound soup filled with interferences, a "degrammaticalized da, da, da" that can evoke both the dadaist movement and certain Hindu chants about cosmic reminiscences, a dissolution of the differences between subject and object promoted by Buddhism or the sound of thunder to which T.S. Eliot refers in his poem *The Waste Land*. "The documentary of Bhimji," Maharaj said toward the end of his presentation, "articulates a syntactic and semantic liberation that neutralizes the rational consciousness and transmits to us an untranslatable experience, a nebulous and unstable knowledge."

This text is a summary of a presentation entitled *An Unknown Object in Uncountable Dimensions: Visual Arts as Knowledge Production in the Retinal Arena*, given by Sarat Maharaj on 12 November 2003 in Seville during the (*a-W*) *art and wisdom* conference. The conference was part of the *arteypensamiento* (artandthinking) project, organized by the International University of Andalusia (UNIA) and appears here with permission of the author and UNIA.

Irit Rogoff
What is a Theorist?

Undone

A theorist is one who has been undone by theory.

Rather than the accumulation of theoretical tools and materials, models of analysis, perspectives, and positions, the work of theory is to unravel the very ground on which it stands. To introduce questions and uncertainties in those places where formerly there was some seeming consensus about what one did and how one went about it. In the context of a question regarding what an artist might be, I would want to raise the question of what a theorist might be to signal how inextricably linked these existences and practices might be. The old boundaries between making and theorizing, historicizing and displaying, criticizing and affirming have long been eroded. Artistic practice is being acknowledged as the production of knowledge and theoretical and curatorial endeavors have taken on a far more experimental and inventive dimension, both existing in the realm of potentiality and possibility rather than that of exclusively material production. The former pragmatic links in which one area "serviced" another have given way to an understanding that we face cultural issues in common and produce cultural insights in common. Instead of "criticism" being an act of judgment addressed to a clear cut object of criticism, we now recognize not just our own imbrication in the object or the cultural moment but also the performative nature of any action or stance we might be taking in relation to it. Now we think of all of these practices as linked in a complex process of knowledge production instead of the earlier separation into creativity and criticism, production and application. If one shares this set of perspectives then one cannot ask the question of "what is an artist?" without asking "what is a theorist?"

The narrative of theoretical unraveling, of being undone is a journey of phases in which the thought we are immersed in is

invalidated. Those moments of silent epiphany in which we have realized that things might not necessarily be so, that there might be a whole other way to think them, moments in which the paradigms we inhabit cease to be self-legitimating and in a flash are revealed to be nothing more than what they are, paradigms. In my own particular case this was a journey from a discipline called art history, via great roads of critical, theoretical study to some other and less disciplined place which for the moment and very provisionally we might call "Visual Culture."

Furthermore, I come to the formations of visual culture from a slightly different perspective of cultural difference, and it is one of the privileges of the culturally displaced that their view is always awkward and askance, never frontally positioned, and often exists in an uneasy relation to dominant paradigms. Initially I came from a long, conventional, and very anti-intellectual training in art history which left me at its end at a complete loss on how to navigate the interstices between who I was, what I did, and the world that I inhabited.

In my own particular case the distance between these three was such that fairly acceptable exercises in stretching and expanding a professional practice to make it accommodate one's concerns seem in retrospect to have not been able to bridge the gaps. Therefore in the first instance my attention was caught by what possibilities there might be for formulating a project not out of a set of given materials or existent categories, but out of what seemed at each historical moment a set of urgent concerns. Roughly speaking these emerged for me as: in the 1980s a concern with gender and sexual difference which resulted in an exploration of feminist epistemologies; in the 1990s a concern with colonialism, race, and cultural difference which resulted in trying to take on the authority of "geography" as a body of knowledge with political implications;

and currently, a concern with questions of democracy and of what modes—parliamentarian and performative—might be open to us to take part in it, which I am currently thinking about as an exploration of participation and of what it means to take part in visual culture beyond the roles it allots us as viewers or listeners. Obviously I am speaking of a long journey of some twenty years now, which has included encounters with, on the one hand, the ways in which global politics constantly reformulate and reformat themselves and on the other, tremendously exciting encounters with critical theory that asserted that things aren't necessarily what they seem and gave me the tools to see through them.

But have no fear, I am not about to rehearse upon you the long march from structuralism to Gilles Deleuze with detours through feminism, psychoanalysis, and colonialism. Instead I am concerned with the dynamics of loss, of giving up, and of moving away and of being without. These dynamics are for me a necessary part of my understanding of visual culture, for whatever it may be it is *not* an accumulative, additive project in which bits of newly discovered perspectives are pasted on to an existing structure, seemingly augmenting and enriching it, seemingly making it acceptable to the pressures of the times. In my own thinking it is not possible to divorce the notion of *criticality*, which I see as foundational for visual culture, from the processes of exiting bodies of knowledge and leaving behind theoretical models of analysis and doing without certain allegiances. "Criticality" as I perceive it is precisely in the operations of recognizing the limitations of one's thought, for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information rather than rethinking a structure. It seems to me that within the space of a relatively short period we have been able to move from criticism to critique to criticality—from finding fault, to examining the underlying assumptions that might allow

something to appear as a convincing logic, to operating from an uncertain ground which, while building on critique, wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions, allocating blames. In the project of "criticism" we are mainly preoccupied with the application of values and judgments, operating from a barely acknowledged Humanist index of measure sustained in turn by naturalized beliefs and disavowed interests. The project of "critique," which negated that of "criticism" through numerous layers of poststructuralist theory and the linked spheres of sexual difference and postcolonialism, has served as an extraordinary examination of all of the assumptions and naturalized values and thought structures that have sustained the inherited truth claims of knowledge.

Critique, in all of its myriad complexities, has allowed us to unveil, uncover, and critically reexamine the convincing logics and operations of such truth claims. However for all of its mighty critical apparatus and its immense and continuing value, critique has sustained a certain external knowingness, a certain ability to look in from the outside and unravel and examine and expose that which had seemingly lay hidden within the folds of structured knowledge. The ever-increasing emphasis on allocating blames and pointing out elisions and injustices has created alliances between critique and such political projects as "identity politics" and diminished the complex potentiality of occupying culture through a set of productive dualities and ambiguities. One is after all always at fault; this is a permanent and ongoing condition, since every year we become aware of a new and hitherto unrealized perspective which illuminates further internal cultural injustices. The more current phase of cultural theory, which I am calling *criticality* (perhaps not the best term but the one I have at my disposal for the moment), is taking shape through an emphasis

on the present, of living out a situation, of understanding culture as a series of effects rather than of causes, of the possibilities of actualizing some of its potential rather than revealing its faults. Obviously influenced by the work of Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Giorgio Agamben, by their undoing of the dichotomies of "insides" and "outsides" through numerous emergent categories such as rhizomatics, folds, singularities, etc., which collapse such binaries and replace them with a complex multi-inhabitation, criticality is therefore connected in my mind with risk, with a cultural inhabitation that performatively acknowledges what it is risking without yet fully being able to articulate it. In criticality we have that double occupation in which we are both fully armed with the knowledges of critique, able to analyze and unveil while at the same time sharing and living out the very conditions which we are able to see through. As such we live out a duality that requires at the same time both an analytical mode and a demand to produce new subjectivities that acknowledge that we are what Hannah Arendt has termed "fellow sufferers" of the very conditions we are critically examining.

Without

I have called this section *Without* because for some time now I have been very interested in this condition as a starting point for embarking on new thought and new research projects. It seems to me to indicate a state in which we acknowledge that we had some navigational principles and some models of critical analysis to hand, but that they no longer quite serve us in relation to a new and emergent conjunction of problems. And more than simply acknowledge them we pay them the respect due by recognizing what strong supports these models of analysis had been to us, of how aware we are of their lack. The events of September 11 are for me a very actual example for the state I am trying to articulate. In the context of critical thought

these events, dreadful and tragic, came in the wake of a slowly growing realization that the twin models of postcolonial theory on the one hand and discourses of globalization on the other, were no longer equal to the task of trying to think through intercultural relations on a global scale. Suddenly we were faced with what I have called elsewhere "geography in real time." Real time is the moment in which some nebulous half-acknowledged entity, previously no more than a vague unease or a partially avowed recognition, crashes into our own reality by becoming a reality itself. The events of September 11 were an instance of suddenly being forced to live in real time. But with hindsight, many of us will confess to having been uneasy for quite a while now; G8 summit meetings in Seattle, Gothenburg, and Genoa disrupted by increasingly violent protests, the Intifada in Palestine and the Israeli response spiraling out of control, evermore exasperated spokespersons for international aid agencies trying to warn of impending disaster, cities in which NGOs are the only infrastructure still in place, open discussion of the consequences of slavery and racial violence across the globe taking place in Durban. Therefore intellectuals who have been thinking about geopolitical power relations through their cultural manifestations found themselves for a moment in a state of being "without." The old ordering of the world between colonizers and colonized was not sufficient to come to terms and analyze these events, nor was the more recent ordering viewed through the logics of multinational corporations and free trade agreements and Internet blurrings of national and cultural boundaries. Had we not been through those models of analysis, postcolonialism and globalization, we would not have understood our state of simultaneously knowing and being unable to know, which characterizes the condition of being without.

But to return to a more detailed characterization of my understanding of visual culture as a state of being without, one must pose the following question: what is it that has been given up in the shift from the investigative and the analytical to the performative and the participatory? Most people would say that the source of greatest insecurity is the absence of a solid sense of history that anchors and legitimates everything. I myself do not feel that since I have always seen it as an amalgam of tropes and narrative structures. Historical research often contains fascinating materials but rarely actually explains anything at the level at which I want it explained, as dissonances and disruptions and trivial performances which say as much about us as they do about the outside world. The answer lies, to my mind at least, in substituting the historical specificity of that being studied with the historical specificity of the he/she/they doing the studying. In order to affect such a shift without falling prey to endless anecdotal and autobiographical ruminations, which stipulate experience as a basis for knowledge, we attempt to read each culture through other, often hostile and competitive cultural narratives. This process of continuous translation and negotiation is often exhausting in its denial of a fixed and firm position, but it does allow us to shift the burden of specificity from the material to the reader or viewer, and prevents us from the dangers of complete dislocation. Perhaps it might even help us to understand that at the very moment in which historical specificity can provide liberation and political strength to some of the dispossessed, it also imprisons others within an old binary structure that no longer reflects the conditions and realities of their current existence. The Deleuze-inspired replacement of working with a model of a culture of *singularity* (singular to a logic of its own organization) rather than one of *specificity* (specific to one particular location) has been of great importance to this discussion.

Certainly what is also given up is the security of a discipline and with it all the comforts of a coherent identity, of having clear sources for funding applications, of knowing which subject panel your work should be sent to for assessment. Even the simple question of knowing what to answer when you are asked at a party, "And what do you do?," which always elicits panic stricken silences and particularly lame answers. Now I am bolder and more confident and look them straight in the eye and say "Visual Culture" and wait for *them* to look away in embarrassment when they clearly have not a clue what I am talking about. Consider a piece by Lithuanian artist Arturas Raila called *The Girl is Innocent*, which simply tracked on video a group of professors at the Vilnius Art Academy doing end of the year critiques of the students' work and assigning final grades.[1] In the simplest form this piece rehearsed the ways in which aesthetics and ideologies are linked at moments of crisis and demise to a point that none of the participants, who had made their name in a previous era, had any principles by which to navigate the current moment. They spoke of their loss, insecurity, confusion—one bearded middle-aged professor said in a sorrow-choked voice, "and now we can't even speak of beauty." The piece did not assign progressive or retrograde positions to the protagonists and did not rehearse all the obvious political arguments around communism versus democracy, but simply staged the confusion inherent around teaching, judging, and locating art within dramatically redefined paradigms.

What else has been given up? More problematic to give up has been the very notion of a methodology, of the certainty of an approach, of a problematic, of a set of analytical frames that we can use to tackle whatever issue of problematic we are preoccupied with. It was relatively easy to give up notions of history or notions of disciplines because we had inherited them and had to either accept or agitate to make changes

within them, but methodology was something we struggled for and invested in its operations all of our hopes for producing an intellectually broader, a politically more inclusive, and a subjectively more imaginative field of activity. I have for some time been interested in space and spatialization and have been very excited about what is commonly called "the discourse on space" and particularly in those discussions which seemed able to unravel some less familiar manifestations of both sexual and cultural difference. However recently and to my surprise I understood that it is not space as such that interests me but rather what it has allowed me to perceive about the dynamics and performances of ambivalence and of disavowal in public sphere culture.

Which leads me to understand that perhaps the thorniest of the forsaken elements has been the notion of the subject of the work one is doing. Increasingly I have become wary of occupying areas that have an agreed upon and sanctioned subject for their activities. In the wake of all the posts we have read and internalized, I understand that both the consensus around a subject (for example that we all understand each other perfectly when we say "I am working on the representation of female subjectivity in domestic interior paintings at the turn of the century," or the ways in which everyone hummed reassuringly when someone said they were working on the "The Body"), and secondly the assumptions and systems and boundaries that sustain its very existence in the world as a subject. Instead I think we are in that phase when all of the work goes into the constitution of a subject for the work. We have a set of concerns, of issues, and we have a set of nagging doubts about what lies behind the manifest, and we have a certain investigative

1 Arturas Raila, *The Girl is Innocent* (1999) in *Borderline Syndrome – Energies of Defence* (exhibition catalog) Manifesta 3 – European Biennial of Contemporary Art, ed. Igor Zabel (Ljubljana: Cankarjev dom, Cultural and Congress Centre, 2000), pp. 142–143.

freedom and we set those to work and wait to see what comes up. So many of our PhD supervisions now dance around the inconvenience of what the dissertation is about, of what its subject is, of what we might name it when it finally comes into the full exploration of its concerns. Increasingly we seem to interview potential research students for the motivation that underlies their project and not for what they want to do. The less they seem certain of what precisely their project is, the more we seem to like them, but the less likely they are to receive Arts and Humanities Research Council funding unless we can rally to repackage all of that uncertainty into a set of plausible questions, methods, and assertions and perhaps the work is really in this translation between the twin poles of doubt and certainty.

So what then, where is the work located? Perhaps that is the wrong question, perhaps a "where" intimates a fixed and known location where we might conceivably go and look for the work and actually find it. Perhaps better is the notion of how does the work function and what does it produce, of what effects it has in the world rather than of what existing meanings it uncovers.

Again and again in recent years I have found myself dealing with a particular question, critically analyzing the contexts and conditions of its emergence, the assumptions on which it might rest and the languages in which its is articulated. But having gone through all of these analytical steps I would find myself at a loss to imagine the next step: the one that would go beyond critical analysis into the possible imagining of an alternative formulation, an actual signification of that "disrupted-through-analysis" cultural phenomenon. On occasion, certain encounters with conceptual art works, which are taking up the same issues I am preoccupied with, would provide a bridge to the

next step for thought: an actual cultural making, not an analysis, of a condition I perceived of theoretically. They address how culture is perceived when it is viewed from the back door or at an oblique angle, through miscomprehension and mistranslation, and what it means to be in a position of culturally longing for that which is historically and politically forbidden to you.

My current theoretical articulations locate the artists' work within a set of cultural debates in which the visual arts rarely find representation. It assumes the form of a practice, of a "writing with" an artist's work rather than about it, a dehierarchization of the question of whether the artist, the critic, or the historian, the advertising copy writer or the commercial sponsor, the studio or the director, have the final word in determining the meaning of an work in visual culture.

Unfitting

When we began to theorize visual culture as an entity in the mid-1990s, it was very much geared towards an amalgam of all of the "withouts" that I have just tried to elaborate here. In a sense what prompted that enterprise, and I am speaking in the context of the United States, where I was working at the time, was a recognition shared by many of us that it was simply no longer productive to continue a battle with the strictures of art history as a discipline and with all the efforts to force it to expand its boundaries. Boundaries, small or large, limited or expanded, are in the end just that: setting the limits of the possible. What was required instead would be an open and fluid space in which numerous forms of experimental conjunctions between ideas, politics, images, and effects might take place. Furthermore in this space neither materials nor methodologies would dominate and the endless taxonomy of constitutive components that characterizes so-called interdisciplinarity could be dispensed with. Depending on the problematic one was investigating or

thinking through, one would bring into the discussion anything that seemed important or illuminating without having to align it with the histories of the disciplines it might have been culled from. Here we return to the argument of singularity versus specificity I mentioned earlier, and to the Deleuzian view of matter as being self-organizing rather than filling up previously structured organizing principles.

Since then a certain amount of institutionalization has inevitably taken place in the field: departments and programs, readers and monographs, journals and teaching curriculums are proliferating. Fair enough, and since I am at the heart of all this and know full well that no one actually knows what visual culture is in that simple form of definition, what we were experiencing was perhaps a slightly more organized form of that same hoped for fluidity. However more recently I have been hearing about a certain kind of policing of what visual culture is—apparently it is this not that, can be defined in this manner not that one, can be spoken by these but not by those. In short, the processes of territorializtion have begun and in their wake will probably trail the entire gamut of subject fixing and method valorizing, of inclusions and exclusions, which we had tried to escape from a few years ago in the aim of fixing our attention on what needs to be thought rather than on arguing with what had already been thought. I would have wanted to reiterate my belief that the work of *unfitting* ourselves is as complex, as rigorous, and as important as the work that goes into fitting within a disciplinary paradigm or that of expanding it in order to accommodate our concerns. That it shares much with Derridean deconstruction though its is perhaps less preoccupied with shifting consciousness and is more focused on enactments and cultural effects.

Most recently we have all, in our different countries and institutions and practices, had to think about the institutionalization

of what we do. About the newly emergent names and titles and so called "fields'" which we inhabit and of how they might interface both with each other as well as with funding structures and job descriptions, as witnessed by my friend the artist ShuLea Chang, who has now begun to call herself a "conceptualizer" to the great envy of all of us.

These thoughts are for me an unwelcome diversion, though obviously a necessary one in the circumstances, for what I had really wanted to think about here was—some years on from writing texts that had tried to characterize the study of visual culture—what it was like to actually be in visual culture, working in it and living it out rather than to talk about its coming into being. To me the most surprising thing that has happened recently has been a shift in the direction I am facing. At the beginnings I had described earlier, I was firmly facing the academy and intellectual work, they were the frames of references through which I arrived at art works and they were the arenas in which the work circulated, albeit with many hiccups, and with which it was in dialogue. Suddenly I find myself facing the art world, by which I mean not simply that this is where the work is gaining response but is spurring something in response. The process is still much the same, a lot of eclectic reading, going to talks and exhibitions, and finally writing. The effects however are very different. I have not had enough time to fully understand or think about the implications of this shift but it does seem to me to have something to do with the shift to a performative phase of cultural work in which meaning *takes place*, takes place in the present rather than is excavated for. Where its operations are not through signifying processes or through entering a symbolic order, which I suppose are the hallmarks of academic intellectual work, but through forms of enactment. Through languages and modes of writing that focus on address rather than on what Roland Barthes called the filial operations of

texts. As Peggy Phelan says, "I am also interested in the ways in which the performative *inspires* new terms; I think that's one of the *performances* the term performativity enacts." Perhaps what I am trying to say is that it is my understanding of a response that has changed. Perhaps it has moved from response as affirmation of what you have said, which is what happens when someone quotes your work, to response perceived as the spur to make something as yet nonexistent.

Practicing

It is these conjunctions of what has been undone and unravelled that allow us now to think in terms of "practicing" and of "practicing theory" in particular. Whereas in the past we set credence by a notion of "theory informed practice," a practice in which numerous theoretical models could be seen to have informed the very premises of what was being engaged with as well as the language that was being put forth for that engagement. Now we might entertain the notion of "practice driven theory," of theoretical surges whose drive and impetus might have come from the experience of art and other practices, with their permissions to start from elsewhere, to not rehearse great swaths of prior knowledge, to invent viewing positions and contextual fictions. In the process we have not only claimed an entire alternative set of sites for knowledge, i.e. that it could be gleaned from many previously unexpected "elsewheres," but also greatly expanded the limits of what "knowledge" might be in the first place and how it might be arrived at.

I remember being in the anonymously grand corridors and ballrooms of some great New York Hilton, the site of the annual CAA (College Art Association) general conference. There were at least 10,000 artists and art historians milling about; giving papers, making their name, claiming their place, interviewing for jobs (for this is North America's job market in these fields).

There was a lot of anxiety in the air and little mirth. I ran into my friend the artist Simon Leung, whose face was crinkled in glee—apparently a bit of a catastrophe had taken place and he recounted the story: a panel he was supposed to be on, which was entitled "Siting China," and which aimed at producing a series of perspectives from which China could be seen, had through the mistake of some hapless copy editor turned into a panel called "Sitting China." Simon was in full hilarity mode and he said, "Can you just imagine one billion bottoms hitting the ground, the ungodly thump of it?" I agreed that it was very funny, but what was he going to do about his paper and the panel? Within minutes, he had spun out a theory, some thought of through previous questions he has posed before, some of it mobilized on the spur of the moment—a theory about the sitting position of squatting. When the Buddhists arrived in China they apparently brought with them chairs and the "elevated" position of sitting in a chair, far above the ground, a repose mediated by a device, by a piece of furniture. In contrast "squatting" became an indigenous pose, marked by class and by a far less mediated relation of the body to the ground. Squatting then, is the bodily enactment of a critical mode of resistance and of a set of ties to indigenous culture, a place and a pose from which to be critical. Within a moment, the mishap of the mistaken title "Sitting China" had turned into a set of epistemological possibilities—a kind of contingency epistemology, a production of knowledge on the hoof.

I have a vague feeling that this episode did eventually turn into a fully fledged piece of work; researched, written out, and published, but I continue to cherish the moment of that encounter, the experience of seeing it come about fleetingly in response to the challenge of a mistaken title. It was an inspired moment of "practicing theory"—someone fully armed with great quantities of critical theory and cultural politics, who could use

a momentary disturbance to reshape that knowledge into a potent intervention. At the same time the incident did exactly what Phelan spoke of in the previously mentioned "performances of the term *performativity*." In the situation described, CAA is performing and knowledge is performing and the performance of giving a talk within the structures of institutional knowledge is performing, and a long history of being a reader of post-colonialism and an investigator of cross cultural misperceptions is performing–and some fleeting and uncapturable mode of knowing, only there and only then, has come into being.

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Natascha Sadr Haghighian and Ashley Hunt
Representations of the Erased[1]

"Vision requires instruments of vision. . . . An optics is a politics of positioning." Donna Haraway

Natascha Sadr Haghighian Michel Foucault says that visibility is a scheme that defines what can be seen. Avery F. Gordon describes in her book *Ghostly Matters* how visibility is a complex system of permissions and prohibitions punctuated alternately by apparitions and hysterical blindness.

How do we confront the scheme or system when talking from an invisible position like the one of the undocumented or the imprisoned?

Ashley Hunt Both of these descriptions of visibility refer to a social optics, which of course does not correspond to what can be seen by the physical eye but to what can be "seen" by a subject, or recognized by discourses such as history or politics. Foucault in this sense theorizes a prescriptive system that regulates the visible—what can be visible and how, conditioning the subject to see or not see, to recognize and misrecognize—classifying objects as legible or illegible to the institutions and discourses. Similarly, Gordon's framework theorizes sociological manifestations, subjectivities, and imaginations that emerge from such a schematic, and its manifestation as a blindness which is ultimately haunted by what it disavows, or what appears too discrete or small to be touched by power.

1 Ashley Hunt's maps theorize how prisoners in a domestic context, and refugees in an "extra-national" context, compose a growing body of stateless persons, upon whose erasure and marginalization global affluence and neoliberal capitalism are built. In conversation with Natascha Sadr Haghighian he talks about images that create invisibilities and about how theorizing interrelationships and dynamics between states and individuals, ideas, laws, organizations, histories, forces, and processes can help visualize these invisibilities.

When we talk about positions like the undocumented or imprisoned and theorize how one should act or speak, I find it necessary to make it clear that I am not personally speaking from such a position, and think it important to not collapse the precarious positions of artists and cultural workers in with "the invisible," as much as they may be in solidarity.

That said, included in your question is the assumption that it is important to "have a voice" (where "voice" is a metaphor and mode of inclusion/exclusion similar to "visibility"), and some people mistrust this goal, thinking it better to remain invisible: to find power in the undetectable, flying below the radar, refusing to engage the language or visual scheme used by a given regime to structure our spaces and interactions. From this perspective I would say that one shouldn't worry about such schemes—you're not invisible to yourself, to your family or community, and you can strengthen these spheres, organize and live your life, all without waiting for other people who "don't see you" to give you permission.

But if confronted with violence and abuse or driving toward a collective goal of empowerment, what can one do to confront such a scheme or system? First, it should be understood that this scheme is not an end in itself, but is a mode of exclusion, domination, or exploitation; and it is dynamic, always adjusting and disguising itself. As important is as it is for all people to be visualized on their own terms and heard in their own words, it is equally important that what is produced in response be dynamic as well. This struggle should not be an end in itself, but should be a tactic. We have to produce our own images, ones that do not fit into the scheme the current regime has prepared for us, but should also distinguish between the images we create for ourselves and those we transmit to others: one is nurturing and social,

producing the collective identity required for mutuality and cooperation; the other is responsive and political. Both are important.

Ultimately we're talking about representations, though, and we are not theorizing a pure or truthful representation as opposed to a false one (this would misunderstand the nature of representations); we are countering one set of representations claiming truth with another claim to truth (inevitably, equally a representation). And is this a struggle for visibility? Or is it a struggle for power—in which case, visibility is a strategy that can serve or betray you, regardless of intentions and ownership.

NSH There is a desire to create a vision that counts on the autonomy of the image towards "the gaze." An autonomous migration, for example, would have a different representation than one that is evoked by the gaze onto migration. What does this vision look like?

I am referring to the lecture *And They Leave the Image* held by Brigitta Kuster and Vassilis Tsianos at the *Beyond Belonging* conference this year. They look at the representation of Europe's borders in documentary film. Specifically they are looking for strategies of image and narration that visualize what is seen as "border," "migration," and at the same time sketch out a different approach to reflect the gaze and its object. A search for an optics that expects the autonomy of migration in respect to how it is perceived and doesn't subordinate it under the regime of a gaze that determines and defines what and who its object is. They show excerpts of films that in their eyes try to develop a language of image and narration beyond reproducing the gaze.

AH My first response is that this is a very naive idea. As we know, there is no image that can be inherently autonomous and mean the same thing to everyone in every context. But perhaps this is not what is meant in the question. I do see an autonomy as a possibility if we take it as a principle, an axiom that guides cultural production and organization. And then we have to be precise about what we mean by the gaze. Whose gaze is it and how does it distort images (of migration and immigrants for example), and what can an image do to a gaze that by all accounts exists—at least in part—outside the image? A gaze is an abstraction of a phenomenon that does not exist in some unified metaphysical form outside of the multiple particular instances of its performance and enactment. If we accept a gaze as an asymmetrical (in terms of power) field of visual transaction that demands a certain overdetermination of what appears before us, then we don't just want to contradict its expectation or desire; it is prepared to cope with that already. What we must aim for is the disruption of what confirms that gaze, the subjectivity it assumes and sustains, the symbolic asymmetry which it counts on recognizing. In other words, to try to be autonomous in this sense would be to exceed or step outside the dyads and binaries that hold appearances hostage and constitute the current visual regime altogether, rendering that gaze conspicuous and superfluous. It does not mean "being seen" physically, but overcoming a systematic erasure in a way the system does not anticipate. (And here is the importance of dynamism and autonomy being an axiom rather than a goal: how long until the system adjusts and erases or vilifies a new appearance? How long before that strategic appearance becomes orthodox and conservative in itself?)

The massive immigrants' rights protests that took place in the US this past spring of 2006, for example, were extremely effective, and temporarily inspired a discourse around migration that was somewhat autonomous from what the nationalist and racial gaze of the state and media had previously achieved through its images and categories of knowledge. This was not because the protests revealed the *opposite* of how immigrants had been stereotyped, merely putting "a human face" onto the cold statistics and dehumanizing political rhetoric, for example, and swapping a good image for a bad one. Rather, I believe their effect was to collapse such categories altogether and render them inert. The images that had existed of Latino immigration were inherently homogenous, claiming an "immigrant" and "immigration experience" that were singular ("the immigrants!"). Yet the rallies were extremely heterogeneous in their composition, and as such they were completely heterogeneous to the dyad of representation (good immigrant/bad immigrant; citizen = good, immigrant = bad) that held the center of the political debate. It was as if it scrambled a circuit of power which no longer had a category to put them all in, for on the one hand there was this massive unification of all these millions of people in the streets, with a political intelligence and extremely smart organization; while on the other, there were millions of unique, singular individuals with particular histories who were, in their diversity, irreducible to any neat, totalizing categorization or stereotype. It totally screwed up the politicians, the logic of their arguments and their constituency calculations, wreaking havoc on the visual terrain of their hegemonic strivings.

A way that this would contribute to a different "vision," as your question began, is by shifting the power relations of the field of visibility in the first place, which necessarily

alters the gaze. The success of these protests didn't take place so much by taking power, although flexing the muscle of constituency was definitely a part of it. It existed more in the demonstrators taking millions of pictures of themselves and posting them to websites and emailing them and making t-shirts, which in turn inspired even more family and friends to come out for the next protest, while also producing a social continuity between these events and personal histories and Latino history generally in the US, on the level of historical social movement. They were joyful and indignant and it didn't matter that there were a bunch of fucking idiots on TV calling them terrorists who want to overthrow the US, it just didn't matter. (I should say that this fight is far from over and there are a lot of lunatics here patrolling and building fences—(mostly old white men with authority complexes who miss the good old days)—and there's a lot of struggling against them to do; but the goal of making this extreme point of view political common sense has yet to happen—yet.)

NSH My questions concern the contradiction of illegality and visibility, on the one hand, and on the other hand, strategies of visualization as putting something on the map. How do we put our demands and needs on the map and/or on the agenda?

One strategy that is often used is victimization. It seems a powerful strategy that often comes with strong imagery, either visually or rhetorically. Which map are we addressing with this strategy, meaning which map will we appear on, which map are we invoking ?

AH It seems to me the map you're referring to here (the "map" we would supposedly want to put our claims onto) is that of accepted, legitimized political concerns or issues; the "road map," you might say, for what political energies,

attention, and capital will be directed towards. This relates to your questions around visibility in the sense that something which falls or is kept "off the map" is, in essence, not seen. It doesn't mean that it isn't a real issue or claim that needs addressing, but it means that it is treated as such, by politicians and media alike: it won't even qualify as "news," and it allows politicians to not even have to take a position one way or the other—it's been left out of the question at hand altogether so it doesn't have to be addressed. This, I would say, is a different field of the visual in terms of depth and qualities than the type we've been discussing so far, which is more deeply cultural and psychological in scope. Although it's a similar operation, to equate the two would suppose that representative politics as we know it is the only possible avenue for political change, and would also suppose that the field of vision produced by the state and pseudo-state apparatuses (such as the media) is the total social field of vision of a society at a moment in history. This is what people in positions of power would like us to think, but it can never be true. In activism, visibility on the agenda of parliament or the front page of a newspaper should not be confused with the ultimate measure of success, but it is dangerous to assume that this means it is a useless or illegitimate arena to engage or within which to struggle; it is also an important and powerful site for seeking change and demanding visibility and voice, and if neglected, a site of domination.

What does it take to get onto this map? The first thing it takes is to be considered a valuable constituency for government or media (from big business to campaign donors to an influential block of voters for the former; in terms of reader- and viewership, the "customers" of the news for the latter). Aside from this we should realize that this map we're talking

about exists on the order of the spectacle, so what it requires to gain access is the same as what it requires to capture the attention of the spectacle. Lots of activists are getting wise to this and deploy clever or spectacular strategies, and of course, a "demonstration" is by definition one such tactic, though I think it is less a tactic of demonstrating disagreement than a theatrics of revolt by taking over the streets (which is easier said than done). And of course, to return to your question, a habitual way to accomplish this is by displaying images that are common to the vocabulary of the spectacle, such as starving and victimized poor people and people of color in far away places. But while this is presumed to humanize people, I disagree. I think such imagery in its ubiquitous form tends to victimize people more, still denying them what Gordon has referred to as "complex personhood." Sympathy may be effective and sometimes necessary, but it is not empathy, and it is terribly close to pity.

NSH I think that your documentary *Corrections*[1] very acutely negotiates the power relations that are produced by the visual and narrative representation of slavery and its successor, the prison-industrial complex. I don't know if you agree, but in my view the maps are another approach to representing such a complex field of representations between what is talked about, by whom, and whom it talks to. All of these things combined create an image somehow.

Are the Prison Maps[2]/World Maps[3] visualizations of hidden information or rather an attempt at emancipation from the system of visibility? How do they work?

AH As visualizations, they are attempts to theorize interrelationships and dynamics between states and individuals, ideas, laws, organizations, histories, forces, and processes,

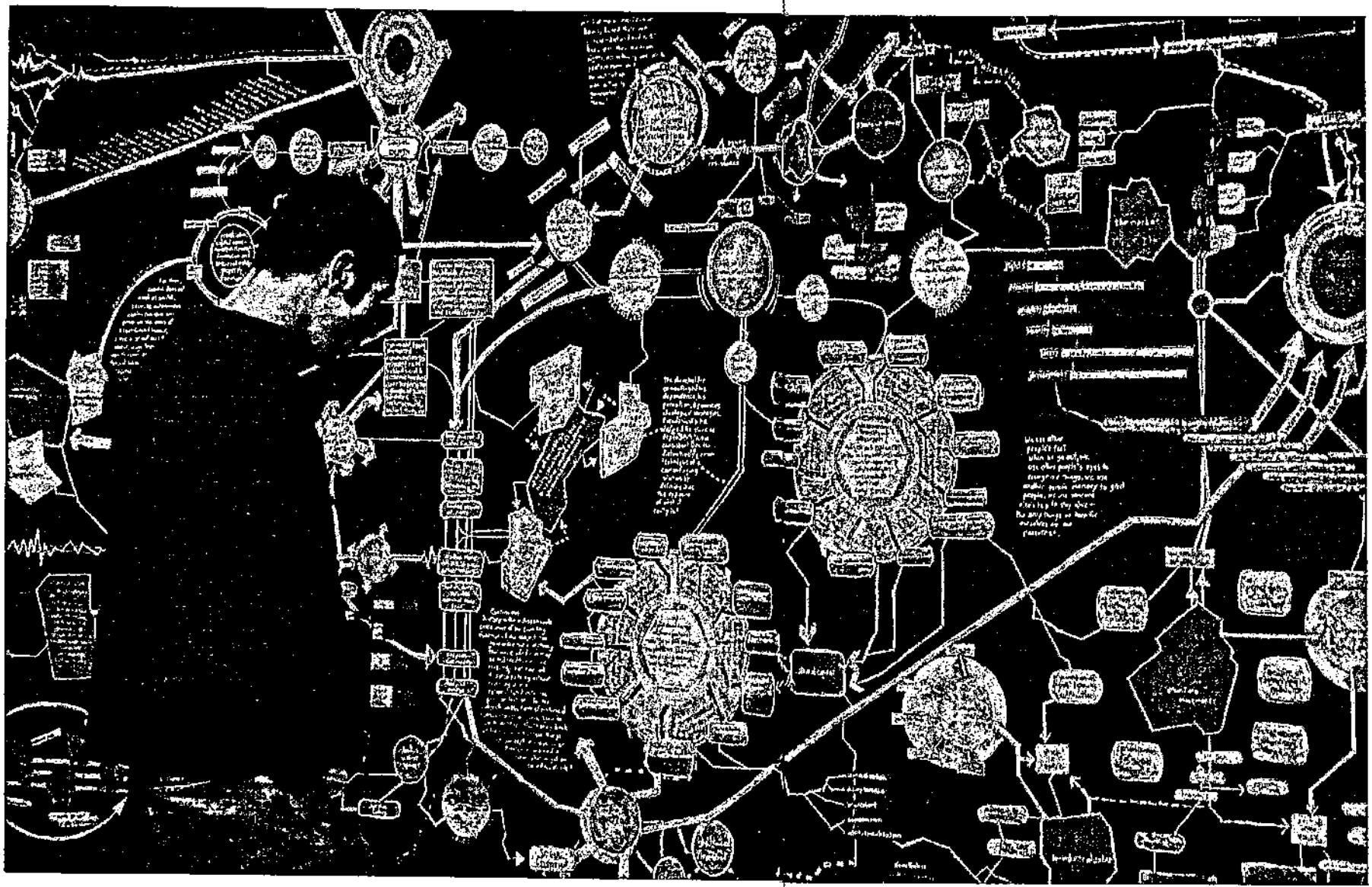
one in the context of what we call the prison-industrial complex and the other in the field we call globalization. The Prison Maps theorize (one in historical terms, the other in terms of the cast of characters that compose the prison-industrial complex) how desire for a growing prison system is produced and continues to multiply. The globalization map (*A World Map: In Which We See...*), theorizes how prisoners in a domestic context, and refugees in an "extra-national" context, compose a growing body of stateless persons, upon whose erasure and subjugation global affluence and neoliberal capitalism are built. I understand these maps as diagrams that might make discourse and action possible. Gilles Deleuze had a really fabulous formulation of the relationship between theory and practice, which I would like to pretend is my own:

> From the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to encounter obstacles, walls, and blockages which require its relay by another type of discourse (it is through this other discourse that it eventually passes to a different domain). Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.[4]

Moving from that, understanding practice not as a mere application of theory but as a relay moving it past blockages, and theory as a relay which moves practice past its own limits, both of these maps began by identifying fields of knowledge and action within activism that I saw as limited in

1 See http://www.correctionsproject.com.
2 See http://prisonmaps.com.
3 See *A World Map: In Which We See...* at http://ashleyhuntwork.net.
4 "Intellectuals and Power," a conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (1972), in *Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Culture*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

Ashley Hunt, *A World Map: In Which We See...*, 2005, chalk and pastel on blackboard, installation view, Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago, 2005



their specificity. I understand great historical movements as moments when multiple isolated and discrete practices are unified and mobilized beyond what each could have imagined by some unifying analysis or historical event which collectivizes a set of claims or common identity across them. Similarly, maps enable practice and the unifying of discrete practices and spaces, so I thought they'd be interesting to try.

In the anti-prison movement here in the US, many groups work on isolated issues and have little time to spend investigating the larger contexts of which these isolated issues are each but one symptom. The Prison Maps were an attempt to visualize this larger analysis. Similarly with the World Map, I noticed that while the anti-prison movement in the US operates on principles that are shared with anti-globalization work, at the same time the anti-prison movement—which is a nationally localized discourse—is effectively segregated from movements that are global in scope. The closest bridge I could identify between the two was the Third World liberation discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, and while it is still relevant, I felt this needed to be re-theorized. The World Map became an attempt to bridge this nationally limited discourse with a global one by way of a discourse on citizenship, a theoretical model trying to act as a "relay" between two spheres of practice, which could perhaps engender another sphere of practice altogether.

NSH How do we erase the images that create invisibilities? The TV series *COPS* produces a vision that renders the shown suspects representatives of a criminal counterpart and a threat to civil society. At the same time it renders the social and political and biopolitical causes of what is defined as crime invisible. It produces a gaze that supports a policy of segregation and oppression. In *Corrections*, you confront the image that a

TV series like *COPS* evokes and affirms with the political, social, and economic elements that are involved in the production of "the criminal" and "the prisoner." How do the Prison Maps relate to this powerful image production? What strategies lead to the format of mapping?

AH The thing I like most about this question is your phrase, "images that create invisibilities," as this asserts invisibility as a positive thing, as a process of erasure, rather than as "nothing there." It is similar in spirit to Foucault's assertion that repression does not negate but is in fact productive: productive of subjectivities and discourses and institutions and built environments. In relation to imprisonment and crime, this means the production of prisoners (a position which the bodies of citizens are presented to fill); it produces prisons and camps, it produces jobs for those who work in and police these structures, it produces economy, and it produces complex discourses that naturalize crime and strip complex series of behaviors, actions, and reactions of their reasons for being—as Richard Millhouse Nixon said, embracing one such strain of criminology in the 1960s, it's time we stop talking about "root causes"; crime is about bad people who do bad things. Who are these people? What makes them fundamentally bad? Why are some children who fight "misguided" or "troubled," and other children (usually darker-skinned and poorer) "bad," "criminals waiting to happen?" Here we find multiple erasures, including the historical facts of racism, poverty, and political disenfranchisement—which cannot in the political arena be deduced from the figure of crime—as a productive operation; and similar mechanisms operate around immigration, not to mention discourses on terrorism. I believe you're correct in your question that this produces a gaze, or rather a viewer, a subject position, that will presume the necessity of segregation and state

violence; those in power who benefit from such phenomena for any of a number of ugly reasons will of course feed into such discourse and erasure with vitriol, and *COPS* (a TV show created by a Texas police department as a public relations maneuver) is one such method of feeding the discourse and glossing it with entertainment value.

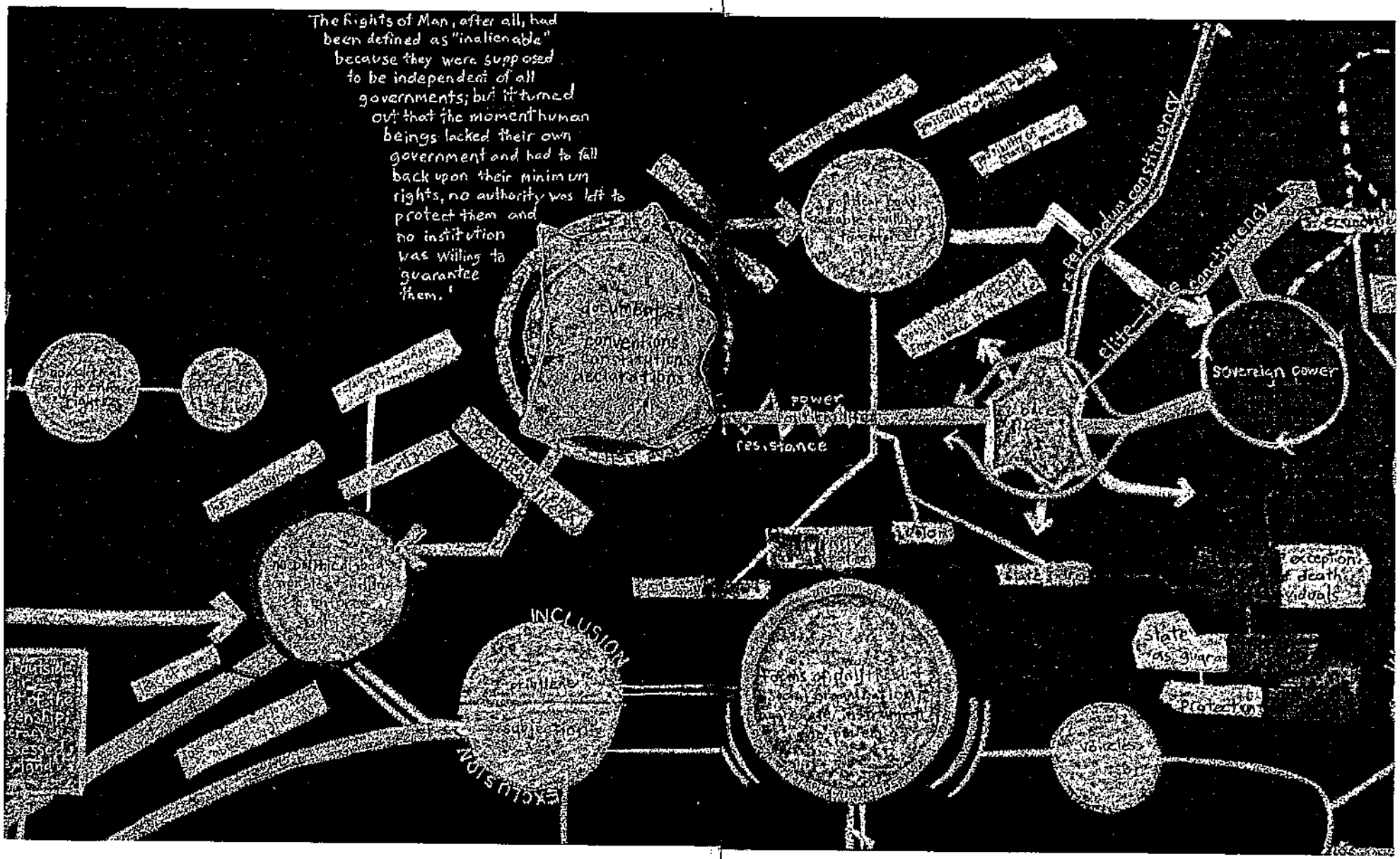
How do we counter such images? As I stated in the previous question, I believe this requires self-image production, but not only on the same order of *COPS* and political demagoguery, as these remain on the order of spectacle, where you're stuck with the figure of "the criminal." I am most interested in focusing on new representations of what has been effaced from discourse, while researching how the effaced had existed within discourses previously. The Prison Maps function in this way, countering such erasures, while also rejecting the images that within the spectacular already signify an overdetermined figure of crime. I was attracted to using mapping here in part by a geekish attraction to maps, but I also thought their didactic and pedagogical form might inspire new representation from others as well, rather than serving as final, ultimate representation in themselves.

NSH Do maps sometimes also cause problems for you?

AH Yes. Maps are generally too totalizing, proposing full knowledge and discouraging more critical and creative thought. A good map, on the other hand, folds in on itself, betrays you, and reveals itself as a construction—including most of all the point of view from which it organizes and produces a visual field. Although the Prison Maps suggest a total explanation, they are too overwhelming to allow a total perspective, and having two of them suggests multiple ways of mapping the prison-industrial complex. The World Map on the other hand actually folds in on itself structurally, as there is no entry or exit point to the map, a number of the things mapped reappear in multiple places, and no way through the map allows the viewer to arrive at any stable point of certainty. Both maps are designed not to produce certainty but to produce the desire to talk more, to keep looking, to begin researching and acting, and ultimately get off the map.

NSH There is a map published by the Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen (Niedersachsen Council on Refugees and Exiles) that maps out the official, semi-legal, and illegal camps in and around Europe. It was produced in relation to the debate in Germany and in Europe in general about opening camps outside of Europe in order to stop people from coming to Europe. This initiative was officially justified with a humanitarian approach because so many people die each year while trying to cross the Mediterranean. A publication by the Flüchtlingsrat and an accompanying map wanted to show that these camps already exist. A strategy of counter-information. To what does the map respond and how can we respond to the map? That to me seemed a crucial question as I intensely studied the map and afterwards felt displaced and unable to locate myself or something I can relate to on the map. A map that was produced out of a practice of solidarity, taking sides, positioning and locating, I suppose, at the same time created an alienating feeling of being lost and of the finger hurting wherever you put it on the map. How can we make counter-information productive and speak from a position that tries to emancipate from hegemonic arguments and visualizations like statistics, numbers, maps, and other impersonal representations that make it impossible to propose a vision without gaze? Did you have these questions or problems while working on the Prison Maps/World Maps? It seems to me that they use

Ashley Hunt, *A World Map: In Which We See...*,
2005, chalk and pastel on blackboard, detail



counter-information in a different way and are able to create a liberating sphere of finding your own way through the thoughts and connections of thoughts.

AH I had an interesting conversation with Ruthie Gilmore in 2000, where we discussed the implications of the number of prisoners in the US having exceeded 2 million (now it is close to 2.2 million and still growing). One question was whether we thought 2 million prisoners sounded like a lot to the public. Some were arguing that "well, people don't have the perspective to know how many 2 million really is—*if they only knew* how many that really is they'd be outraged!" To this notion, Ruthie replied (and I'm paraphrasing): I think people know exactly how many 2 million really is, but they're not outraged because they know it's 75 percent people of color, and that's what people expect to happen to people of color. In other words, if a public is already predisposed to see black people as criminal, then they're not going to be shocked when seeing them treated like criminals, whether that's presented to them through booming prison statistics or images of poor people manhandled on *COPS*—it's completely normal to see that. Unfortunately, what I think the Flüchtlingsrat map does not account for is the fact of this predisposition, its existence, its structure, the ways it is reproduced and what it conditions in terms of visibility and vision.

Inasmuch as misinformation is used to manipulate publics into doing and thinking nasty things, the Flüchtlingsrat map—as counter-information—is an important type of production; it is important to contradict misinformation and to be skillful and strategic about it, since politicians aren't merely ignorant of the damage they do, they just don't care until they are forced to pretend to care, and we have to know how to force them into that position. On this level, this map may have been very important.

But on a broader level (which is perhaps unfair to the Flüchtlingsrat map), as we discussed before, getting such counter-information "onto the map" means speaking on the order of the spectacle, and this is a different order of the visual than the one we've been concentrating on. The order of the spectacle is also where we find the metaphor of the light bulb (*if only people really knew* the truth, then they would agree, see the light, and do the right thing). But this is a serious error! The over-simplicity of the light bulb strategy, I think, leads to a lot of ineffective activism, self-congratulations, and missed opportunities.

What this does not account for is indeed the gaze that the spectacle proliferates and induces. But liberating counter-information from any gaze is precisely the wrong direction in my opinion. So long as we are talking about human beings we cannot eliminate the problem of the gaze, but we do need to dig into its construction and the character of its desire. We need to strategize control of the gaze, reconfigure its point of view, consider the subjectivity we want to inspire and the action it would seek. Counter-information by itself is meaningless, it's just more information, after all; it is meaningful in relation to a point of view, a perspective that can recognize it and do something with it.

So when I look at the Flüchtlingsrat map, I ask: what does this map request of me? Where does it place me? Where does it allow me to travel and how does it tell me I can or cannot move? I also ask: What is it hiding from me, and how does it limit my vision? If this is a map, then like all maps, it assumes a point of view, a "you are here" through which you see and assume its perspective. As I stated above, in its form and address, this map assumes the perspective of the state, and (if that isn't alienating enough) I would say that

this perspective is inherently one of war. That is, the prerogatives of the state as visualized in a map are the prerogatives of war: to protect the integrity of territory, to plot out assets and liabilities, strengths and weaknesses, to identify and counter invasion and insurgency, and to strategize. (Maps are one of the theorizing tools that enable the practice of war.) Perhaps the disorientation and immobilization you felt came from trying to use this map to "see," when from the perspective it offered you could see only groupings of dehumanized bodies in the abstract form of numbers and statistics, as the state would see them, as it would calculate them among acceptable or unacceptable costs in a war. I think that it is from this position, this vantage point for the user of the map, that such an emancipation, as you put it, of this information might be possible—only I do not think of it as an emancipation so much as a re-inscription, re-inscribing it into other regimes of the visible that we create.

A friend of mine reminded me yesterday of an account of the visible by Alain Badiou, wherein he claims it's not a matter of being able to see or things being visible, but a matter of *how* we can see them. It's like a theory of an obedience of images, where everything can be seen, but we are conditioned in how we are capable of or allowed to see, of course, but what I found interesting in his model was that when something insists upon appearing differently than we have been prepared to see it, it appears as *violence*. One of the curators who included the World Map in an exhibition in Baltimore remarked to me many times that it would make people really mad, and when I asked who, she would say, "capitalists!" It seemed funny that a mapping could make people mad, especially people in power! But she seemed to think that it meant the map was on the right track, not so harmless, I guess. In this way, perhaps what Badiou means

is an epistemological violence, a violence against those stable positions and categories that order our vision and support the hierarchies of the day. I think this is a good strategy.

This conversation first appeared in *No Matter How Bright the Light, the Crossing Occurs at Night*, edited by Anselm Franke, Natascha Sadr Haghighian, et al. (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2006) and appears here with permission of the authors.

Simon Sheikh

Talk Value: Cultural Industry and the Knowledge Economy

"There are bodies of knowledge that are independent of the sciences (which are neither their historical prototypes, nor their practical by-products), but there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms." Michel Foucault[1]

"The most important form of fixed capital is now the knowledge stored in, and instantly available from, information technologies, and the most important form of labour power is brainpower. Between brainpower and fixed capital – in other words, between living knowledge and machine-knowledge – there is no longer any distinct boundary. Post-Fordist capitalism has taken over Stalin's formula: 'man is the most precious capital'." Andre Gorz[2]

In the invitation to participate in *Concerning "Knowledge Production" (Practices in Contemporary Art)* that I received from BAK, the term "knowledge production" was seen in the context of art practice, or rather, institutional practice tied to art: that is, in the current proliferation of symposia, lectures, panels, and other public talking sessions within art institutions that formerly were almost entirely devoted to the display of art objects. This indicates a change in institutional policies, and perhaps discourses on art, moving from purely exhibition making and the presentation, circulation, and affirmation of knowledge and discipline this may entail, to discussions and discourses on art practice (and its discourses), which may or may not be directly connected to the objects on display in the actual galleries. Seen in historical terms, this emergence of "talk value"—to purposely borrow a term from business—apparently indicates a paradigmatic shift in the discourses in and around art production itself. Here I focus on these paradigmatic shifts (within what is

1 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 183.

2 André Gorz, *Reclaiming Work – Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (London: Polity Press, 1997), p. 6.

also known as the post-Fordist era), and try to draw a connection between them, as well as some conclusions from this bind vis-à-vis artistic production and institutional policies.

First of all, I certainly agree with the premise articulated by BAK, that we have witnessed a growth in public discussions in art institutions as well as alternative spaces, to the extent that being a panelist is almost a possible occupation, besides curatorial and academic work, for instance. Such public talks can even be viewed as a genre (such as the artist's talk), almost independent from object- and exhibition making, understood in terms of the performative, and be employed as an actual site for artistic intervention: a move from a discourse on aesthetics to the aesthetics of discourse, or rather, the staging of discourse.[3] Secondly, the growth of public talks and meetings that are not (only) tied to exhibition display should not just be seen in the light of the development of artistic and institutional practice and discourse, roughly since the 1960s, but also in relation to a partial shift in the role of the art institution as a public space—a shift that has on the one hand been brought about by changes in artistic practice in the aforementioned period, by the efforts of institutional critique especially, but also in societal and political changes occurring elsewhere, which has led to different politicization as well as commercialization of the art institution and its public role.

Since the 1960s, with the advent of minimal sculpture, Conceptual art and site-specific practices, art institutions have had to take the double process of the dematerialization of the art object on the one hand *and* the so-called expanded field of art practices on the other, into account. This in turn has led to the establishment of new public platforms and formats—not just exhibition venues, but also the production of exhibitions in different types of venues, as well as the creation of venues that

are not primarily for exhibition.[4] This crucial shift, which cannot be emphasized enough, is best described as "art conquering space" by art historian Jean-François Chevrier, who has written of how this conquest has facilitated a shift in emphasis from the production and display of art objects to what he calls "public things."[5] Whereas the object stands in relation to objectivity, and thus apart from the subject, the thing cannot be reduced to a single relation, or type of relation. Additionally, the introduction of the term "public" means that this thing is placed in a relation to the many, that its significations are uncertain in the sense that it is open for discussion. This shift also entails, naturally, different notions of communicative possibilities and methods for the artwork, where neither its form, context, nor spectator is fixed or stable: such relations must be constantly (re)negotiated, and, ultimately, conceived in notions of publics or public spheres. This shows how notions of audience, the dialogical, modes of address, and conception(s) of the public sphere(s) have become the important points in our orientation, and what this entails in form of ethics and politics.

Words such as *audiences*, *experiences*, and *differences* naturally also smack of market research and public relations

3 We can now talk of a new type of public intellectual, namely the art theorist, who is somewhat different from the art historian, and as such not necessarily regularly employed by an academic institution or as a curator of exhibitions, but who makes his or her living from writing, naturally, usually not so well paid, and then, a little more substantially from being on panels. Also the artist's talk, or being an artist on a panel can involve notions of performance—the obvious, simply performing the artist figure, eccentric and mysterious, for example, or the well-trodden path of the drunken macho painter, etc. This performance serves as the primary medium and strategy of the artist, perhaps introduced by Robert Morris in his famous impersonation of Gombrich in the early 1960s, and seen today among a large number of artists—in the different personas and strategies employed by Andrea Fraser or the Atlas Group, to name but two prominent examples—where this performance is not a vehicle supported or guaranteeing the artistic oeuvre, but rather an integral part of the oeuvre itself.

4 Here one can point to the seminal Depot, an art institution exclusively dedicated to the discourses around art, culture, and politics, founded in the early 1990s.

5 See Jean-François Chevrier's take on the cultural products of one crucial year of the 1960s, *The Year 1967: From Art Objects to Public Things* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997).

management, and in fact point to the other major shift in the public role(s) of art institutions and in the mediation between artist, artistic production, and reception. For a cultural industry, as well as for the currently prevalent neoliberal governmentality, replacing publics with markets, communities with segments, and potentialities with products are the new points of orientation. These demands are implemented by degree from funding and governmental bodies onto art institutions (indeed any public institution). As sociologist Ulf Wuggenig has repeatedly pointed out, the managerial critique of institutions has had far more fundamental effects on art institutions than artistic critique from conceptual art practices such as institutional critique. However, this "marketability," or market ideology, if you will, has also been presaged within the art world, especially from the conceptual circle. Writing about the same period as Chevrier, who focused on the crucial year 1967, Alex Alberro has recently supplied us with a poignant revisionist history of Conceptual art and its relations to the new, post-Fordist ways of working and marketing industry.[6] Alberro analyzes the important role of curator/dealer Seth Siegelaub and how he forged connections between the corporate world, the self-image of the new ad men, *and* the dematerialized art works of Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner, et al. It is his contention that the materials, language, and publicity were shared by the two fields—talk value becoming sign value, we could say.

We can then, perhaps, speak of a linguistic turn, meaning that language and (inter)textuality have become increasingly privileged and important in art practice, the staging of the discourses around art, the aesthetization of discourse, and the new knowledge-based industries such as marketing, PR, and services.[7] Similarly, and also simultaneously, as art has become dematerialized and expanded, labor itself has done the same, and production has shifted towards a cultural industry and the

so-called knowledge economy. This is indeed reminiscent of Felix Guattari's writings about a semiotization of capital and of production.[8] This notion is crucial for two reasons: both in terms of description *and* articulation. Or, to use other terms, analysis and synthesis.

Guattari obviously takes his cue from the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, turning his famous idea of the subconscious being structured like a language onto the logic of capital, its expansions and subjectivizations, and claiming that capital is (like) a language. Accounting, measuring, and the stock exchange are all linguistic effects, as is the automatization and machinic assemblage of the production and labor process. This notion of semiotization is also a way of describing labor becoming immaterial (and the subsequent dematerialization of value). Guattari's linguistic turn brings about metaphors of grammar and structure, obviously, but perhaps also notions of counter-narrative, incoherent speech, gibberish, lying, and *detournément*—maybe even silence, muting. That is, in the usage of language also lies resistance.

The linguistic turn can also be found in theories of post-Fordism proper, such as the writings of Paolo Virno, who sees postindustrial production as the development of capital that has included "within itself linguistic experience as such."[9] That is, as a process without a necessary end product, but rather

6 See Alex Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2003).

7 Interestingly, two of the figures connected to the so-called second wave of institutional critique, curator/theorist Helmut Draxler and artist Andrea Fraser attempted a reconfiguration of critical artistic practice vis-à-vis institutions and publics through the employment of the term "service," and an analogy with the service industry. See their contribution "Services," in *Games, Fights, Collaborations*, eds. Beatrice von Bismarck and Ulf Wuggenig (Lüneburg: Cantz, 1996), pp. 196–197.

8 See Félix Guattari, "Capital as the Integral of Power Formations," in *Soft Subversions* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), p. 202.

9 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 56.

endless communication and language games, which requires virtuosity and skills of a performative, and thus political, kind from the worker, rather than technical or bodily knowledge. This also means that features such as cooperation and informality, traditionally at the background of industrial work, now move to the foreground—from the assembly line to the project team:

> Virtuosity becomes labor for the masses with the onset of a culture industry. It is here that the virtuoso begins to punch a time card. Within the culture industry, in fact, activity without an end product, that is to say, communicative activity which has itself as an end, is a distinctive, central, and necessary element. But, exactly for this reason, it is above all within the culture industry that the structure of wage labor has overlapped with that of political action.[10]

Political action has to be understood in terms of work itself here; that is work without an end product, albeit not without products, where the evaluation and thus remuneration of this work cannot be measured in the hours spent producing objects, as was, argued Marx, the case in the industrial era of capital. Here, Virno uses the example of the peasant versus the industrial worker versus the cultural worker (or entrepreneur . . .). Where the peasant is awarded for producing something from nothing (growing food from the bare earth), and the worker is paid for his ability to transform one thing into another (raw materials into usable items), the cultural worker's work can only be evaluated by his or her progress in the field. There is no product to show how skillful a priest or a journalist are in convincing their audience or consumers, so instead they must be evaluated for aptitudes and skills of a political kind, based on how capable they are of advancing within the system: the quality of the priest can only be seen in him becoming a bishop, in the journalist becoming an editor, and so on. Thus it is

careerism and power brokering that are at stake. The parallels to the art world are only too obvious. How else to decide who the best artists or curators are? By the number of people they have convinced? Or, rather, by the institutions in which they have shown, the titles and awards they have been granted, and so on? I believe the latter to be the case; how else can we account for the need for endless CVs and bios in every catalog or application?

However, as Virno remarks, this cultural mode of production is not only a postindustrial sector in itself, but has become the norm: "The intermingling of virtuosity, politics, and labor has extended everywhere."[11] We can thus speak of an industry of communication, where the artist figure (as well as the curator) is a role model for contemporary production, rather than a counter model. Or, to put it another way, what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have termed the "artistic critique" of capital has been integrated into capital itself; virtuosity, creativity, performativity, and so on are the basis of this production and knowledge itself is a type of commodity.[12] These are the characteristics of what can be termed the knowledge economy.

In the knowledge economy, education plays an important role, not just as a commodity in and of itself, but also as a measure of constant deskilling and redistribution of labor power. Indeed, politicians in the current merger between neoliberal hegemony and the maintenance of the (national) welfare state constantly talk about lifelong education as a new mode of being. This can be translated as constant subjectification into language as economy (or, to use Virno's terms, into performativity, virtuosity,

10 Ibid.

11 See Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005), especially the chapter "The Test of the Artistic Critique," pp. 419–482.

12 Virno, p. 59.

general intellect, and the political.) Seen in this light, myriad issues call for reexamination including: the educational role of art institutions, such as exhibition spaces; the role of artistic production in the knowledge economy; the corollaries between Conceptual art and immaterial labor; and the links between knowledge and discipline.

Historically, exhibition making has been closely related to strategies of discipline and Enlightenment ideals, not as a contradiction or dialectic, but rather as a simultaneous move in the making of the "new" bourgeois subject of reason in Europe in the nineteenth century. Exhibition making marked not only a display and division of knowledge, power, and spectatorship, but also the production of a public, a nation. The bourgeois class attempted to universalize its views and visions through rational argument rather than by decree. The bourgeois museum and its curatorial techniques could thus not express its power (only) through discipline, but also had to have an educational and pedagogical approach, present in the articulations of the artworks, the models of display of the objects, the spatial layout, and the overall architecture. It had to situate a viewing subject that not only felt subjected to knowledge, but was also represented through the mode of address involved in the curatorial technique. In order for the mode of address to be effectively constitutive of its subjects, the exhibition and museum had to address *and* represent at the same time.

The cultural theorist Tony Bennett has aptly termed these spatial and discursive techniques of the curator "the exhibitionary complex" as a means of describing the complex assemblage of architecture, display, collections, and *publicness* that characterize the field of institutions, exhibition making, and curating. Drawing on the writings on discourse by Michel Foucault, Bennett has analyzed the historical genesis of the

(bourgeois) museum and its installment of relations of power and knowledge through its dual role, or double articulation, of simultaneously being a disciplinary and educational space:

> The exhibitionary complex was also a response to the problem of order, but one which worked differently in seeking to transform that problem into one of culture – a question of winning hearts as well as the disciplining and training of bodies. As such, its constituent institutions reversed the orientations of the disciplinary apparatuses in seeking to render the forces and principles of order visible to the populace – transformed, here, into a people, a citizenry – rather than vice versa. [. . .] Yet, ideally, they sought also to allow the people to know and thence to regulate themselves; to become, in seeing themselves from the side of power, both the subjects and objects of knowledge, knowing power and what power knows, and knowing themselves as (ideally) known by power, interiorizing its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance and, hence, self-regulation.[13]

Whereas the "strictly" disciplinary institutions (in a Foucauldian sense), such as schools, prisons, factories, and so on, tried to manage the population through direct inflictions of order onto the actual bodies, thus altering behavior, the exhibitionary complex added persuasion to coercion. Exhibitions were meant to please as well as to teach, and as such needed to involve the spectator in an economy of desire as well as in relations of power and knowledge. Similarly, exhibition spaces (and educational facilities) today attempt to produce publics by calling communities to order, and displaying knowledge.

13 Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 84.

And, as I have argued elsewhere, they do this as much through entertainment as through enlightenment or discipline.[14] Despite the changed public role, institutions still represent a body of knowledge, and any changes in the mediation and display of this knowledge, such as the current focus on talk value would indicate, are the results of changes in the discursive practice that circumscribes this knowledge.

Knowledge is, in the words of Foucault, " . . .that of which one can speak in a discursive practice," and, " . . .also the space in which the subject may take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse," as well as, " . . . the field of coordination and subordination of statements in which concepts appear, and are defined, applied and transformed," and finally, " . . .defined by the possibilities of use and appropriation offered by discourse."[15] Obviously, it is not difficult to understand the figure of the speaker-as-performer in this context, at once being in a language that gives validity to the performer's speech act, as well as speaking in a way and about objects that can be known by this language, and thus always already guaranteeing this language its supremacy. So when speaking about knowledge production within art (or economy), one cannot separate it from how it is produced, what it excludes and negates in order to produce, and how it is formed by discourse. Foucault concludes, "there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice." Thus despite whatever experimental and innovative metaphors for knowledge production are employed within current art speak, or, for that matter, business talk: talk value is also sign value.[16]

Furthermore, there is the relation between *the will to knowledge* and *the will to truth*, as Foucault puts it, since the production of truth always requires an alteration of knowledge and its institutions.[17] Knowledge is thus not truth, but an instrument of

discourse, and as such is subordinate, servile, and dependent. Here, Foucault refers to the Nietzschean rather than Aristotelian notion of knowledge. Where Aristotle sees a link between sensation and pleasure in the production of knowledge, Nietzsche sees knowledge not as a natural instinct, but as an invention, which comes about through an ambiguous mixture of pain and pleasure. Knowledge always hides its subconscious (fear, desire, impulse, etc.), and it is in the clash of these disparate instincts that knowledge is produced rather than through harmony and a naturalist notion of cause and effect. And if knowledge professes any truth, it is "through the action of a primordial and renewed falsification that establishes the distinction between the true and the untrue."[18] Interest, or even ideology, thus precedes the production of knowledge and conditions its scope and its alterations. How then, to account for changes in the discursive formations, such as in the case of artistic presentation and production? Foucault writes:

> The transformation of a discursive practice is tied to a whole, often quite complex set of modifications which may occur either outside of it (in the forms of production, in the social relations, in the political institutions), or within it (the techniques for determining objects, in the refinement and adjustment of concepts, the accumulation of data), or alongside it (in other discursive practices).[19]

If applied to the field of art (and thus, I am afraid, art history), we can see the changes beyond general shifts in production and

14 See my article, "The Trouble with Institutions, or, Art and Its Publics," in *Art and Its Institutions*, ed. Nina Möntmann (London: BDP, 2006), pp. 142–149.
15 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 182–183.
16 Ibid.
17 Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power* (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. 152.
18 Michel Foucault, "The Will to Knowledge," in *Ethics – Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997), p. 14.
19 Foucault, *Ethics*, p. 12.

consumption in terms of dematerialized and expanded art practices, in addition to the number of wide ranging transformations in other academic disciplines, the changes in political economy, and national and sacred re-territorializations. In contemporary art practices these shifts include: a certain openness or expansiveness with regard to its objects of knowledge, if not discursive formations; an interdisciplinary approach where almost anything can be considered an art object in the appropriate context, and where more than ever before there is work being produced within an expanded praxis, intervening in several fields other than the traditional art sphere, touching upon such areas as architecture and design, but also philosophy, sociology, politics, biology, science, and so on. The field of art has become—in short—a field of possibilities, of exchange and comparative analysis. It has become a field for alternatives, proposals and models, and can, crucially, act as a cross field, an intermediary between different fields, modes of perception, and thinking, as well as between very different positions and subjectivities. Art thus has a very privileged and crucial, if impermanent, position and potential in contemporary society. But it is crucial in its very slippage, in that it cannot hold its ground as a discipline or institutional place. It is not a matter of the politicization of art, but rather of the culturalization of politics, in the sense that Virno suggested.

Perhaps it is also in this context that we should view the emergence of terminology like "knowledge production" and "artistic research" in both art education and exhibition making. We are dealing with a transferal of terms, since we are not just talking about "research" as such, as in other fields, but with the prefix "artistic" added; that is, something additional and specific to the field of art. One must thus inevitably ask what kinds of practices do *not* involve artistic research? What practices are privileged, and which are marginalized or even excluded?

Does research function as a different notion of artistic practice(s) or merely a different wording, providing a validation process and contextualization that can mold and place artistic work within university structures of knowledge and learning, as well as within the aforementioned advancements in cultural work?

Often, but not always, in such dematerialized, post-conceptual and, perhaps more accurately termed, re-contextualized art practices, there is of course a notion of research invoked. Research has even, to some extent, superceded studio practice. Artists are increasingly researching projects, not only to make site-specific works, but also time- and content-specific works. Here, form follows function, and the materialization of the work is decided upon different parameters than in historical studio practice. It is clear that this interdisciplinary approach stands in opposition to a traditional division of art practices into particular genres, mediums, or indeed disciplines. In order to address the situation that contemporary artists, or cultural producers, face we cannot rest on the pillars of tradition, neither within institutions, art production, or methods of teaching. On the contrary, traditions seem quite counter-productive to our current endeavor: the assessment of new skills and tools for a re-contextualized art practice. So, if we view art production as knowledge production rather than formal production, we will have to develop and define a different set of properties and parameters for discussion, production, and evaluation. And when we focus on art as a place "where things can happen" rather than a thing "that is in the world" we will see how an engagement between art production and critical theory becomes necessary, and that education itself is a multifaceted interdisciplinary field that moves in many spaces as opposed to staying within one mode of production or form. And any change that goes beyond the knowable must engage itself with discursive formations, with truth procedures and thus with how we can change political

institutions, ways of doing and knowing—how we know rather than simply what we know or do not know.

In a sense, the notion of the cultural producer, a contemporary artist figure, must be seen as complicit with the later developments in administration, politics, and capital within the emergence of the knowledge industry. Artists function as a sort of social avant-garde, on the forefront of the risk society and the horizon of immaterial laborers. When it comes to knowledge, art institutions and universities are often mere teaching machines, reproducers rather than producers of knowledge and thinking, which is why we should not maintain their structures while transforming their products. Rather, we should learn from those structures as spaces of experience, as discursive spaces, and simultaneously remain critical of the implementation of its productive features, maintaining a notion of *un*productive time and space within exhibition venues. We have to move beyond knowledge production into what we can term *spaces for thinking*.

Thinking is, after all, not equivalent to knowledge. Whereas knowledge is circulated and maintained through a number of normative practices—disciplines as it were—thinking is here meant to imply networks of indiscipline, lines of flight, and utopian questionings. Naturally, knowledge has great emancipatory potentials, as we know from Marxism through psychoanalysis, but knowledge, in the sense of being what you know, what you have learned, is also a limitation: something that holds you back, that inscribes you within tradition, within certain parameters of the possible. It can delimit the realm of what it is possible to think, possible to imagine—artistically, politically, sexually, and socially. Secondly, the notion of knowledge production implies a certain placement of thinking, of ideas, within the present knowledge economy, i.e. the dematerialized production of current

post-Fordist capitalism. And here we can see the interest of capital to become visible in the current push for standardization of (art) education and its measurability, and for the molding of artistic work into the formats of learning and research. There is a direct corollary between the dematerialization of the art object, and thus its potential (if only partial) exodus from the commodity form and thus disappearance from the market system, and the institutional re-inscription and validation of such practices as artistic research and thus knowledge as an economic commodity.

What we need to develop, through institutions and self-institutionalization, are ways of thinking that can contribute to a different score, to different imaginaries, to ways that attempt to contest the capitalization of time through a thinking that is unproductive rather than productive and commodifiable. What *this* work, for lack of a better term, entails is another matter that will have to be elaborated elsewhere. For now, the following will have to suffice. It is a quote from Alain Badiou's attempt at a manifesto for affirmationist art: "It is better to do nothing than to work formally toward making visible what the West declares to exist."[20]

20 Alain Badiou, "Third Sketch of a Manifesto of Affirmationist Art," in *Polemics* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 148.

Contributors

Matthew Buckingham (born 1963) is an artist who works in the media of film, video, writing, drawing, and print. He studied film production and film studies, holds a Master's degree in Fine Art from Bard College, and participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York. Buckingham has also participated in numerous artist residency programs worldwide, most recently at Artpace in San Antonio. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Matthew Buckingham*, Index, Stockholm, 2008; *Play the Story*, Camden Arts Centre, London/FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon/Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines (2007–2008); *Matthew Buckingham – Everything Has a Name*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2007; *Time Lines*, Kunstverein und Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen, 2005; and *Currents 94: Matthew Buckingham*, St. Louis Art Museum, 2005. Recent group exhibitions include: *Mapping the City*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2007; *Messages from the Unseen* (with Joachim Koester), Lunds Konsthall, Lund, 2006; and *Post No Bills*, White Columns, New York, 2005. Buckingham lives and works in New York.

Copenhagen Free University (2001–2007) was an artist-run institution, founded by Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen, dedicated to the production of critical consciousness and poetic language. For more information see: www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk.

Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), founded in 1987 by Steve Kurtz and Steven Barnes (among others), is a collective of internationally recognized artists of various specializations dedicated to exploring the intersections between art, technology, radical politics, and critical theory. CAE is engaged in both contemporary politics and media culture, using tactical media strategies to reveal particular socio-political contexts, raise awareness of a range of social issues, and expose the authoritarian underpinnings of global capital and western democracy. Most recently their work has been directed towards providing the general public with awareness and understanding of issues related to biotechnology. CAE's artworks and films have been exhibited and screened worldwide in exhibitions and festivals including: AV Festival, Newcastle, 2006; Whitney Biennial, New York, 2006; *The Culture of Fear*, Halle 14, Leipzig, 2006; and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2006. Recent publications include: *Molecular Invasion* (2002) and *Marching Plague* (2006).

Clémentine Deliss (born 1960) is an independent curator and Director of Future Academy at Edinburgh College of Art. She studied art in Vienna and holds a PhD from the University of London. Deliss currently runs Randolph Cliff, a new artist's residency in Edinburgh established with Charles Asprey, Edinburgh College of Art (eca), and the National Galleries of Scotland. She is also the 2008 Curator of the Paul Klee Sommerakademie. Since 1996 Deliss has produced the writers' and artists' organ *Metronome*, publishing in Dakar, Berlin, Basel, Frankfurt, Vienna, Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Paris, London, Oregon, and Tokyo. *Metronome*, which presents individual discourses that highlight the circulation of information between contemporary artists and writers, has been launched at the Dakar and Venice biennales; the Kunsthalle Basel, Basel; DAAD, Berlin; documenta X and documenta 12, Kassel; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; and Kandada/CommandN gallery, Tokyo (www.metronomepress.com). Deliss lives and works in London.

Joachim Koester (born 1962) is an artist who studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. His work, in media including photography, video, and writing, explores the boundaries between documentary and fiction, between the known and the forgotten. Koester has participated in numerous exhibitions worldwide and is a nominee for the 2008 Hugo Boss Prize. Recent exhibitions include: *Tarantism & Pit Music*, Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen, 2008; 8th Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, 2007; *Numerous Incidents of Indefinite Outcome*, Extra City, Antwerp, 2007; *Prophets of Deceit*, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, 2006; *The Magic Mirror of John Dee*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2006; and Danish Pavilion (with Gitte Villesen, Peter Land, Ann Lislegaard & Eva Koch), 51st Venice Biennale, Venice, 2005. Koester lives and works in New York.

Sven Lütticken (born 1971) is an art critic, editor, and writer who teaches modern and contemporary Art History at VU University Amsterdam. Previously, he was editor of the journal *De Witte Raaf* from 2000 till 2004. Lütticken has written extensively on the central role of historical theory in contemporary art and media as well as curated various exhibitions. His writing has appeared in magazines and journals such as *Jong Holland*, *Artforum*, *New Left Review*, and *Texte zur Kunst*. He published *Secret Publicity. Essays on contemporary art* in 2005 and is currently researching and writing a book on contemporary art, idolatry, and iconoclasm. Recent curatorial projects include: *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*, Witte de With, Rotterdam (2005) and *In This Colony*, Kunstfort Vijfhuizen, Vijfhuizen (2005). Lütticken lives and works in Amsterdam.

Sarat Maharaj (born 1951) is an eminent art theorist and art historian who is Professor of Art and Art Theory at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His research covers a diverse range of issues related to cultural translation and globalization as well as artists such as Richard Hamilton, Marcel Duchamp, and James Joyce. He has held visiting professorships and fellowships at many institutions including Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht; Humboldt University, Berlin; Malmö Art Academy, Malmö; and Lund University, Lund. Author of key texts such as "Xeno-epistemics: Makeshift Kit for Sounding Visual Art as Knowledge Production" (2002) and "Monster of Veracity, a Crystalline Transubstantiation: Typotranslating the Green Box" (1996), Maharaj's writings, curatorial projects, and presentations appear all over the world. Curatorial projects include: co-curator, Guangzhou Triennial, Guangzhou, 2008; *Knowledge Lab*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2005; co-curator, Documenta 11, Kassel, 2002; and co-curator (with Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk), *retinal.optical. visual.conceptual . . .*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2002. Maharaj lives and works in London.

Eva Meyer (born 1950) is an art theoretician, writer, and philosopher who studied philosophy, art history, archaeology, and comparative literature. She is currently editing *What Does the Veil know?*, to be published this year. Since the 1990s Meyer has collaborated on films and radio plays with Eran Schaerf (born 1962) an artist who studied architecture, specializing in urbanism, video, and photography. The works of Meyer and Schaerf attempt to undermine sign systems in order to propose a new relationship between words, things, and images, and investigate what one could call the meaning or meaninglessness of concepts. Joint film projects include: *Flashforward* (2004) and *Europa von weitem* (1999). Recent exhibitions and screenings include: *Skulptur Projekte Münster 07*, Münster, 2007; *SNAFU – Medien, Mythen, Mind Control*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 2006; and *Utopia Station*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2004. Meyer and Schaerf live and work in Berlin.

Marion von Osten (born 1963) is an artist, writer, and curator who studied painting, art history, philosophy, and literature. She is currently a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Von Osten combines methods of art and theory to create exhibitions, publications, installations, and films, often in collaboration with other cultural producers. She co-curated *Projekt Migration* (an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation) on the history of migration in post-war Germany and was also the artistic director of *TRANSIT MIGRATION*, an experimental and multidisciplinary component of the larger project, Cologne, 2002–2006. Recent projects include: *reformpause*, Kunstraum of the University of Lüneburg, Lüneburg, 2006; *Atelier Europa*, a collaboration with a social scientist that included von Osten's film project *Kamera Läuft! (The Camera is Running! Material for a Film)*, Kunstverein München, Munich, 2004; and *Be Creative! The Creative Imperative!*, Museum for Design, Zurich, 2003. Von Osten lives and works in Berlin and Vienna.

Alejandro del Pino Velasco (born 1972) is a journalist, designer, photographer, and publisher who holds a degree in Journalism and Media Studies from the Universtiy of Seville, Spain. He is currently editor and publisher of the web sites of the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (Contemporary Art Center of Andalucia) and UNIA arteypensamiento (UNIA artandthinking), for which he summarizes all conferences and round tables associated with the project. Del Pino Velasco has worked on various art and culture projects including: Atalayas del Mediterráneo, Andalucia24horas, Elcultural.com, Cinestrenos, and Archivo F.X. and has published his writings in various exhibition catalogs and cultural and academic magazines including *Cien años de cine: la fábrica y los sueños* and *Revista Parabólica*. Del Pino Velasco lives and works in Seville.

Irit Rogoff is Professor of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, University of London. She writes extensively on the conjunctions of contemporary art with critical theory with an emphasis on issues such as postcolonialism, cultural difference, and performativity. From 2001–2006, she directed an international Arts and Humanities Research Council research project "Translating the Image: Cross-cultural Contemporary Arts" housed at Goldsmiths College. Rogoff's current research considers audience participation in contemporary art spaces, questioning whether audiences are perfomatively able to become part of the very nature of the exhibition. Her publications include: *Looking Away – Participations in Visual Culture* (forthcoming), *Othering German Art – Haunts of Difference* (forthcoming), *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (2000), co-editor of *Museum Culture: Histories, Theories, Spectacles* (1994), and editor of *The Divided Heritage: Themes and Problems in German Modernism* (1991). Rogoff lives and works in London.

Natasha Sadr Haghighian's biography can be found at http://www.bioswop.net/.
Ashley Hunt (born 1970) is an artist, activist, and writer who holds a Master's degree in Fine Art from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2007, Hunt was a fellow at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics in New York, as well as a guest of BAK's Research-in-Residence program in Utrecht, along with his collaborator Taisha Paggett. His main focus over the past eight years has been developing *The Corrections Documentary Project* (www.correctionsproject.com), which deals with the contemporary growth of prisons and their centrality to today's economic restructuring and politics of race. Hunt's writings have appeared in *Rethinking Marxism*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, *Art Journal*, and *Sandbox Magazine*, among others, and his most recent work is *9 Scripts from a Nation at War* (www.9scripts.info), made in collaboration with Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes, Katya Sander, and David Thorne for documenta 12 (2007). Hunt lives and works in Los Angeles.

Simon Sheikh (born 1965) is an art critic and curator. He is editor of the OE critical readers series in visual culture, published by b_books in Berlin and co-editor of *Øjeblikket*, a Danish magazine for art and visual cultures. Sheikh works as assistant professor of Art Theory and the coordinator of the Critical Studies program at Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. Previously he was Director of Overgaden – Institute of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen from 1999 to 2002. His practice has evolved around the position of contemporary arts in the public sphere. Recent curatorial projects include: *Capital (It Fails Us Now)*, UKS, Oslo, 2005 and Kunstihoone, Tallinn, 2006; *Circa Berlin*, Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, 2005; and *Naust*, Øygården, Bergen, 2001. Recent publications include: *Capital (It Fails Us Now)* (2006), *In the Place of the Public Sphere?* (2005), and *Knut Åsdam; Speech, Living, Sexualities, Struggle* (2004). Sheikh lives in Berlin and Copenhagen.

Project Summary/Credits

Concerning "Knowledge Production" (Practices in Contemporary Art)[1]

BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht
(Venue: former Courthouse, Hamburgerstraat 28, Utrecht)
25 November–16 December 2006

Concerning "Knowledge Production" (Practices in Contemporary Art), a multifaceted project consisting of research, discussion groups, a series of lectures and dialogues by and with artists, curators, and scholars, as well as a series of public readings, screenings, and presentations, evolved around current articulations of the notion "producing knowledge" through the practices of contemporary art. The project, developed by Binna Choi, Maria Hlavajova, and Jill Winder and organized by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, aimed to reexamine the connections between art and knowledge in the face of the "discourse industry" burgeoning across the field of contemporary art in the form of talks, lectures, platforms, panel discussions, etc., in which terms such as "knowledge production" are uncritically evoked and endlessly circulated. As opposed to putting "knowledge on display," the project attempted to produce new insight in this over-saturated field through in-depth critical artistic and intellectual work. The series consisted, among other activities mentioned above, of four sessions taking place every Saturday from 25 November to 16 December 2006. Each session was preceded by a discussion group in which a limited number of participants discussed the issues and questions raised in each session on the basis of a selection of texts that were read prior to the meeting.

1 Video documentation of the four main sessions of *Concerning "Knowledge Production" (Practices in Contemporary Art)* is available for viewing via BAK's online video archive (www.bak-utrecht.nl).

25.11.2006
"Processing 'Knowledge Production' in Art"
With Clémentine Deliss (curator and writer, Edinburgh), Vincent Meessen (artist, Brussels), and Simon Sheikh (art critic and curator, Berlin/Copenhagen)

To speak about art as a generator of knowledge requires us to critically analyze what we mean by "knowledge" in this context, especially if we are not simply referring to "knowledge on display." This session considers the adoption of the term "knowledge production" in the contemporary art field, and interrogates the process of its emergence from art historical, social, and political perspectives.

Lectures and discussion followed by a screening program by Vincent Meessen.

02.12.2006
"Inter-discipline or Non-discipline?"
With Lonnie van Brummelen (artist, Amsterdam), Mariana Castillo Deball (artist, Amsterdam/Berlin/Mexico City), and Bruno Latour (philosopher, sociologist, curator, Paris)

The field of contemporary art seems to redefine itself anew through complex "interdisciplinary practices." Given such practice, an elaboration of what the prefix "inter" implies for the relationship of art with other domains of knowledge or disciplines (such as architecture, history, science, or sociology) is needed. This session discusses the various interpretations of the so-called interdisciplinary approach in contemporary art and its position within other disciplinary knowledge systems in terms of the connectivity, exclusiveness, or exchange between them.

Lectures and discussion followed by a presentation by Anne van der Zwaag (art historian, Utrecht) who introduces and reads from a selection of the extensive collection of artist's books at the Institute of Art History, Utrecht University.

*Parallel program: BAK hosts the launch and presentation of the project *CO-OPs: Inter-territorial Explorations in Art and Science*, organized by NOW (Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research), which investigates the relation between contemporary art and science. The launch marks a cooperation between BAK and *CO-OPs* resulting in a series of expert meetings.

09.12.2006
"Unclaimed Knowledge"
With Sven Lütticken (art critic and art historian, Amsterdam) and Eva Meyer (philosopher, Berlin) & Eran Schaerf (artist, Berlin)

Artists working within and among various fields of knowledge often focus on information, stories, alternative visions, or events that are not privileged in the dominant discourses. This session explores the ways in which art practices may shape marginalized knowledge into new forms (non-knowledge, artistic knowledge), what related strategies or approaches can be identified in the field of contemporary art, and the particular role of the "visual" in these practices.

Lectures and discussion followed by a performance by Claire Harvey (artist, Amsterdam) and a screening of video documentation of a performance by artist and choreographer Ivana Müller, *How Heavy are My Thoughts* (2003).

16.12.2006
"Artists as (Public) Intellectuals"

With Thierry de Duve (art theoretician, Brussels)

This session considers how the definition of the term "intellectual" in a broader sense might be expanded by thinking of artists as "knowledge producers" and thus as a type of intellectual, and discusses the ethical, political, and social implications of defining artists in this way. What new concept of the intellectual might be necessary to encompass the kind of non-totalizing and diverse art practices that create knowledge?

Lecture and discussion followed by the first European screening of filmmaker, writer, and composer Trinh T. Minh-ha's most recent film *Night Passage* (2004).

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Project Management and Production: Arjan van Meeuwen
Editor: Jill Winder
Project Assistant/Editorial Assistance: Suzanne Tiemersma
Dutch text editing: Danila Cahen
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