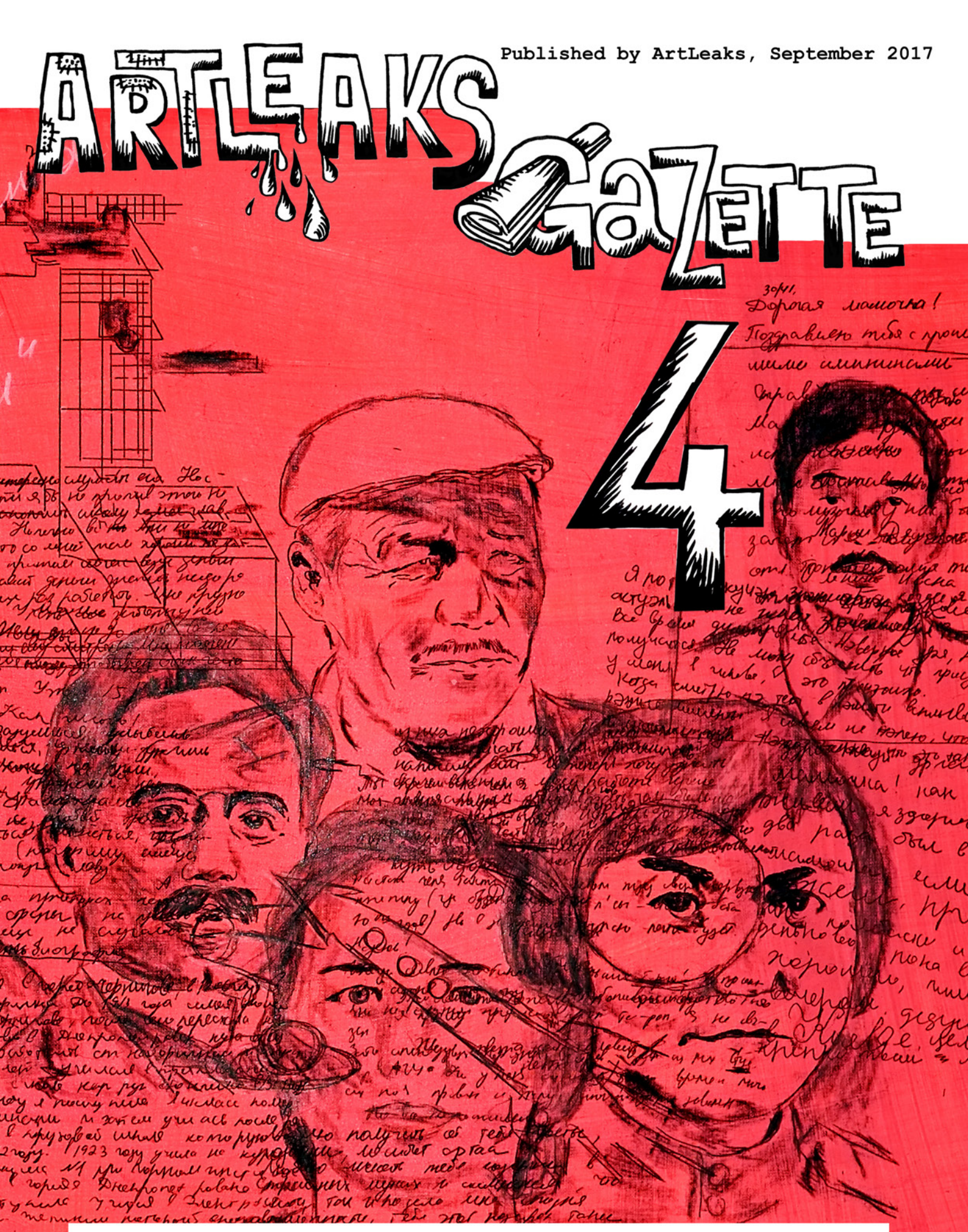
Published by ArtLeaks, September 2017

ARTLEAKS GAZETTE

4



Anastasia Vepreva & Roman Osminkin, Claudiu Cobilanschi, Corina L. Apostol, Gil Mualem Doron, Haim Sokol, J20 Artstrike, Joshua Schwebel & Catarina Pires, Mike Watson, Tihomir Topuzovski, The Art Handlers Alliance of New York, Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić, Gregory Sholette, Kuba Szreder, Noah Fischer, Marco Baravalle.

Contents

Demanding Justice: Social Rights and Radical Art Practices 5
Introduction

Dialog 1,2,3 7
Anastasia Vepreva & Roman Osminkin

Let's talk about Class, and Art 11
Mike Watson

Subsidy 21
Joshua Schwebel and Catarina Pires

Bill of Rights 29
Art Handlers Alliance of New York

Contradictions and Transformative Trajectory of Art & Labor 31
Trondheim Seminar/Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić

Visualizing Resistence: Subversive Artistic Practices in the Republic of Macedonia 45
Tihomir Topuzovski

Dictionary of Resistance for Beginners 63
Haim Sokol

#J20 Art Strike 78

Art Workers, Art Strikes and Collective Actions 85
Corina L. Apostol

Artist Strike, or How Close Are We to Bouazizi? 97
Gil Mualem Doron

www.kunsthalle.ro 99
Claudiu Cobilanschi

Dark Matter Games 103
Gregory Sholette, Kuba Szreder and Noah Fischer
Interview by Marco Baravalle

Demanding Justice: Social Rights and Radical Art Practices

Introduction

The Open call for the ArtLeaks Gazette No. 4 "Demanding Justice: Social Rights and Radical Art Practices" was published in December 2015 and, because of personal and political challenges, it took us some time to publish this issue. Nonetheless, we believe that the theme of the publication is as relevant today as it was a year ago, and we would like to thank our contributors for their timely interventions and patience!

A lot has changed since the ArtLeaks platform was launched in 2011. Compared to the existential threats societies are exposed to today, the problems of the art world seem less important. We witnessed the rise of Trumpism, the establishment of right-wing governments in Europe and threats of global wars. A wave of aggressive commercialization has swept the art field, driven by the process of financialization, turning art into assets for financial speculation. Nevertheless, the climate of social disintegration and political confrontation also forged new forms of struggle and alliances. Art workers around the world contextualize their practice on another qualitative level, in a period marked by human rights, labor, anti-fascist and anti-war campaigns. They are trying to reconcile their artworks, texts, exhibitions, projects with a desire to act politically in line with these campaigns by blurring the lines between artistic, non-artistic and political activist types of work. Their strategies have taken the form of nonviolent actions directed at the museum and gallery system, the art market and even at local governments.

The fourth edition of the ArtLeaks Gazette is supporting art workers' campaigns, and with regards to their social (civil, economic and legal) rights, and demands for an increase in art institutions' responsibilities in upholding these rights. These responsibilities encompass struggles related to representing art workers' projects with integrity, treating their profession fairly and with respect, and remaining open to debates with art workers. While not all art workers' campaigns are united by the

same specific goals, as contexts and needs differ, they include increasing the representation of art workers' voices in art institutions and at the state level.

In addition to analyzing concrete practices and campaigns, this issue engage with relevant topics related to social rights, jurisdictions, legislatures and competences, in order to develop a critique of the neoliberal formats that have been for decades perpetuating across the globe. We decided to bring together those contributions which are able to question neoliberal realities, virulent nationalisms, and austerity regimes, considering not only overall conditions in the artworld but also local specificities.

Editors:

Corina L. Apostol, Vladan Jeremić and Rena Rädle.
With gratitude to Katja Praznik and Airi Triisberg for the editorial engagement at the beginning of the process.

Text Authors:

Corina L. Apostol, Trondheim Seminar / Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić, Tihomir Topuzovski, Haim Sokol, Mike Watson, Joshua Schwebel and Catarina Pires, Dark Matter Games (Marco Baravalle, Noah Fischer, Gregory Sholette and Kuba Szreder)

Campaigns:

Art Handlers Alliance of New York, #J20 Art Strike

Visual Contributions:

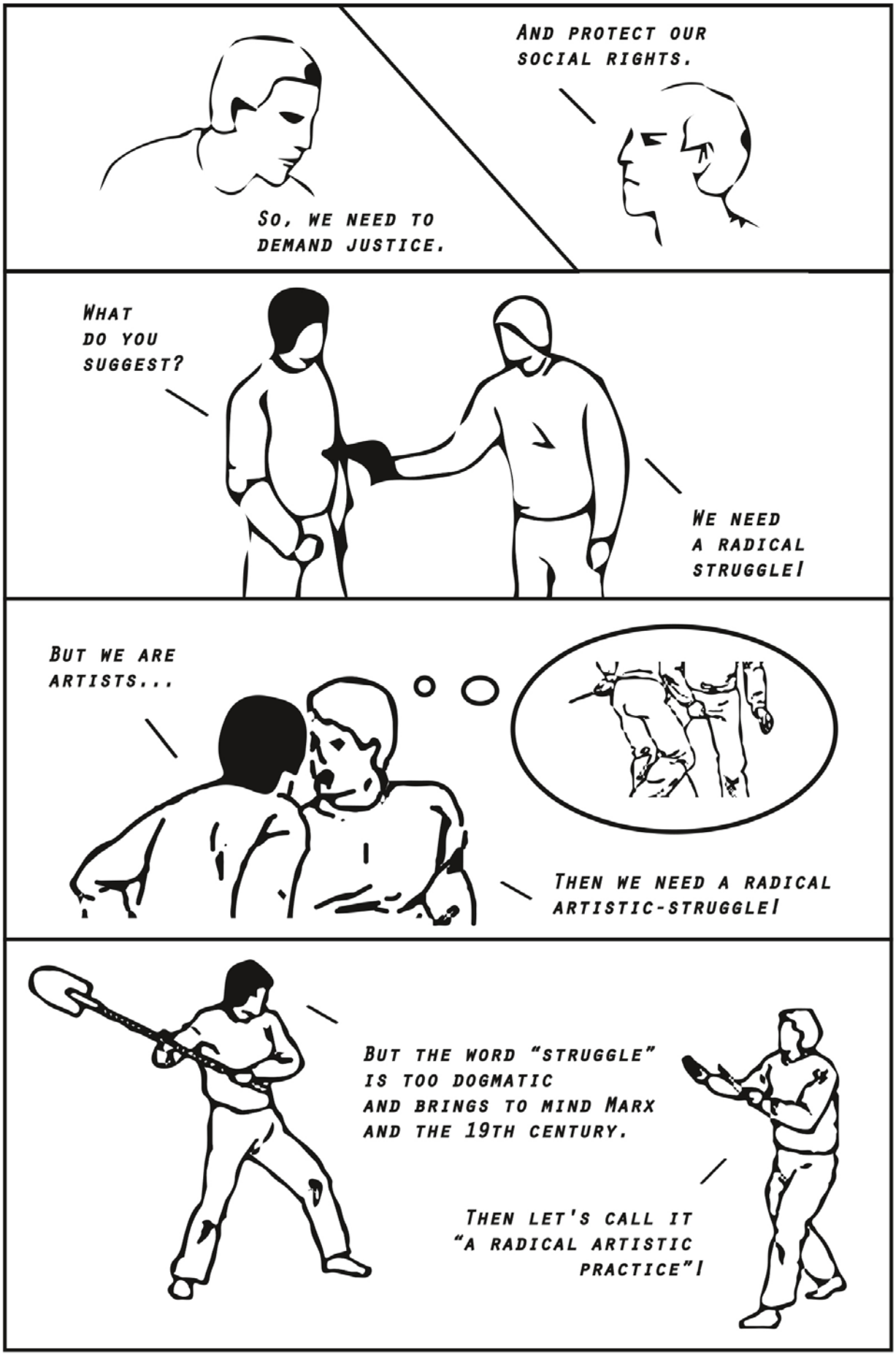
Claudiu Cobilanschi, Anastasia Vepreva & Roman Osminkin, Haim Sokol, Gil Mualem Doron

Title page illustration:

Poster no. XIV from the series "On the Concept of History"(2016) by Haim Sokol

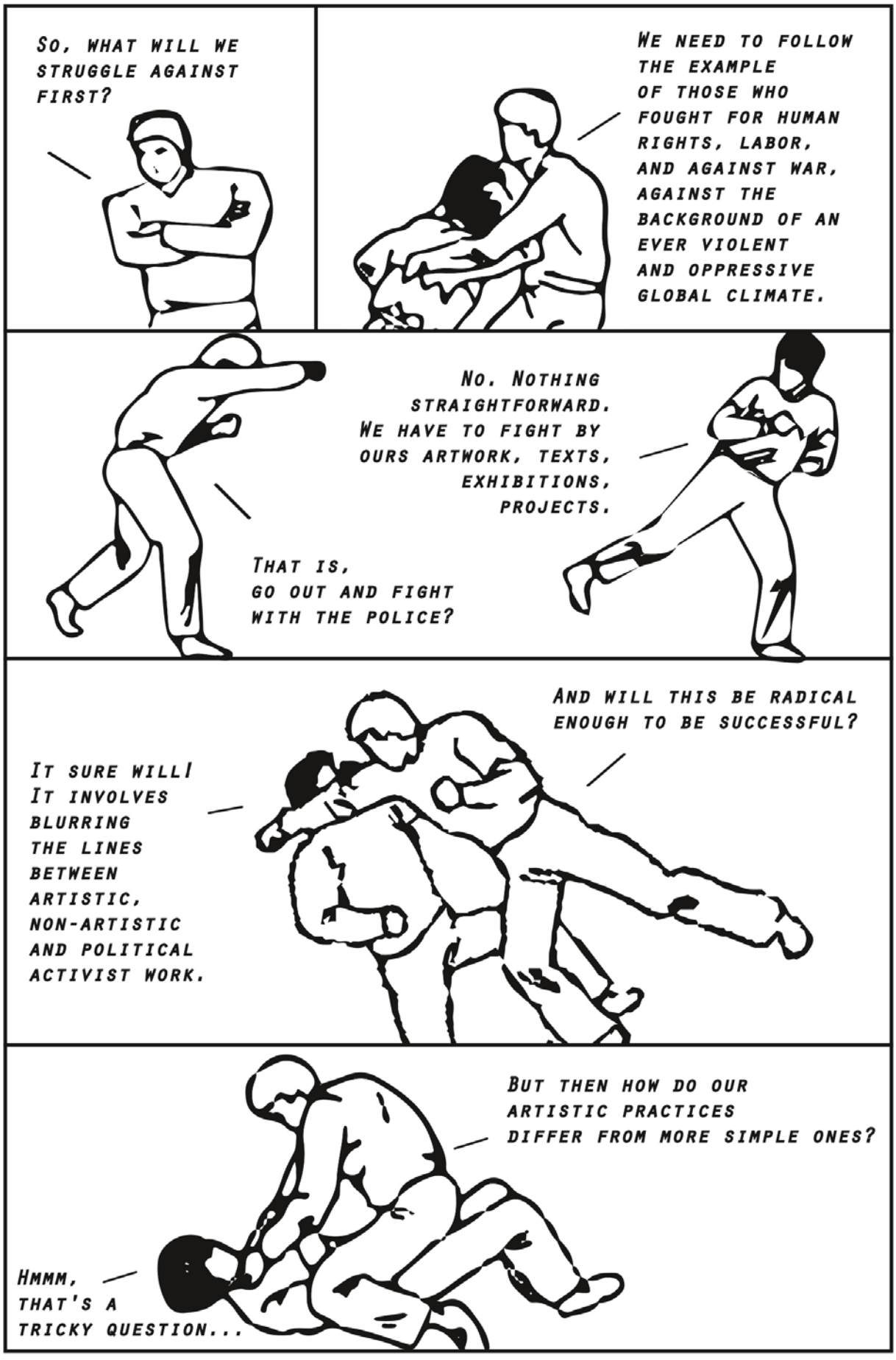
Published by ArtLeaks, September 2017, http://art-leaks.org

dialogue 1.



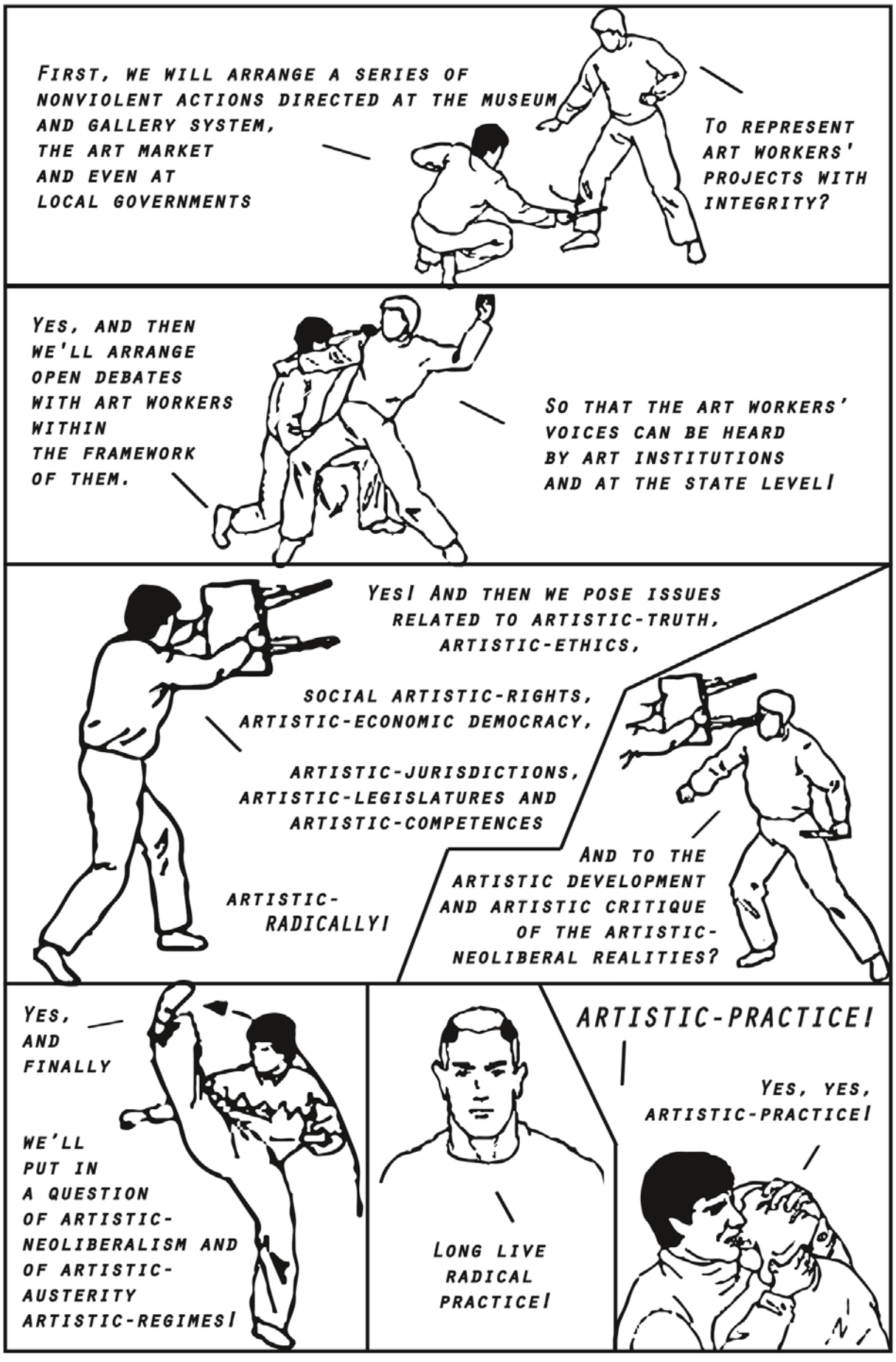
Comics by Anastasia Vepreva & Roman Osminkin.

dialogue 2.



Comics by Anastasia Vepreva & Roman Osminkin.

dialogue 3.



Comics by Anastasia Vepreva & Roman Osminkin.

Previous pages:

Comics by Anastasia Vepreva and Roman Osminkin

This comics constructs from the open-call text for ArtLeaks Gazette No.4 // Demanding Justice: Social Rights and Radical Art Practices. We took the key phrases from it and played with them. Hereby we wanted to show contradictions between political art and political activism. The paradox is that socially engage art wants to participate in politics but also wants to save its own autonomy as art—because when art becomes politically effective, it ceases to be art.

Roman Osminkin is a Saint Petersburg based poet, art-theorist, performer and video-artist. Ph.D at the Russian Institute of Art History. Member of the St.Petersburg Writers Union since 2007. Author of poetry and short prose books, Comrade-Thing (Kraft, 2010), Comrade-Word (Kraft, 2012), Texts with external objectives (NLO, 2015), Not A Word About Politics! (Cicada Press, NY, 2016). - Winner of the POETRY SLAM SPb, 2006, 2010 and the video-poetry festival «Fifth leg» 2010, 2016. Member of the editorial board of the «Translit», the most influential leftist journal of poetry and literature theory in Russia.

Anastasia Vepreva's artistic practice has a focus on the analysis and discourse of historical memory. She works in various techniques with the idea of systems of oppression, and of death. She holds a double MA from Smolny College, SPBU, St. Petersburg and Bard College, NY, USA. She has participated in the Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, The 6th Moscow Biennale, Manifesta 10, 35th Moscow International film festival.

Let's talk about Class, and Art

Mike Watson

What we mean when we say we want to talk about social class and art:

When I first decided to talk about social class in the art world I knew I would face a difficult task. Two years on from that point—when I began organizing a forum on social class held at Open School East and The Royal College, London in December 2015—I am more convinced than ever of the need to address the issue of social class division within the arts, as well as the need for creative discussion to be applied to issues of class in wider society. What follows are some of the difficulties I have identified in talking about social class over the last two years. Many of these points back up experiences in the art world, academia and in my wider life experience. Indeed, class is not really a quantifiable science, which in itself can be a cause of frustration when trying to state to middle or upper class peers the importance of talking about social class and of realigning the class makeup of the arts. Though this should be no deterrent and I would urge working class art professionals to draw on the passion they feel for the subject of class inequality and to bring that passion to bear in conversation with their peers, for whilst not being measurable, that passion is tangible. As such, it is a positivist manifestation of the reality of social class as a materially inscribed fact. Indeed, such passion, emotion, anger or fear has been the motor for the greatest movements in history both for social change and against it. One only has to see the contorted and mean spirited postures and faces of David Cameron and George Osborne in YouTube footage of the two dismantling the mechanisms of social justice to see to what level emotion is crucial to the politics of class, at both ends of the scale.

Moving on to the difficulty in talking about class in the art world: Firstly, I have found that it is generally only the working class who think we need to talk about class; the middle and upper classes treat the subject as little other than a bearable annoyance, a fact of birth, or of history, but nothing one can do anything about. This is clearly carried over into a lack of interest in the political debates which surround issues of wealth inequality. Whilst, to be fair, a good number of middle

and upper class people do hold a broadly leftist political world view, this tends to be channeled via the softening touch of social democratic values, which airbrushes the rough edges of the leftist cause, so that revolution becomes a more palatable adherence to 'social values'. There are two problems here, firstly it is all too easy to talk casually about class: we all have class backgrounds and we all know someone who is richer than us. Consequently, conversations on social class are engaged in with an air of 'oh dear', as participants who are not really underprivileged pose as if they are. Of course, these conversations are not liable to reach any incendiary conclusion, not least as they often take place within the comfy surroundings of a gallery, museum, coffee shop, restaurant or other dinner table. This leads neatly into the second point, which is that the middle-class art practitioner does simply not know what it is like to wonder where the next meal is coming from or how one is going to pay the rent, or run a phone or internet connection or buy a new pair of shoes as the last remaining wearable pair (i.e. without holes in the soles) broke. Therefore, one of the problems with talking about social class in the art world is a woeful ignorance which makes people talk as if they are underprivileged whilst they bask in a level of comfort that means it is unlikely that they'll ever muster the anger to really do anything about their underprivileged position. This problem has been exacerbated by—and is brilliantly, yet unwittingly, conveyed via—the 99% movement, as discussed in Towards a Conceptual Militancy (Zero Books, 2016):

> "The same syndrome can be seen in the largely 'gestural' oppositions to the global economic crisis and its causes. The 99% slogan – 'we are the 99%', popularised by the Occupy Wall Street movement – which highlights the vast accumulation of wealth in the hands of an elite 1%, ignores the vast differentiations of wealth amongst the 99% 'poorest' people on Earth. This blindness to the privileged position of some of the 99% in comparison to the poorest people within the global whole – and all of the stratifications between – highlights yet another attempt to create distance and ascribe blame. It is a classic case of Nietzschean ressentiment (or 'resentment', whereby the aggrieved re-feel their grievances to the detriment of their ability act to change their position). As Nietzsche argued in A Genealogy of Morality, the characterisation of the oppressor as 'bad' cannot automatically imply that the oppressed are 'good'. Yet as applied to the anti-war and anti-finance protest the logic of resentment takes on a different complexion, for even as – for example – the gap between rich and poor grows, class stratifications are arguably far more varied in Western society today than in Nietzsche's time. We are witnessing a middle-class resentment at both its complicity with and distance from power." (TACM, pp17-18)

Put simply, the teeth of any potential working class movement are blunted because a great many of the people with an apparent vested interest in class politics are not really working class, are not underprivileged and do not care to start any meaningful course towards societal reform, because they are too comfortable to care. This can be seen in the art world by anyone who is genuinely from a poor background and who

has frequented some of the plethora of endless talks, screenings, dances, poetry readings and now (popularly, as if we needed another 'trend') 'walks' around political themes held in the name of art. The hands off, ineffectual manner of so many of these events (not naming any, as they involve too many respected colleagues) is enough to make one spit or pull their hair out. If this reaction seems aggressive, just spare a thought for the poor dying refugees that are trying to enter fortress Europe as tens to hundreds of middle class artists, curators and art lovers engage in talks, walks, and dances on 'borders/Syria/climate change/capitalism/gentrification/etc' at any given point on any evening of the week across Europe.

The great gulf between what needs to be done and what is being done is in itself enough reason to try to talk not only about class in the art world, but about how the art world's resources can be used to address class issues in the wider world. Though this needs to be a real discussion on social class in which people appreciate their relative level of comfort or discomfort and open up to a radical restructuring of the labour practices of the art world so that the class structure can become more evenly differentiated. That differentiation is crucial so that the art world can speak with a maximum diversity of voices from across all social backgrounds, all genders, all ethnic groups and all sexual orientations.

This leads nicely to a crucial next point, and that is that conversations on social class in the art world are often interrupted by people who argue that we should be talking about gender, race or sexual orientation instead of class. Whilst one can understand this sentiment as the directed anger of people who are also aggrieved by oppression and intellectually moved to declare their own plight as important, it also sadly derails the leftist project. All too often the well-intentioned practices of identity politics do the work of the ruling class for them by forsaking solidarity in the name of individual grievances. Granted, it is vital that specific maligned groups are represented within the voyage towards a more equal society. In this light, the Black Panthers and the Combahee River Collective are among the most outstanding leftist movements in the recent history of the West. However, they did not specifically aim to supplant a class discourse. Indeed, The Combahee River collective, formed in 1974 by amongst others, Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith and Demita Frazier in order to give a voice to Black women—who felt marginalized both by the anti-racist and working class movements—issued a statement in 1980 in which it was written:

> "The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women, we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face."

Often taken as the first group to specifically use the term 'identity politics', the Combahee River Collective—named after a military action along the Combahee River in South Carolina undertaken by a female Commander Harriet Tubman in 1863—clearly saw the promotion of black women's rights as essential to overcoming the shortcomings of the male dominated leftist and black power movements, though, crucially, within interlocking systems of oppression. Now, within that, sometimes one will need to talk about race, and sometimes gender, sexual identity or class. That is to say, within an interlocking system of oppression we need to strengthen the oppressed in all walks of life, so that they can join forces and challenge the ruling elite together. This also means that there will be times when we need to speak simultaneously of all our discontents, but when I'm talking about social class and my own discontents I'd ask that people don't interrupt me with theirs as if our discontents are mutually exclusive, because they're not.

Another reason why we shouldn't posit social class politics in opposition to race, gender or sexual identity issues is that doing so risks leaving working class people of all genders, races and sexual orientations behind whilst potentially promoting only the interests of middle to upper class people from racial minorities, exploited genders or non-normative sexual orientations. One might think here to the figure of Okwui Enwezor, who curated the 2015 Venice Biennale around the theme of Marx's *Capital*. To be fair, symbolically such an event had enormous potential. Yet Enwezor himself moved with the airs and graces of nobility, and British nobility at that. This was a man schooled in evading questions, who when asked about the Marxist mission in the Guardian, just prior to the Biennale, dropped the ball, answering:

> "His programme was to use capitalism to achieve social equality," says Enwezor. "I don't think that Marx, had he lived, would have wanted capitalism to end." [1]

With friends like these one doesn't need enemies though, above all, this is evidence that class needs talking about openly and seriously in the art world, because until that point is reached political art will just be used to make middle class people feel less guilty and to whitewash (or 'artwash') global capital. In fact, we need to address the social makeup of the art world so that the global art world does not become a mere sop to globalization itself. Indeed, if global political art, or political art on a global level is not actually acting in any directly political way, and is only representing politics whilst continuing to operate an unequal system of privilege, it will be used by corporations to whitewash what they are up to whilst giving jobs to bored middle and upper class art enthusiasts. The loser will continue to be the poor.

In this sense, there is a certain responsibility in saying one is a political artist or curator. You cannot just wear the badge of being a political artist, something more has to happen, though it felt that was what Enwezor was doing.

This leads to a next consideration, namely, that the art world is dominated by people from privileged backgrounds who employ a certain code of behavior out of habit, and that this code excludes people who are underprivileged. This can most clearly be seen when an exchange or money or discussion about payments is involved between an institution or privileged individual and someone who is categorically from a poorer background. In some exchanges the poorer person, needing payment, is often seen as vulgar, pushy and, ironically (or perhaps, better put, *disturbingly*), over concerned with money. Indeed, asking that payment be made promptly, and in line with prior agreements, can appear to underscore a lack of love for the work itself, or a lack of concern for art or culture. This accords with the fact that a great many people who work in senior positions in museums, in academia, in galleries, etc., don't actually need their stipends in order to live. This varies from country to country but is certainly the case in Italy (where I live), a country lacking in meritocratic structures. Of course, it is actually the case that the person who is quick to ask a payment is often needing money to get through to the next day, having sacrificed everything to work in the arts.

This basic misunderstanding is linked to a more fundamental misunderstanding of the values of working class people, who are often seen as living rather irresponsibly, hand to mouth, instead of amassing, however slowly, savings. This argument was played out publicly in 2014 in the UK as Tory peer Lady Jenkins argued:

> "We have lost a lot of our cookery skills. Poor people do not know how to cook," before continuing to say, "I had a large bowl of porridge today, which cost 4p. A large bowl of sugary cereals will cost you 25p."[2]

This not only misses how damaging it would be to eat only cereal all day every day, but the fact that the particular situation of a freelancer in the art world with no savings or no family or other help (often unable to secure a loan or credit card) often means that shopping with any long-term plan in mind is impossible. There is never enough money at hand to do a large weekly shop, whilst the number of hours worked for low pay necessitates quick daily shopping trips in order to buy just enough food to make it to the next low payment from a client. Living in this environment of uncertainty—frequently from childhood, i.e. from birth—of course develops in the individual a tendency to grab when money is there (or is due to be paid), and then a tendency to go on a spending spree when a decent (though still low) amount of money arrives. It also leads to intense resourcefulness on a community level as a kind of unofficial communism arises between friends and family, who lend and give each other a large percentage of their income, regularly and without second thought.

It is coming from this a poor artist or curator enters into the baffling financial and social rites of the art world, with the potential for embarrassment always on hand. Most confusingly, I have found, is the fact that vast amounts of food and drink are often shared, but often with little in the way of friendship being exchanged. In fact, the more lavish the display of hospitality, the stiffer the people are and the less

they seem to want to know anything about their guests. One can appreciate that a certain level of reservedness goes hand in hand with power and wealth. It certainly wouldn't make sense for the wealthy to exclaim surprise at their own hospitality, yet often the food and drink is provided by faceless sponsors, just to be consumed by dour faced art world acolytes, bored of the constant rounds of cocktails. Thus, after we talk in an art space about politics, and maybe go for an art walk, and do a dance on the theme of poverty, we eat food given to us by strangers, drink alcohol and talk on the whole coldly with associates. In these situations, I learned long ago to return to my hotel (if staying away, paid by faceless entities at a museum of art foundation) to eat a kebab, watch football and drink cheap lager (at least knowing it wasn't given to me by a faceless corporation seeking publicity or a proud host throwing a lavish display of personal wealth). And here we see the vast gulf between the spontaneous and uncalculated giving, sharing and celebrating of the working class and the calculated patronage of the powerful.

Against given sensitivities, the question of what social class a person might come from could appear uncouth. Indeed, it is something that only a working-class person would ask in part as they have the generosity of spirit to reciprocate and divulge their own class background, in part as they have nothing to hide or lose. Though above all the question of social class, raised by a working-class person, could be seen as led by resentment and jealously. However, I could say wholeheartedly that this is not the case for me or any of my politicized working class colleagues in the art world. In fact, conversations never revolve around how much money 'they' have and how much 'we' want. Working class people who want money generally don't work in the arts (with few exceptions). The issue that a leftist has with the rich isn't that they should give more of their money to us, the issue they have is that the rich and powerful place too much emphasis on the importance of gaining and maintaining wealth and power, to the detriment of the enjoyment of life and of the fostering of community. We don't want the money or the power of the rich, we want the rich to stop involving the whole world in their obsession with money, power and greatness (which would appear to be a major principle of Corbynism, and the reason for its success). We want the rich to stop involving the rest of the population in their notion of a deferred gratification and a stiff upper lip, and to stop nullifying the value of art by bringing it under this rubric. Though, above all, we want to talk about social class in the art world as social class stratification and its attendant promise of class mobility—providing one behaves like the upper classes—is the tool by which the powerful spread their love of power and make their perversion our concern.

More than all this we need to talk about class division in the art world as art helps to provide us with the symbolic tools for conveying who we are, and right now those symbolic tools are in the hands of the elite. Though above all we need to leverage the tools of the art world to open a more transparent debate about social class across society, because if we're not careful social class divides—which one could argue underpin every concern from terrorism, to immigration, to climate change to economic crisis—will tear us apart this century just as they did in the last.

Since beginning to talk about social class within the arts, the worlds of art and academia suffered the loss of a cherished figure who gave people from low income backgrounds tremendous hope - Mark Fisher. Beyond simply pointing to the disproportionately middle and upper class composition of the cultural fields, Mark Fisher made it feel that it's ok to be working class in the academic and cultural fields, and that feeling beaten down at times by your peers is a normal reaction to an abnormal environment. At one point, he wrote on social media of the anguish felt at 'coming up against' a social class superior within the university environment. He understood that however hard one tries, the baggage of a life lived struggling to deal with inadequate finances whilst attempting to master strange social conventions will always be to some extent limiting. He understood the feeling when words fail you and muscles tighten so as to make movement and speech awkward in the face of peers raised and schooled for the professional way of life. A feeling confounded by the patronising pity of the bourgeois leftist. And none of this is based on merit. Quite the opposite, in fact: the socially disadvantaged art world or academic worker must perform a gargantuan feat of stamina and mental acuity whilst hiding their broken feelings on a daily basis. Meanwhile, the bourgeois peer play acts for pocket money.

That Mark was subject to long term depression which recurred and ended with him taking his life was a cruel blow for those who joined him in the condemnation of an academic and cultural system that weighs heavily on the energies and health of its most deprived employees. Of course, it would be simple to blame the capitalist and academic system for pushing Mark to the edge, though the point will be made and discounted in equal measure. After all, it is in line with depression as a condition that its sufferers feel victimised and blame others for their state. As such, the logic that the sufferer of depression (or anxiety) need to simply pick themselves up and carry on easily takes hold.

Though in part to dismiss such callousness I would like to reflect via personal anecdote and broader fact on the very real material correlate between the social structure in the cultural and academic fields and stress, anxiety and depression. I would like to do this so that the problem of these conditions can be located in a resolvable exterior which can be changed, thereby drawing upon the hope that Mark brought to the public via his writing and through his actions, not least evidenced in his openness to young academics, students and creative practitioners.

Starting with this latter point I wish to pinpoint a 'closed-door phenomenon' within academia and the arts that operates both in the UK and Italy (the two countries I have most experience of as a student, visiting lecturer, curator, critic and adjunct professor). Put simply, for reasons of culture and history (i.e. due to a rigid class system) one is taught from an early stage in their career that the door (metaphorical but also physical) is closed as a matter of course. Access to academics is by invite and acceptance into circles where successful academics convene is rare. Further, acceptance as 'one of them' (a viable person who understands *what is there to be*

understood) is hard won, signaled by a complex system of body and verbal language traits that excludes people who grew up in non-white middle class environments. Indeed, at one of London's (and Europe's) most prestigious graduate schools in philosophy where I studied at some point in the '00s it was the norm for students to be made to feel stupid by professors who knew more than they did. This sensation was tangible and reflected by a number of my student colleagues in what was seen as a Pythonesque situation whereby the guardians of knowledge would zealously protect it even from the people they were obligated to pass it on to. In what would appear to be an inheritance of the private schooling system professors would over time select students they particularly favored for special treatment, encouraging them onto the Ph.D. program and into a career in the same department or another one within the same network. This was the state of the academic left which gave rise to Mark Fisher, though he battled long to get a position himself, having taught until the late part of the '00s in a further education college and only gaining a full-time position at Goldsmiths, University of London, relatively recently. On the way there, his popularity arose largely for his willingness (and perhaps accurately for the necessity) to circumvent the barrier which separated those 'in the know' from the rest.

In part this was due to Mark being an early adopter of internet blogging via his site K-Punk, which correctly identified the fact that the staid and closed form of academia that operated in the UK at that time could not continue. Or, rather, at the least, it couldn't continue as the only sphere for leftist academic debate. The internet enabled geeks and enthusiasts of every variety to 'talk' – or, more commonly, type – endlessly on subjects which might otherwise have caused intense boredom or irritation to their partners, friends or family. This led to an era of blogging in which, for example, new philosophical movements were founded or consolidated online through the interaction of students with academics who were often from outside their own institutions as well as between academics living in different countries and on different continents. Some of the most important academic friendships and feuds of our time were formed and fomented in this environment. Indeed, Speculative Realism, Object-Oriented Philosophy and Object-Oriented Ontology all grew up in this way in a short space of time.

Whilst optimism for the political potential of the internet has waned in many respects (not least as it has been instrumental in the rise of the far right and of the disturbing phenomena of Trump and Brexit) we can't overlook a phenomenon which has allowed students to bridge a gap in tuition by appealing directly to a young generation of blogging tutors from other institutions (such as, notably, the very prolific blogger and philosopher Graham Harman, Mark Fisher and Nina Power). Whilst blogging proved fairly ineffective for tackling the actual problems inherent to the academic system itself, at a structural level it can't be doubted that a new generation owes much to that time of ferment and the openness of a few thinkers unrestrained by social class protocol. The trouble is that so long as a broad class system still prevails there will always be a sensation of superiority and inferiority within academic departments as well as in the cultural field.

Simply, if one is outside the dominant social class in a given field there will always be something that differentiates them from their peers. On the surface this manifests in behavioral traits and in a studied casual yet elegant manner of being that is beyond emulation for any period of time. One either has the affectations of the upper classes or does not, but if they do it's because they were born with them and then further schooled in them. Beneath the surface there is a material aspect. One either has someone holding their back (or considerable savings or a house owned outright) or does not. If one does not have these things life will be more stressful and fitting in with one's upper class peers will be virtually impossible on any sustained level.

Of course. there are token working class people in the arts (Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst), but they are put there specifically to be working class for the entertainment of the wealthy. This is not a path open to many people and not one that can be planned for or deliberately obtained and these few working-class superstars are closer to Wayne Rooney than Peggy Guggenheim. For the rest of us upward mobility is a hamster wheel. One never really arrives where they think they should and the constant thought that 'by now I have done surely enough to rest, to relax, to have the ease of my peers' is always met with disappointment. What's worse is that the need for enterprising young working class cultural practitioners to establish themselves is often exploited. I have worked in an art foundation nearly entirely staffed by unpaid and underpaid labor. At one point during the six-month run of a politically themed exhibition an illegal immigrant worker spent several hours in the attic of the arts foundation bailing out water as it was raining and the roof was broken. Beneath people watched videos on capitalism and climate change. This is for me the best visual metaphor of the art world I have ever seen, only it was real. Everyone in that foundation was bound into compliance with its corrupt functioning by their need to get ahead. This is something repeated throughout the arts and academia and can be seen in the adjunct professor system operative in American universities.

Now, on a physical level sustained stress without relief leads to depression. This is a material reality: life conditions create mental illness. What then, on a scientific basis is the likely fate of a working class academic or arts practitioner who repeatedly finds themselves in the same place despite working harder and achieving more year on year? Clearly the facts speak for themselves.

We need to look out for each other and open doors instead of closing them. We need to fill the halls of academia and the art world with people of diverse backgrounds such that no one feels excluded. In some small way that path has begun.

Let's talk about class, let's do it proudly! Let's talk about what social class I am and what social class you are.

Mike Watson is an art theorist, critic, and curator based in Italy who is principally focused on the relation between art and politics. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from Goldsmiths College and has curated for Nomas Foundation and at both the 55th and 56th Venice Biennale. In May 2016 he published a book entitled Towards a Conceptual Militancy for ZerO books.

References

1 The question actually asked, by correspondent Charlotte Higgins, was "Did not Marx foresee the end of capitalism, inevitably brought down by its internal contradictions?" Full text: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/07/das-kapital-at-venice-biennale-okwui-enwezor-karl-marx

2 https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/dec/08/poor-cannot-cook-peer-eats-words

Subsidy

Joshua Schwebel and Catarina Pires

The following is a description of an intervention and exhibit that took place in Berlin at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in the summer and autumn of 2015. The text is written by myself, the artist who created this work, and by Catarina Pires, one of the interns who was working at the Künstlerhaus at the time of my exhibition.

Project Description

My name is Joshua Schwebel and I am a conceptual artist. My most recent project, *Subsidy*, exposes the labour practices in art institutional structures, particularly the pervasive absence of payment in the field of cultural labour.
The project began when, as an artist in residence at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin for the year of 2015, I recognized that the institution used (and continues to use) unpaid interns as part of its administrative structure. Having been awarded a funded residency in this institution, I was disturbed to be put in a position of benefiting from a standardized practice of structurally enforced precarity.
My artistic project within the residency was to redirect the complete funds allotted for my exhibition budget (€3,000) into honoraria to compensate the formerly unpaid interns whose time coincided with my year in residence. Through a negotiation process, I returned my budget to the institution in order to pay a total of seven interns for their work in the administrative offices.

I sent the following letter to the artistic director, Christoph Tannert, and residency director, Valeria Schulte-Fischedick:

> 7 July, 2015
>
> Dear Valeria and Christoph,
>
> I am writing to request your support and assistance to complete the project I have developed while in residence here at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien.

I aim to use my entire exhibition fee to compensate the unpaid interns who work with the administrative staff and support the artists at the KB. My fee should be divided equally amongst the interns who have worked during the year of my residency. Ideally I would like the KB to simply transfer my exhibition fee to its own accounts, and then make bank transfers directly to its interns. With your support I am open to resolving the precise movement of the funds in compliance with tax regulations, however I would prefer if possible that the payments go directly from the KB to its interns. The documentation of these transactions, inclusive of this very letter, subsequent pertinent correspondence, and proof of the bank transfers, will be included in my exhibition.

While the Künstlerhaus Bethanien is one amongst many, if not the majority, of international arts institutions benefiting from, and in many cases dependent on unpaid labour, my intention is not to single it out, but rather to draw attention to the larger practice of unpaid labour in the arts. The KB institution and artists, myself included, are benefiting from the availability and necessity of passionate self-exploitation at the entry level of cultural work. No other field so implicitly contradicts itself in declaring a culture of access, openness, and radical political critique, while ignoring and therefore obfuscating the growing gap between those who can afford to support their cultural commitments and those who cannot continue in the field due to lack of external financial means. I intend my transaction to address this crisis of access and sustainability in arts and culture today.

I am happy to meet with you both to discuss this further. Your facilitation and advice are welcome and necessary in order to complete this transaction.

Respectfully,

Joshua Schwebel

This letter provoked a radically censorious response from the director, who phoned me 10 minutes after receipt of my letter. He pronounced that the project “wasn’t art”, that it was too political for the institution, and that I was “being stupid”. He insisted that the money was intended for materials and objects for exhibition. He refused to send anything in written form, or even to document his receipt of my letter.

After a week of panic and an intense feeling of hostility and unwelcomeness at the residency, I was called in for a meeting. During the meeting the director proclaimed his disappointment, claiming to “love my work”, and implying that this piece had “nothing to do with my previous work”. He said he felt set up, and that my piece

Subsidy, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Photo Sandy Volz.

was making the Bethanien look bad, making it look like they were doing something illegal. I explained that there is nothing necessarily illegal about using unpaid interns, although there should be, and that my issue is not with the particular institution but with the larger artistic and institutional practice of relying on the unpaid labour of most often female, intelligent, eager young people. And that in accepting this labour, the institution fundamentally devalues the labour of all of its paid employees, by showing governmental funders (the Berlin Senate, in this case), that the institution can and will sustain its operations with inadequate administrative funding. After negotiating the validity of my project and confirming that there would be "things" in my exhibition space, the meeting was concluded with a handshake, and I made clear that I would not change my project or repeal my intention.

In proceeding with the exhibition, I asked the interns working in the office at the time of the exhibition, Livia Tarsia in Curia and Catarina Pires, to perform their assigned office duties within my exhibition space, which I transformed into a semi-private office space by installing a wall and door to divide the space from other artists' galleries. Livia and Catarina enthusiastically accepted my proposal. The choice to position the actual working interns within the exhibition space under

my name was a delicate decision, and one not taken lightly. The decision was made in order to prioritize the interns' voices, opinions, and choices. To make this decision more emphatic, I suppressed the printed publicity card for the exhibition, and reduced the typical exhibition signage to a small name card, which normally was affixed outside my studio door. Catarina and Livia worked in the gallery during the overlap between office and gallery hours (between 14h and 18h Tuesday – Thursday, and 14h and 16h30 on Fridays), speaking with visitors should they have questions, but for the most part, performing the duties they normally would undertake in the KB's administrative offices. All furniture in the exhibition was provided from the KB's own storage, and office supplies were taken from the administrative offices. Funds to divide the exhibition space into an office were redirected from allocations for my (unused) publicity budget.

While including Livia and Catarina in the exhibition space served to make their role within the institution, and my intervention, visible to a general public, more importantly it withdrew them from the institution's offices, articulating their contribution to the institution's operations through its absence.

Subsidy, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Photo Sandy Volz.

Subsidy constituted a refusal to work in the way the institution expected, an attitude and method that has been consistent throughout my artistic practice. By resisting the institutionally streamlined process that facilitates access to money for the production of exhibition objects (and obstructs access to money for work that doesn't prioritize the exhibition outcome), I encountered and overcame several unspoken (and some quite plainly spoken) authoritative assumptions about what art is and where it belongs. The project also enacted a refusal to uphold current working conditions in contemporary art; conditions that maintain systemic precarity, ambivalent ethics, and competition amongst artists and cultural workers. In negotiating for money ear-marked for 'art' to reverse its course and return to the institution, the project forced a re-examination of the values that determine what the institution prioritizes in its spending: how funding priorities pre-emptively designate what is important for art and artists. As Marina Vishmidt remarked, "Money is a flash that lights up the circuits of power in the institution, hence *Subsidy* (2015) takes money as its means of material realization. An institution is forced to recognize the labour of its unpaid staff by means of money, which means it is at the same time forced to recognize this time as labour time, and itself as an exploiter"[1]. By using money as money, my project made visible the structural disparity between labour and value in the artworld.

Catarina Pires

We are dealing at the present time with the general acceptance of the internship as a main source of labour among the art institutions. These internships are either unpaid or underpaid. Art workers find themselves in a vicious circle that includes power imbalance, speculation and immaterial benefits that may never become form.

The internship is a distant relative of 11th and 12th century apprenticeships in Europe, where master craftsmen took in young learners to teach them the trade, usually for years, and after this transitional period, they would be granted full membership of the trade guild and could earn wages. During the 20th century, internships have evolved exponentially. The capitalist system, playing with people's expectations, offers instead of payment – either a "glance into a prestigious institution's way of functioning", an "experience within one of the top companies in the field", or simply "networking"; although they usually search for a qualified person who is "flexible, enthusiastic and highly motivated, with a positive attitude".

Especially in the arts sector, it is expected that people will work for free. The institutions claim most of the time that they lack the funds to pay for the labour that is being executed, while sometimes blatantly spending money on superfluous matters. The under-financing is indeed a reality but the problem lies in the prioritizing criteria used by the institution and not the lack of funding alone. The unpaid/underpaid labour is taken for granted. Art institutions do not escape contamination

by free-market ideology: there is a constant permeability between corporations, the state, and the art institutions themselves. Especially since the economic crisis of 2008 we are led to believe that this cross-contamination is inevitable. We witness the paradox of institutions that wish to be in the vanguard of new ways of thinking and exhibiting while still being based on corporate modes of production and capitalisation.

Andrea Fraser summarizes some features of the art professional: "We're highly educated, highly motivated "self starters" who believe that learning is a continuous process. We are always ready for change and adapt to it quickly. We prefer freedom and flexibility to security. We do not want to punch a clock and tend to resist quantifying the value of our labour time. We do not know the meaning of "overtime". We are convinced we work for ourselves and our own satisfaction even when we work for others. We tend to value non-material over material rewards, which we are willing to defer, even to posterity."[2]. These characteristics make the art professionals ideal candidates for the perpetuation of this kind of exploitation-logic, and why it is so difficult to overthrow.

I was an unpaid intern at Künstlerhaus Bethanien at the time *Subsidy* took place and as for my personal experience as a part of it, I consider it was of great importance to provoke a reaction both from the institution as from the exhibition visitors about these otherwise invisible issues. Most people visiting the exhibition expressed surprise, unease, or even fright, as someone said "hello" to them, in such a context. It produced a direct contact between the visitors and the office interns, something that never occurs. While sitting in the exhibition space we realised that the explanation about the concept and what was taking place was necessary. It enabled a break from the white cube object contemplation, straight into reality – the reality of the institution's way of functioning, labour rights, and in general, what is behind the scenes. The realisation that there is unpaid labour involved in the exhibition made most people uncomfortable; at the very least it raised awareness and at best it will instigate action. As Hans Haacke once said, when art declares its separation from everyday politics and concerns, what it does is to preserve the status quo[3].

At the same time, this project made the interns' absence in the office noticeable for the institution, requiring resultant changes in the usual office organisation. Although I was performing most of my normal tasks in the exhibition space, some required the office physical space and therefore it made fully visible the necessity of the intern's work.

Institutions – especially the largest ones - have no trouble finding interns who will work for no pay, since people feel the apparent inevitability of undergoing successive[4] internships. Interns embody features that make them especially vulnerable to precarity and labour exploitation: the intern stands in a state of limbo; s/he is no longer a student, but also not considered a worker; therefore s/he has no access to union protection, no equal work rights, no social security deductions, but also no

Subsidy, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Photo by Sandy Volz.

student benefits. This extreme precarious situation lowers considerably any potential negotiating position for better working conditions – what if unpaid interns working on galleries, art institutions, museums, etc. decided to go on strike, for instance?

Having a more affirmative and interventional attitude is in my opinion mandatory, as in the case of *Subsidy*, to shake the establishment by not playing by their rules. Priorities should be reviewed when it comes to budget allocation by the institutions, as from the funders – in many cases public ones – that support the institutions' activities without insuring that labour is fairly paid. We need more critical targeted projects and most of all that art workers can channel the non-acceptance of these situations to collective action, unionization and organization, overthrowing first differences inside the class itself, and so that art's aspirations of liberation, consciousness and progressive thinking can be materialised, and not swallowed up by the current neoliberal logic.

Joshua Schwebel is a conceptual artist interested in the relationship between value and visibility. His work reveals the concept of value as a cultural construct borne through hidden ties to morality and privilege, by

exposing the cultural and social techniques employed in value construction. In his work he devises strategies to reveal the politics of exclusion, expropriation, and competition that both mandate and conceal the conditions of valuation in late Capitalism. Through strategic interventions, displacements, and withdrawals, he attempts to unbalance and open up these seemingly impartial processes.

Catarina Pires is a writer and curator based in Lisbon. She was a curatorial and production intern at Künstlerhaus Bethanien.

References

1 Vishmidt, Marina: Wages for Anyone is Bad For Business, Subsidy, Berlin: Archive, 2016 pg.

2 Fraser, Andrea. "A museum is not a business. It is run in a businesslike fashion." Möntmann, Nina. Art and its intitutions . current conflicts, critique and collaborations. Black Dog Publishing, 2006, pg.94.

3 Glahn, Philip. Estrangement and Politicization: Bertolt Brecht and American Art, 1967-1979. Dissertation. New York, 2007.

4 According to a survey published by the European Union, conducted among people between 18 and 35 years old, 46% of the people have had an internship; in Germany, where *Subsidy* took place, this number reaches 76%. From the percentage of people that have had an internship, 22% already experienced doing 4 or more internships. 59% of people reported not having received any monetary compensation for their work during their most recent internship. (European Commission 2013).

ART HANDLERS ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK

BILL OF RIGHTS

The Art Handlers Alliance of New York (AHA-NY) is proud to present this document, drafted by and for Art Handlers, that articulates a clear vision of what the most basic standards for work in our industry should be.

This is a living document that can be amended at any time by AHA-NY.

Distilled from conversations between freelance, part-time, full-time, unionized and non-unionized workers, over a period of nearly three years, the AHA Bill of Rights presents a minimum standard for what decent working conditions should be for all Art Handlers in the New York area.

Let it be as much a guarantee to Art Handlers as it is a guide to socially responsible employers.

Art Handlers are the backbone of a growing and profitable industry. We possess an essential and highly specialized skill set upon which the industry depends to function. With this declaration, we assert not only our value as individual working professionals, but also our value to each other as members of a community of workers.

The Art Handlers Bill of Rights states what Art Handlers in every facet of this field are entitled to, in exchange for the crucially important labor we provide.

1. *The Right to Recognition:*
   - We recognize and affirm that art handling is a profession and that Art Handlers are skilled professionals involved in the transport, display, storage, and preservation of art.
2. *The Right to Equal Pay for Equal Work:*
   - We demand freedom from discrimination based on gender, race, or sexual orientation.
3. *The Right to a Living Wage:*
   - The Art Handler's Alliance of New York recommends a minimum wage of $25 per hour.
4. *The Right to an Eight-Hour Day and a Forty-Hour Week:*
   - Full-time workers are entitled to full-time pay.
5. *The Right to Benefits:*
   - We demand benefits for full-time work and pro-rated benefits for part-time and freelance work.
6. *The Right to Safe Working Conditions.*
7. *The Right to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining:*
   - We demand the right to associate with colleagues and take collective action without employer coercion, retaliation, or intimidation.
8. *The Right to Inclusion under all Federal, State, and Local Labor Laws:*
   - We recognize that Art Handlers are workers and are legally entitled to the protections of all existing labor laws such as: overtime after forty hours, NYC Earned Sick Time Act, worker's compensation, fair and accurate tax status classification, and all provisions of the National Labor Relations Act.

Foundational Bill of Rights, Art Handlers Alliance of New York, relaunched march 2 2017
http://www.arthandlersalliance.org

Art Handlers Alliance of New York (AHA-NY) are art handlers coming together for:

– Open Dialogue

– Shared Resources

– Health Benefits

– Fair Wages

– Job Protection

– Better Working Conditions

– Solidarity Among Freelance, Contract, & Union Labor

Contradictions and Transformative Trajectory of Art & Labor

Trondheim Seminar / Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić

This paper presents the conclusions of the Trondheim Seminar on transformative art production and coalition-building, organized in September 2015 by Rena Rädle, Vladan Jeremic and Anne-Gro Erikstad at LevArt[1]. The seminar "Art Production in Restriction - Possibilities of Transformative Art Production and Coalition-Building" held in Trondheim, Norway had brought together artists, writers, critics, and curators who are active in groups that are struggling for better working conditions in the arts and society at large. Throughout the course of two days participants discussed theoretical conceptions of artistic labor and precarity, exchanged local and trans-local experiences in confronting the neoliberal entrepreneurial mode of art production, and strategized ways of transformative and emancipatory art production and organizing. Below are the summaries of the six plenary sessions, where the results of the working groups were discussed and the conclusion of the Trondheim Seminar.

Plenary Session 05 September 2015

Working Group I

Defining (artistic) work: artistic labor / precarious work / unpaid labor / reproductive work / flexible work/ forced labor

Contributors: Marina Vishmidt (presenter), Jesper Alvær, Noah Fischer, Marius Lervåg Aasprong, Danilo Prnjat, Rena Raedle, Gregory Sholette.

The input for the working group on definitions of artistic labor was given by Danilo Prnjat. He reflected the notion of the 'art worker' in the context of the avant-garde and posed general questions on participation. In the following discussion, the contradictions in defining artistic labor were drawn up and it was debated what kind of

Plenary session, Trondheim Seminar, September 2015

unification and cohesion certain concepts presuppose and what their implications for coalition-building are. There were two aspects looked into, from where artistic labor can be grabbed, the concept of *productive* and *unproductive labor*, and the concept of *division of labor*.

From a capitalist standpoint artistic work is *unproductive labor* as it partakes in the distribution rather than the production of surplus value. The question was put that if artistic labor is assumed to be productive labor, that means **if artists identify as 'art workers' and organize as such, do they then just ask for a bigger share of the surplus value produced elsewhere, thus benefiting from exploitation?**

A historical comparison with the 60s generation of political or activist artists in the US and West Europe identifying as 'cultural workers' shows that their structural position was actually quite elite compared to most workers, and secured in the context of the welfare state compared to today's competitive (debt) environment. But workers did not become a driving force for large-scale social change. On the contrary contrary, artists are today structurally part of a general condition of precarity. It

was argued that the **identification with the 'worker' today could be an attempt to break with this increasingly exploitative entrepreneurial norm, as a class politics acknowledging the class struggle within and outside of the field of art.**

Discussing the second concept, it was stated, that if we want to describe artistic labor from the viewpoint of the *division of labor*, it is hard to say if artistic labor is mental or manual labor, which makes labor politics of art more complex. The question then could be not how to unite with workers, but **how to break with or break the social division of labor that produces art and labor as distinct spaces and categories?** So, the urgency is to break with divisions of labor, - not to re-distribute interpretive power, as institutional critique did. It was argued that **we instead need a re-distribution of work – and we can't fight for workers without addressing our own working conditions.**

So, if the objective is to **dissolve the categories of art/labor, art/life, what do we put in the gap?** What kind of gap is it: a terminological, social, ontological, material one? It might be a *theoretical gap* first of all: does 'art' do a certain kind of work that you would just need to find another designation for? Or it might be a *material gap*: how do you then abolish distinctions which are socially operative?

The implications of these concepts for the artistic practice were then laid out in more concrete terms. It was noted that managerial structures and corporate reward structures pervade the art world just as they pervade the non-profit sphere. That means that the speculative value created by the art CEOs, art middle managers, etc. is disproportionally more rewarded than value created by reproductive labor and care work by the art workers, art lumpenproletariat, etc. **There are the class relations within art and the class relation which art reproduces in general**, and we need to see what definition of labor is most adequate for art workers in their political practice. **Art could be seen here as a *tactical space* – people using the relative freedom and resources of art as a means of getting somewhere else.**

It was proposed that if we aim to dissolve the categories art/labor, art/life, **artistic practice could be described as *competence*, as the term translates well across different fields and can be used as a lever for communication with people outside the art world**, albeit it is loaded with neoliberal managerial connotations. Along these lines it was proposed that our competence as artists might then be **our ability to steal and re-distribute**: to puncture and rupture the walls of art's bastion of privilege and to steal and re-distribute to the undercommons.

Mini Book Fair, Trondheim Seminar, September 2015

Plenary Session & Discussion 5 September 2015
Working Group III

Valuation of artistic work: problems of quantification of work / art and economic alternatives

Contributors: Airi Triisberg (presenter), Corina L. Apostol, Sissel M Bergh, Mourad El Garouge, Minna L. Henriksson, Lise Skou, Lise Soskolne, Raluca Voinea

The input for the discussion about valuation of artistic labor was given by Lise Soskolne. She presented the strategy of Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), a New York-based activist organization focused on regulating the payment of artist fees by nonprofit art institutions. The organization has developed a certification format for institutions that comply with minimum standards for the remuneration of artistic work, a strategy that relies on the "reputation economy" of the targeted art institutions. Currently W.A.G.E. is working on a complementary individual certification model functioning in direction of a union-like organization of workers.

During the discussion, two general strategies of framing artistic labor were elaborated, that conceptualize artistic labor either as commodity or as social contribution. The first **subsumes artistic labor under wage labor**, with the possibility to extend the demanded standards of payment to other workers in or even beyond art institutions. The possibility of internationalization of such standards was discussed. Examples of national standardization campaigns and reached agreements in Sweden and Poland were given.

A number of challenges of the "wage labor-strategy" were addressed, especially in a transnational context. The necessity of a relevant **transnational counter-power able to pressure employers to meet wage demands** and the complexity of **standardization of payment** within globalized working relations was emphasized. It was criticized that standardization also might imply exclusion of certain groups that cannot meet the established standards.

The critical distinction was made that W.A.G.E. does not subsume artistic labor under wage labor. A foundational principle of W.A.G.E. Certification is the fact that an artist fee is distinctly not a wage for the work of making art and is defined as payment for the work an artist does once they enter into a transactional relationship with an arts organization.

The group discussed the difficulties of framing artistic labor as wage labor, because there seems to be a strong resistance against that in the art field, and a certain desire to think about artistic labor as an *exceptional form of labor*. The point was made that **if artistic work is understood as social contribution and not as a commodity it can serve as a model for the reconfiguration of the concept of labor, that would bring about a different model of economy.**

Examples of **alternative economies** were discussed amongst them cooperatives based on exchange economies and their own currencies from Spain and Greece. It was underlined that alternative economies go together with a certain *de-skilling of individual labor*. The discussion ended with the open question how the reduction or even termination of division of labor would affect artistic practice within such economies.

Plenary Session 06 September 2015
Working Group IV

Possibilities and difficulties of coalition-building beyond local and international constraints

Contributors: Ivor Stodolsky (presenter), Jochen Becker, Marita Muukkonen, Minna L. Henriksson, Sissel M Bergh, Vladan Jeremic

The input for the group working on possibilities and difficulties of coalition-building beyond local and international constraints was given by Minna Henriksson. She presented a case study about the Mänttä Art Festival in Finland, an annual exhibition project in the Finnish periphery that invited international artists without paying for fees and production. After examining particular problems of this case, general methods of finding common ground for building alliances were debated.

It was stated that for aligning with social movements, **art has to locate itself in the wider social field**. Starting from the universal common needs people share, more particular interests can be articulated and negotiated in the spirit of solidarity. In a local situation, community building can be achieved through spotting of specific issues, referendums, commoning of resources, building of project groups and collectives. The operaist method of ***co-research***, a research method that intends to erase the border between researcher and the object of research, **was proposed as method to find and define common demands**.

As a central challenge to the communication between different groups the **necessity of translation between different terminologies and "languages"** was emphasized. It was stated that expert terminologies are important but need to be made accessible to communicate with other groups. Local knowledges and languages informed by cultural or social backgrounds need to be reformulated. In this respect it was underlined that **art has the advantage of being a more "universal" form of communication**. The point was made that the *translation / reframing / reformulation* of needs or problems into political demands is at the core of political empowerment and representation. **Careful *reformulation, translation and re-translation* is especially important to find common grounds for alliances in trans-local**

Plenary session, Trondheim Seminar, September 2015

contexts. This means that existing organizations need to develop the capacity to reformulate their problems, demands and political strategies keeping in mind a trans-local approach.

Another important issue of discussion was the need of adequate spaces for gathering and voicing demands. **Spaces for meeting were found to be a precondition for finding common grounds and aligning of different groups and movements**. In this context the question was raised if the spaces of the art world such as biennials and art fairs, can be at all considered suitable spaces for such purposes. It was stressed that a welcoming public space open to everyone needs to be created. In addition, the fact that one needs to be aware that these spaces are also open to recuperation from other forces was discussed.

In terms of language, the argument was made that for describing international alliances today it is necessary to find alternatives to the words "national" and "global" that stem from the discourse of capitalist market globalization and nation state politics. Instead of "inter-national" or "trans-national" **the terms "trans-local" (rooted in more than one situation) or "pre-mondial"** were proposed. The term "mondial" could be used for naming a 'globalization from below'.

Plenary Session 06 September 2015
Working Group V

Transformative ways of art production: Artistic contribution as class struggle

Contributors: Raluca Voinea (presenter), Corina L. Apostol, Danilo Prnjat, Jean-Baptiste Naudy, Jelena Vesić, Jesper Alvær, Kuba Szreder, Lise Skou

The input for the group discussing transformative ways of art production was given by Jesper Alvær, who presented examples of his artistic research on art and labor. For the plenary session, the group prepared a *collective statement* to articulate contradictions and potentials of artistic practice that makes links with subjects positioned outside of the art field.

In the beginning it was stated that the group speaks from the position of artists and cultural workers. The group stressed that the emancipatory force of art can only be realized if art doesn't exploit people in the interest of art but if art puts itself in the

Dinner at RAKE workspace, Trondheim Seminar, September 2015

interest of the people. It was underlined that **artists can use their privileges and status in a tactical way to support certain causes.**

The **relation to the institution of art was identified as main contradiction** and the group called for the **re-appropriation of the definition of social practice,** but as well the **re-appropriation of the notion of *aesthetics*** from the institutions**.** The notion of *aesthetics* needs to be remobilized in a way that can (1) stimulate the imagination of the oppressed to form a liberating force not limited by conventions, (2) that can change the notion of the real, of what is normal and of what is acceptable. ***Playfulness* was proposed as a tactic/strategy to counter rules and expectations.**

In the plenum discussion problematized that **artistic practice nevertheless remains bound and valued within the institution of art**, although rules of the institution can be subverted and institutional space can be used tactically and playfully for non-art purposes and common social or political causes. It was underlined that **artists must be aware of their manifold privileges when they join coalitions for social struggles with other groups.** The artist can go out on the "playing field" of other social struggles and then return and harvest the value of his/her practice in the institution of art. However, the question of accumulation of cultural capital and funding come up. On the other hand, one can also lose, be blacklisted by either an institution or a movement.

The **best meeting place for making coalitions was found to be outside of the art institutions**, in the public space, on the streets. This is the "playing field" outside of safe boundaries of art institutions, where artists can show what contribution they have to offer for a common cause.

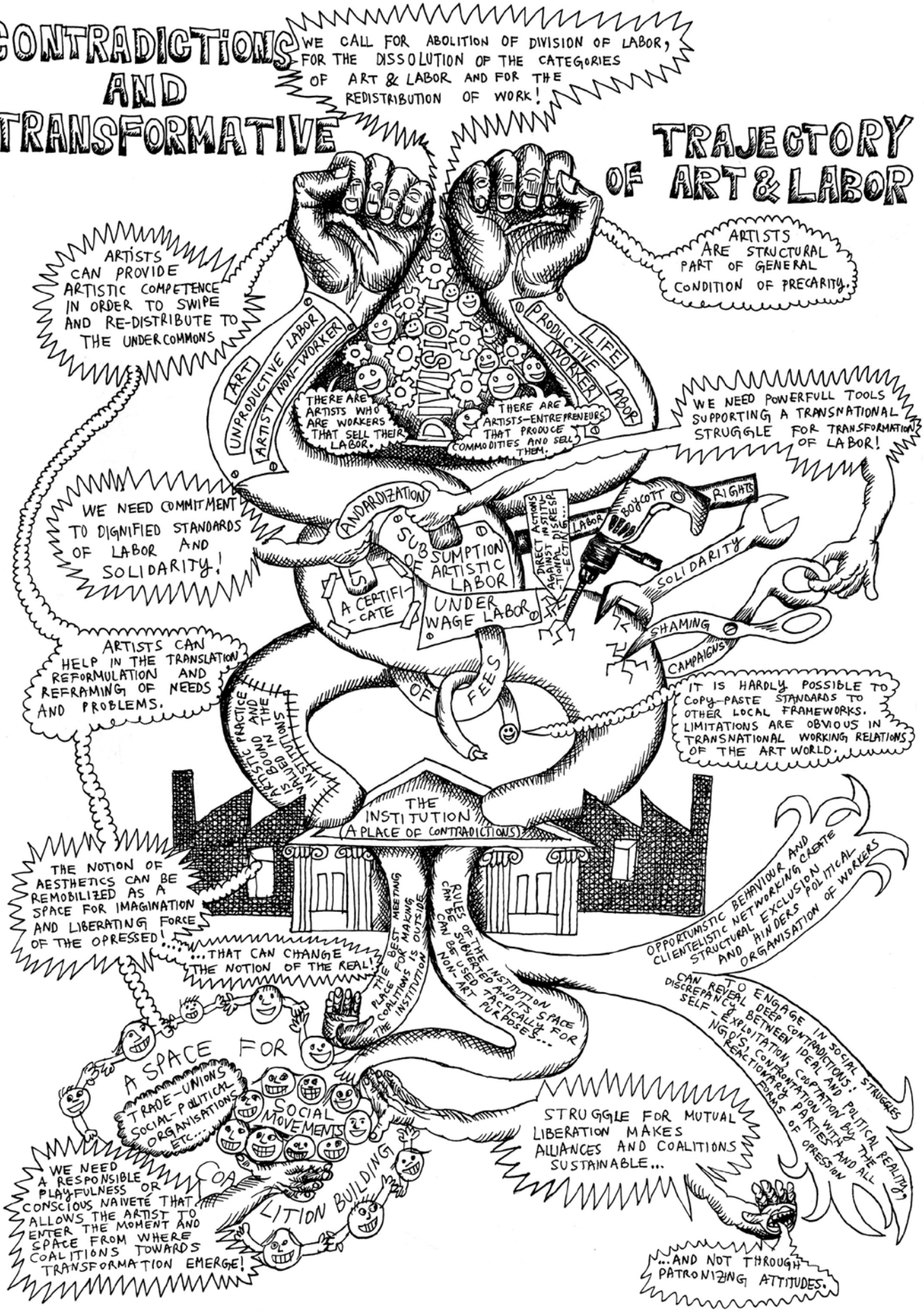
Plenary Session 06 September 2015
Working Group VI

Aligning with social movements

Contributors: Gregory Sholette (presenter), Airi Triisberg, Lise Soskolne, Marina Vishmidt, Marius Lervåg Aasprong, Mourad El Garouge, Noah Fischer, Rena Raedle

The input for the group discussing alignment with other social movements was given by Noah Fischer. He reported on artists involvement in the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011. Fischer described forms of organizing that emerged and gave examples of coalitions with social movements that came out from Occupy, such as the Art and Labor Group, Gulf Labor Coalition and G.U.L.F.

It was stated that in recent years a striking growth of coalitions between art and labor and art and justice campaigns can be noted, such as Gulf Labor Coalition, Liberate Tate, Australia, Precarious Workers Brigade, ArtLeaks, Art & Labor or the occurrence of labor strikes at the National Gallery London. It was proposed



Contradictions and Transformative Trajectory of Art & Labor, drawing by Vladan Jeremić and Rena Raedle, 2015.

that the **raise of consciousness about the relation between art and labor can be explained through the global economic crises and capital's turn from generating surplus value based on labor towards pure forms of financialization.**

In respect to these coalitions, the advantages and disadvantages of positioning / identifying the artist as artist or as worker were discussed. Both positions were elaborated.

On one side, art can be defended as a *special kind of labor,* that is useful to non-art political coalitions and social movements. Art helps to get media attention. Furthermore **art and culture can generate and expand the collective embodiment of resistance and help to turn it into objective social forces.**

The other position sees art as *non-special work* similar to any other type of precarious work, because it is part of the "social factory" (Mario Tronti), where all aspects of life are fully subordinated to capital. This **common condition of precariousness and existential risk encourage the artists to build bridges to organized labor unions** outside of the art world.

The need to distinguish **two positions of the artist in the process of production, either as a wage laborer or as an entrepreneur,** was discussed: either as workers that sell their labor or as entrepreneurs that employ others, produce commodities and sell them.

The group concluded that in order to become active outside the prescribed spaces of the art field a certain *naïveté* is required by the artist. The group argued that to operate within a social movement or any other coalition, the artist needs to take the risk of setting herself/himself aside and to **actively forget certain conventions and habits of imminent critique or ever-growing cynicism**. The notion of *active naïveté* by Antonio Negri was proposed to describe this relation towards moments and spaces from where coalitions can arise.

In the plenum, building solidarity was stressed as most important aspect in the process of coalition-building. The **problem of patronizing attitudes** was addressed. It was stated that ***solidarity* arises from the joint struggle for mutual liberation** and that objective class differences don't need to result in patronization if coalitions are negotiated as partnerships. Within the movement, artists do not need to represent artists-authors, they are members that **use their artistic competencies as part of and in solidarity with the movement.**

We need to be aware that engagement in social struggles can reveal deep *contradictions*: **self-exploitation, cooptation by institutions, parties, NGO's, conservative and reactionary political attitudes, discrepancy between an idealized situation and a concrete political reality.**

Conclusion: Findings, Agreed Points and Recommendations for Transformative Art Production and Coalition-Building

1. The Troubles with Artistic Labor

The contradictory character of artistic labor that can be described as both non-work and role model of labor has become paradigmatic for the general position of labor in modern relations of production. Artistic labor plays an important role in social reproduction – amongst many other forms of unpaid labor. To problematize this relation it makes perfect sense that artists redefine their labor as productive labor and, in line with this argument, claim "wage for work". Even more so since the exploitative entrepreneurial norm artists are subjected to, has become a common norm of general precarious labor conditions. Yet this isn't the end of the road. It is futile to differentiate artistic labor as manual or mental labor, as productive or unproductive work or as wage-labor or reproductive labor.

Nonetheless, the question remains: how do we break the social division of labor that produces art and labor as distinct spaces and categories? For that we need a re-distribution of work that represents the link through which artists can get involved in a common struggle, addressing their own working conditions. With the abolition of the division of labor, with the dissolution of the categories art / labor, artistic activity and the value of art would undergo a complete re-definition. Thus, the problematization of artistic labor and the material working conditions of artists is an eligible field where common ground needs to be found with other workers / non-workers.

2. Ways of Labor Struggle in the Arts

Artists' unions and other artists organizations demand the standardization of fees to be implemented by state institutions and non-profit art institutions, based on either legal guarantees or voluntary certification of employing institutions. While the strategy of standardization of wage shows successes within local frameworks, limitations become obvious in transnational working relations of the art world. Standards would have to be relative to local living and working conditions, an institution that could control these standards doesn't exist and localities or groups that don't meet a minimum standard would be excluded from every scope of action.

Instead, individual commitment to dignified standards of labor and solidarity with local social struggles through withholding of labor, organized boycott of problematic art manifestations, solidarity or shaming campaigns and direct action against institutions disrespecting labor rights become powerful tools supporting a translocal struggle for transformation of labor on common basis. The symbolic act of with-

holding of labor from a biennale is a legitimate tool to support the cause of a local community. The effect of such boycott grows proportional to the cultural capital of an artist. More sustainable alliances with groups from outside the art-world require engagement of artists in the wider social field.

How and on which common ground these alliances can be build and where is the place of the artist within such coalitions?

3. Recommendations for Alliances and Coalition-Building

Finding common ground, from universal common needs to more particular interests, is the precondition of any alliance. Artists can help in the translation and re-translation, reformulation and reframing of needs and problems that are articulated by different groups. Translation between different terminologies and languages informed by social and cultural backgrounds gains importance in translocal approaches to finding common grounds. Art and culture are also powerful means to create cohesion and to form a collective identity of social movements.

In practice, artists share a common continuum with the general precarious condition of labor. Not only in the art world, opportunistic behavior and clientelistic networking typical for flexible labor conditions create structural exclusion and hinders the political organization of workers. A material distinction of the position of artists in the process of production can be made: There are artists who sell their labor and there are artists-entrepreneurs that employ others to produce commodities and sell them.

Another peculiarity that makes troubles in coalition-building between artists and non-art groups lies in the artists' relationship towards the institution of art. It needs to be acknowledged that artistic practice stays bound and valued in the institution of art and therefrom a number of contradictions come up, when artists link their practice to the wider social field.

Rules of the institution can be subverted and institutional space can be used tactically for non-art purposes to gain visibility for common causes. Artists can use their privileges and they can re-appropriate the definition of social practice and aesthetics. The notion of aesthetics can be remobilized as a space for imagination and liberating force of the oppressed, that can change the notion of the real.

But the emancipatory force of art can only be realized if art doesn't exploit social movements in the interest of art but if art becomes a means in the hands of the people. Alliances and coalitions can only become sustainable if solidarity is developed in a struggle for mutual liberation, and not through patronizing attitudes.

Consequently, the best meeting place for making coalitions is definitively the space outside of the institutions, because here it is where artists can show what their

contribution to a common cause really is. To engage in social struggles can reveal deep contradictions: discrepancy between ideal and political reality, self-exploitation and cooptation by institutions, parties or NGO's, confrontation with conservative and reactionary political forces and all forms of repression. For the artist, this might mean to give up certain peculiarities of the arts, such as for example authorship, or maybe an artistic career. And she needs to translate/reframe her/his practice in the light of particular competencies that might be useful for a certain cause.

To be part of a social movement or coalition, the artist needs to take the risk of setting herself/himself aside and to consciously block out certain conventions and habits of the art world, imposing either its imperative of criticality or omnipresent cynicism.

It is a 'responsible playfulness' or 'conscious naiveté' that allows the artist to be part of a moment and to enter the space from where coalitions towards transformation emerge.

This paper was first published in: Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić (eds.) *Conclusions of the Trondheim Seminar – Contradictions and Transformative Trajectory of Art & Labor*, LevArt, Belgrade, Trondheim and Levanger, 2016. (http://levart.no/contradictions-and-transformative-trajectory-of-art-labor-rena-radle-og-vladan-jeremic)

References

1 This paper was written by Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić in Belgrade, December 2015 and reviewed by Airi Triisberg, Corina L Apostol, Gregory Sholette, Lise Soskolne and Katja Praznik. Contributors to the working groups were: Airi Triisberg (Tallinn), Corina L Apostol (ArtLeaks, Bucharest), Danilo Prnjat (DeMaterijalizacija umetnosti, Belgrade), Gregory Sholette (New York), Ivor Stodolsky (Perpetuum Mobile, Berlin), Jean-Baptiste Naudy (Ateliers Populaires de Paris), Jelena Vesić (Belgrade), Jesper Alvær (Oslo), Jochen Becker (metroZones, Berlin), Kuba Szreder (Warsaw), Lise Skou (Aarhus), Lise Soskolne (W.A.G.E., New York), Marina Vishmidt (London), Marita Muukkonen (Perpetuum Mobile, Helsinki), Marius Lervåg Aasprong (Trondheim), Minna Henriksson (Helsinki), Mourad El Garouge (Ateliers Populaires de Paris), Noah Fischer (Occupy Museums, New York), Raluca Voinea (ArtLeaks, Bucharest), Sissel M Bergh (Trøndelag Bildende Kunstnere, Trondheim). Drawings and photographs by Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić.

For more information about the seminar, related papers by the contributors and full documentation of plenary sessions see http://transformativeartproduction.net.

Visualizing Resistence: Subversive Artistic Practices in the Republic of Macedonia

Tihomir Topuzovski

Research on subversiveness in the visual arts is concerned with opposition to the existing social order and attempts to achieve changes through engaged forms of action. Subversive practices in art are intertwined with forms of action that undermine the establishment's institutional system. The practitioners attempt an opposition to and transgression of existing social norms and situations and initiate demands for change. In this context, the relation between these practices and politics presupposes that art, in one way or another, can help expand political action and participation, using artistic modes of presentation and practice that are intended to increase awareness and stimulate or provoke political action.[1] According to Ingram "artistic practices are not just a form of resistance, refusal and critique, but contributor to political and spatial transformation,"[2] where artists interact with the geopolitical context. They are involved in the political circumstances, reacting and seeking changes. In conditions of opposition, therefore, art becomes subversive of the existing social order, undermining the normal and legitimate, aimed at transforming the existing situation. This raises the question: What can subversive art accomplish in the political arena? And what are its limits?[3] The study focuses on practices that represent a completely different approach to artistic action, aimed at achieving changes to the problems emerging for artists and citizens in their current situation as well as the manner in which any given art opposes the given order[4] or subverts it. This insistence on rejection or subversion incorporates the affirmative statement that art has an autonomous power of resistance[5] embodied in various visual practices which are "being ever more called upon to provide both insight into politics itself and the stimuli for social change".[6] In the acts of "subversion and transgression [actors] crossed the contemporary borders of art and overthrew various binary and hierarchical oppositions"[7] established within social systems and create new situations.

This article focuses in particular on recent events in the Republic of Macedonia where artists are intervening in the political context. These artistic practices relate to the political crisis in the Republic of Macedonia which evolved from problems with democracy, including an instrumentalized state in the service of the ruling party, media under government control, rigged elections, and a scandal over the illegal wiretapping of citizens by the government. These political circumstances in the Republic of Macedonia are powerful societal forces that influence culture. In such situations, artists have developed innovative practices and responses to the ongoing situation that are characterized by subversiveness.

I argue that the subversiveness of artistic practices is an important object of study whose investigation brings new insights into art. In this article, I consider the theoretical discussion on interpreting subversiveness and also focus on the contextualization of subversiveness within the field of artistic action, in order to interpret the tendencies of these practices in the case of the Republic of Macedonia where they provide continual impulses and political demands. The article provides an important opportunity to advance the understanding of how subversiveness in the visual arts relates to political dynamics in the Republic of Macedonia.

Protest in the front Public Prosecution Office in Skopje; Photo: Vanco Dzambaski.

While this article has a conceptual and an empirical focus, I organize my argument as follows: I start by analyzing subversiveness from its political connotations to its articulation in art. Here the aim is to provide theoretical background to the empirical analysis, in which I focus on a more explicit grounding of subversiveness, describing and explaining agents, principles, and forms of action. Taking these dimensions into account, I apply this discussion in the context of the Republic of Macedonia within which I identify and analyze forms of subversiveness. One particular aspect of the analysis offered here is that there is little discussion of these practices in the spatial context of this country. Finally, I examine wider lessons that can be drawn from subversiveness in art and what these practices have achieved in the case of the Republic of Macedonia.

In addition to the diversity of literature surveyed, the empirical analysis was carried out in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. Data was collected via semi structured and structured interviews, archival research and visual methods. Interviews were conducted with art historians, custodians, curators, artists, politicians, writers and activists (the names of interviewees have been withheld upon request because of the dangerous political situation in the Republic of Macedonia). This data was coupled with secondary sources such as newspaper articles, art magazines and official websites.

Rethinking artistic practices subversively

Subversiveness is commonly defined as opposition to the existing power balance, authorities and social order. However it should be noted that "Subversion has no universally accepted definition".[8] Explanations of subversiveness indicate that, through subversive practices, various social, political and ideological demands are put forward.[9] These acts have a clear intention against an existing social model and its norms. As noted by Levy, "Sovversivismo was a politically nomadic movement, according to Gramsci." He explains that "subversive chiefs used a radical stance as a form of blackmail against the ruling political class, because at the decisive moment these chiefs invariably threw their lot in with the forces of order."[10] Subversiveness involves rejection or destabilization of the existing order, its obliteration and destruction or changes to the existing hierarchy. The model of these practices, as a constituent part of all anti systemic movements, can be traced back to the 1848 revolution in France, where "a proletarian-based political group made a serious attempt to achieve political power and legitimize workers' power"[11] in opposition to the institutional order. These practices are critically or theoretically founded or represent practical activities undertaken to erode the existing order.[12]

As a historical example of subversive activities, Levy points out that the terms sovversivo and sovversivismo (subversive and subversion) were first used by intellectual and artistic circles in Italy in 1914, but also by the police, clerks and government agencies, when describing the activities of anarchists, socialists, republicans and all

other opponents of the monarchy and the political establishment of the time.[13] This refers to the different backgrounds and imperatives of lower-status groups within society. Thus, much of "the Left in particular, and Italian politics in general, runs the Gramscian argument, was a product of the culture of 'sovversivismo'"[14] created in conditions of deficiency, the instrumentalization of institutions, a weak ethical and political culture, a wrecked civil sector and an environment unable to satisfy the basic demands of individuals and groups in the society. In their anti systemic tendencies, "the masses who mobilized to transform the world expected that, once movements came to power, they would enjoy freedom and equality — if not in perfect measure, at least to a greater degree than previously."[15] In other words, it appears that the practitioners intend to go a step further toward principles and visions for a better society.

Turning now to the context of culture, it is worth beginning with the point that subversive practices in art exist as activity close to the notion of politics.[16] These artistic practices are intertwined with political and activist movements and they oppose what Ranciere[17] identifies as consensus, "the main enemy of artistic creativity as well as of political creativity... that is, inscription within given roles, possibilities, and competencies" which passivize the role of artistic action. Instrumentalized acts always support the preservation of existing systems in which, as noted by de Certeau, everyday practices depend on a vast ensemble of procedures.[18] In this context, the role of the artist is instrumentalized or "Today, the artist could be defined simply as a professional fulfilling a certain role in the general framework of the art world,"[19] placed in a system of organizations, authorities, faceless agents, rules and protocols. The ultimate consequence of such activity is that the horizon of possibilities, as described by Bourdieu,[20] is closed, followed by adaptation to the dominant position in inevitable dependency.

However, subversive practitioners intend to take additional steps opposing such an arrangement. Thus, any artistic project which aims at creating a better society must take account of the instrumentalization of institutions in order to create what might be a new possibility through the transgression of existing criteria. This can be considered as calculated damage that questions a society's prevailing value system.[21] In this respect, using this approach re-examines the boundaries "between what is supposed to be normal and what is supposed to be subversive, between what is supposed to be active, and therefore political, and what is supposed to be passive or distant, and therefore apolitical."[22] What follows is the repoliticization of the artists they refer to and the analysis of "socio-political processes, related to the transformation of the system"[23] paying attention to social conditions, problems and challenges.

Examining these possibilities in the context of artistic actions and the creation of subversive agents, it is of paramount importance to note that this concerns not only the artist or artists, but also a large number of those working in the field of culture. This can be illustrated by the example of the Russian collective "What Is to Be Done" (Chto delat), which is a network of poets, artists, philosophers, critics, design

artists and writers who act as a collective.[24] Their horizontal networking and interaction strengthens the organizational capacity of various groups and increases the efficiency and synergy of these agents in their multidisciplinary democratic struggle. The ultimate consequence should be to unify different types of struggle, [25] such as social, urban, ecological, antiauthoritarian, antiinstitutional, feminist and antiracist, as well that of sexually marginalized groups.

The implementation of subversive practices embodies another aspect. The artists' engagement with the problems cited above presupposes certain ethical principles on the part of the participants. They try to change "living conditions in economically underdeveloped areas, raise ecological concerns, offer access to culture and education for the populations of poor countries and regions, attract attention to the plight of illegal immigrants, improve the conditions of people working in art institutions",[26] as well as addressing issues of discrimination, freedom of speech and economic inequality. In the final instance, their agreeing to act upon these problems can be defined as a reaction to "the increasing collapse of the modern social state 'and an effort' to replace the social state and NGOs that for various reasons cannot or will not fulfil their role."[27] Thus these practices are most commonly undertaken by the underprivileged living in conditions of social, identity-based, ethnic and racial segregation and exclusion. Consequently, the principles of these practices aim "to produce a new perception of the world, and therefore create a commitment to its transformation" which are "united no longer by the abstract forms of the law, but by the bonds of lived experience"[28] Through these acts artists come close to an understanding of their paradigmatic role linked to the crux of social problems. At the same time this new faith in the political capacity of art has assumed many forms that are often divergent, and in some cases even conflicting.[29] These art practices often employ forms of radical activism, affecting public spaces such as squares, streets and crossroads, aimed at getting publicity and, more importantly, at influencing the public sphere by involving the public in existing problems and challenges. Furthermore, artists remove distanced observers from their safe position, pulling them into a game of affects. In many cases, forms of subversiveness "generate the effect of absurdity and parody",[30] humor and incisive irony.[31] Such forms of subversiveness can be illustrated with the example of artists in the "Occupy" movement. They occupied cultural institutions such as museums at the onset of the movement "Occupy Wall Street" because these institutions were seen as stimulators of social and economic inequality.[32] On this basis then, the focus of subversive practices in art is not separated from a given societal context, but inherently arises from the existing political and social relations, which are relations of power.

The spatial context

In approaching these kinds of artistic practices this study focuses specifically on the Republic of Macedonia, which has been marked by a transition accompanied

by radical reforms in every stratum of society.[33] These rapid changes are having a serious effect on the distribution of income and wealth, the restoration of the market system, and the growing income gap: all factors that have brought issues of inequality[34] and rising poverty levels throughout the country. The changes have resulted in problems of social inclusion and social cohesion of different class, gender and minority groups and their access to social provision. Mirroring the pattern displayed in most of the former socialist countries, the resurgence of nationalism in the Republic of Macedonia was a key agent in the transformation and became a structural quality in building the new system. Reconstruction of the national identity accompanied the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991. However, in the decade 2006—2016 under the leadership of a conservative, nationalistic party, named VMRO DPMNE (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization — Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), the country has been characterized by some aspects of authoritarianism. There is a distinctive concern that "retooling of this small nation's — a Balkan brand of hyper-patriotism accompanied by the trumpeting of Macedonia's ancient roots — is raising concerns internationally about growing authoritarianism, the silencing of dissent and accusations of abuse of power by the governing party"[35] and "manipulation of independent institutions".[tt] Macedonia's fragile democracy is further hampered by the absence of a free press. In the past decade, owners of Macedonian media have deliberately shifted their political allegiances, constantly depending on the ruling political party

"Warrior on a horse", a statue reminiscent of Alexander the Great, erected as part of the project "Skopje 2014", photo Vladan Jeremić.

and the government's effective purchase of support through media advertising.[37] A member of an opposition political party acknowledged this in my interview, pointing out that "those who declined to consent were shut down, jailed or severely financially strained through libel charges".[38] Under these circumstances the problems with the fragile democracy and human rights in the country are being aggravated.

The leading conservative, nationalistic party in the Republic of Macedonia views culture as a possible means of creating collective memories, patriotic motifs, slogans and symbols, monuments and architecture, pushing it to the level of idolatry in an attempt to reconstruct the historical narrative and establish it meaningfully in the present. Picking up on this, nationalistic art in the Republic of Macedonia usually celebrates proclaimed essences of a national and romanticist spirit. Highly ceremonial, it is heavily oriented towards reconstruction of a national identity[39] as a part of postsocialist material culture.[40] In this case, the geopolitical instrumentalization of culture has always been related to the local and regional establishment, which instrumentalizes art to sustain these systems. This can be explained, in the phrase "apparatus of capture"[41] coined by Deleuze and Guattari, as a geophilosophy of power consisting of the geographical instrumentalization of cultural activities through numerous programs and projects, as well as through networking, documenting and supporting various activities, political goals and programs. In the context of culture and art in the Republic of Macedonia, the instrumentalization can be found in particular schemes where most of the practices are affiliated with governmental programs and strategies. These practices can be understood in the context of various actions, operations and techniques with a political background, attended and financed by the centers of power.[42] Cultural institutions and organizations are profoundly influenced by the political establishment in the country and they adapt their program in accordance with the official political dynamic.

In this way the role of the artist in the Republic of Macedonia is instrumentalized. The artist can simply be defined as a professional fulfilling a certain role in the enactment of state cultural policies and practices relating to the discourse of existing authorities.[43] With the exception of some independent artistic productions, artists in the Republic of Macedonia are included in institutional structures and programs. The purpose of the majority of newly built museums, exhibitions, and cultural events promoted is to achieve materialization of the conservative party VMRO DPMNE's political narrative.[44] This is evident in the case of the project "Skopje 2014" which stands for the reconstruction of national identity as well as the re-representation of Macedonian history, realized in the capital city. The project started in 2010 and involves museums, buildings, and monuments inspired by the past. It is actually a project dedicated to strengthening national identity through neoclassical and baroque architecture and sculptures.[45] The project illustrates a crucial element of the way in which cultural production is instrumentalized by the political establishment and governmental politics in the Republic of Macedonia.

"Skopje 2014": Fountains and revamped facade, photo Vladan Jeremić.

We turn now to evidence of some subversive artistic practices in the Republic of Macedonia that relate to the breakdown of the previous system and the emergence of authoritarianism and hyperpatriotism embodied in new models of social and political order in this country. This situation poses a challenge to artists who aspire to contemplate new agendas and practices in relation to the overall social and political arrangement. It involves the articulation of a different form of action that is not institutionalized and will serve as a call for social change. In line with this aim, "the artist needs to establish a new attitude, based on radical democratic policy that would call for articulation of different levels of strategy".[46] This requires applied effort on all levels of social relations and practices in order to discover new forms of political life, to support new movements that would stimulate the emergence of new ethics and mobilize new initiatives.

Aiming to develop a vision for social change

In considering subversive practices in the Republic of Macedonia, it is important to start by identifying subversiveness on the Macedonian art scene by "the manner in which artists are organized, the situations in which they perform and present themselves, the relations they build, maintain, avoid or break among themselves,"[47] as well as the stances they take. Various subversive practices can be identified in Macedonia, generated by day-to-day political circumstances, as well as by the ever

more present intention in other countries of the region to produce different artistic strategies.

Many debates and initiatives have been undertaken with the aim of developing a vision for social change. These attempts can be defined as unclassified and their goal was to contemplate the possibility of a different political engagement. They emphasize the principles for different practices, where "in the sphere of action of what has been preformulated as artists and critics' competence, the foundation and the improvement of the ethical principles should be of pivotal importance".[48] As an illustration of this, I would refer to the project called "10-minute Protest", initiated by myself and realized on May 15, 2014 in the CAC gallery in Skopje, followed by a discussion about redefining and repoliticizing artistic practices with the participation of activists, cultural workers, politicians and columnists. Protest slogans were exhibited as part of the project. The main aim of the project was that protest should be seen as a means of artistic action. The discussion itself produced the opinion that this is not "the time for negotiation, but for confrontation because we are living in a state of siege"[49], which indeed distills the artists' position towards different forms of action. The project laid out the existing situation and opened the prospect of providing preconditions, perhaps even an actual possibility, for action. It illustrates cognitive subversion, as does the observation that in certain cases "we can sense that efforts are being made to draft a certain strategy of negation, a program for foundation of subversiveness."[50] This implies that "political subversion presupposes cognitive subversion" [51] or a change in the vision of the world that would later be embodied in a series of actions. The idea is supported by Mill's view on the French Revolution, that "the subversion of established institutions is merely one consequence of the previous subversions of established opinions".[52]

It was found that several artists, in interaction with individuals and groups, had taken initiatives that can be deemed subversive, mostly in reaction to the current situation in the Republic of Macedonia. These actions have most commonly been organized as civil initiatives. I will start with the intervention provoked by the government plans to erect the statue of the "Warrior on a Horse" and performed by an informal group on February 4, 2010. The intervention consisted of writing graffiti on the metal safety fencing of the monument construction site in downtown Skopje, an action almost immediately interrupted by a police intervention. The police asked the participants for their ID and they were accused of a misdemeanor against public hygiene because they were writing graffiti on a public building. The metal fencing was repainted the following day.

On another occasion, this group intervened by placing stickers to replace the street name signs in Skopje. The wording of all the stickers was identical: Boulevard of Lesbian Revolution. These inscriptions were placed on several buildings in the center of the city on November 12, 2013. This action was provoked by the decision of city authorities to rename many streets throughout Skopje. The new names of the streets were a result of the revision of national history by the government of the

Republic of Macedonia. The motivation behind this subversive act, according to the official explanation, was to liberate homophobic Skopje. This confirms the position that art uses subversive strategies that appropriate cultural space, while "artists break through the semantic sphere by means of decontextualization and re-contextualization of signs".[53]

Regarding LGBT rights in the Republic of Macedonia, another action was aimed at blocking the normal functioning of the institution of the public prosecutor. Provoked by an act of violence that members of this community suffered from unknown perpetrators and the lack of any legal resolution of the case, a group consisting of human rights activists, members of the LGBT community and their supporters, and artists held a peaceful protest in front the office of the public prosecution or Office of the Republic of Macedonia, underscoring the inefficiency of institutions and the lack of political will to resolve the cases of violence against this group in Macedonia. The blockade of this institution interrupted its normal functioning, making this action exceptionally successful. The protest included a performance which consisted of symbolically placing "corpses" in plastic bags in front of

Left: The monument of the citizens of Skopje shot by the fascists on 13 November 1944, source: Okno.mk; Right: Erection of the improvised cardboard monument, photo: Vanco Dzambaski.

Protest of the association AJDE. Photo: Vanco Dzambaski.

the public prosecution office with the aim of exposing the attitude of the official authorities towards the LGBT community.

In a different context, a group of citizens consisting of artists, activists, and cultural workers initiated an action that was aimed at reminding the public of the removed monument commemorating the death of nine people shot by the so-called fascists on the morning of November 13, 1944 in revenge for the partisan attacks upon the liberation of the city. The group erected an improvised cardboard copy of the missing monument (see image) at its original site by the Stone Bridge in Skopje. The monument was removed the very same day, soon after it had been erected. This event was intended to confront the revisionist iconography of the projects for new monuments in Skopje supported by the Ministry of Culture.

Another initiative, combining a public protest and a performance, was organized by the association AJDE, a platform for civil politics, with the participation of several artists and cultural workers. The performance took place on February 19, 2015 in front of the Ministry of Health and the participants wore white masks and dark clothes, symbolically underlining their unequivocal demands that the Ministry of Health should be held accountable for causing the death of a nine-year-old girl by negligence and incompetence. Furthermore, members of the group "Ajde", seated on chairs, held a protest performance in front of the public broadcaster MRT and

'Colorful Revolution' protest in Skopje. Photo: Vanco Dzambaski.

demanded it be returned to the citizens. They publicly appealed to MRT that it should be a public service of the citizens, not a government propaganda service. This action was realized on November 9, 2014 and in the words of the artists themselves, it was a testimony to the necessity of the artists' involvement in civil movements and initiatives, so that their artistic ideas might help increase the visibility of the action and add creative momentum to help convince the public and the authorities to correct their erroneous policies.[54]

Finally, all these attempts were summarized in the "Colorful Revolution", where neo-classical and baroque facades of public buildings were colored and other artistic activities carried out, actions that were subversive with regard to the existing political order in the Republic of Macedonia and thus contributed to political change in the country. The artists involved in this protest hold that the coloring, seen as an artistic practice, is intertwined with activist forms of action that undermine the institutional and corrupt system in the Republic of Macedonia. This is summarized in the statement that "from an artistic point of view, painting buildings and monuments in downtown Skopje is authentic phenomenon for the country, where art becomes a tool for achieving political change".[55] It is astonishing how artistic means — paint — became a weapon for achieving social and political goals in Macedonia's Colorful Revolution.

Practices create political stance

The cases selected in this study do not exhaust all the practices undertaken in the Republic of Macedonia. They were chosen because they illustrate different forms, imperatives and motivations. All these practices were characterized by subversiveness against the official politics in the Republic of Macedonia which, according to the actors of these practices, run contrary to rather than promoting justice and liberty in a democratically equal society. The activities were realized as nomadic actions outside of the established institutions. They opposed the existing centers of power in the Republic of Macedonia through the occupation of various public spaces, issuing a series of social and political demands. Moreover, these practices can be considered as urban grassroots mobilization and as "a new phase in the development of postsocialist civil societies".[56] Even here, they can be seen as the actualization and concretization of Gramsci's "series of negations".[57] They represented a vision for redefining and repoliticizing the role of the artist, as well as a refusal of the existing norms and criteria that instrumentalize artistic practices, thus creating the possibility of arriving at a political stance.[58] In order to make these practices efficient and to achieve certain goals, the artists forgo privileged positions and transgress institutional lines of the Republic of Macedonia.

The practices discussed here, such as the graffiti on the fencing, the replacement of street signs with stickers, and the improvised cardboard monument, mobilized participants in the struggle to oppose official government policies aimed at recoding the identity of citizens in the Republic of Macedonia. The performance in front of the public prosecution office is part of the struggle of groups suffering sexual discrimination and this particular protest was against the institutions failing to sanction an act of violence perpetrated against members of this community. The protest in front of the Ministry of Health can be defined as social struggle against dysfunctional institutions whose incompetence led to the loss of a human life. Another important action of this group was the performance staged in front of the public broadcaster MRT and the demands that it be returned to the citizens. Finally, actions that were part of Colorful Revolution are an example of artistic involvement through using paint-filled balloons against government buildings and monuments that represent current politics in Republic of Macedonia. In this political performance, a lot of people out on the streets were involved in this act of using artistic means in the struggle for democracy.[59] At a more fundamental level, all these practices, each of which makes a particular contribution, embodied the principles, forms and agency of subversiveness I have discussed.

The actions described above involved different profiles of participants and in that sense it is fair to claim that they outline the agent of subversiveness which presupposes space of interaction through various forms and principles. Allying these subjects through groupings of initiatives, discussions, political activists, and individuals with cultural and artistic affinities involves different approaches and various degrees of horizontal organization.[60] Furthermore, discussing the agent of subversiveness of

these artistic practices establishes the possibility of a more general subject; that is, citizens who strive to achieve social change. The agent of change can be identified through a combination of individuals and groupings that exist separately. Implicitly, this illustrates how the agent consists of a multitude, and hence is composed of a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different."[61] They represent the possibility of stimulating "the daily struggles of the workers themselves, their coordinated acts of resistance, insubordination and subversion of the relations of domination in the workplace and in society at large."[62] Each of these struggles unfolded separately as an independent entity, raising the question and the challenge of how they could be unified in the Republic of Macedonia.

Looking at this issue, it can be seen that a certain level of partial association has occurred over some political and social issues, but above all, over ethical principles. The social engagement of the cultural subject, the visual artist, should be encouraged and supported and the ethical autonomy of the artist in the space of public interest should be seen as the key issue of these actions. The principles of freedom of speech or freedom of choice or the struggle against economic inequality, unemployment and poverty, environmental protection and reduction of pollution can all help in unifying different individuals and groups, whose radical stance includes total negation of the unjust social, cultural, political and economic context of the Republic of Macedonia. These practices demonstrate significant and appropriate strategies for authentic action.

Consequently, subversive practices might be the only engaged and significant attitudes under present circumstances in the Republic of Macedonia. The vision of these actions sees the artistic, that is to say, "the creative, political and mediatic fields" as "intrinsically linked", so that "contemporary cultural practices point toward a new, better society in which art has merged with lived experience."[63] The outcomes of these practices can be twofold: first, they are involved in the specific context; and second, they are part of a wider process of concretizing subversiveness in the field of art.

Conclusion

Subversive practices in art consist of radical forms of transgression of established social and political norms through a form of resistance, protest and creativity visualized in public spaces. These practices in art take very different forms depending on the spatial and political contexts of the activities as those contexts are crucial in understanding them. Practicing such acts includes various forms of acting in order to increase public awareness of existing social problems and to initiate changes. This work highlights the complex and ever-shifting relationships between artistic practices and political and social contexts and challenges. This was the initial approach whereby some of the modes of action employed by the artists were identified.

The study discussed theoretical aspects of subversiveness through the lens of an agent, principles and forms of action and their contribution to the ways in which artistic practices intervene in political contexts and disrupt spatial structures. On this topic, the study continued by identifying these practices within the context of the Republic of Macedonia. Using the Republic of Macedonia for case analysis was productive because of the radical changes and transformations it had undergone in past decade, coupled with the political crisis. Recent cases of subversive practices in art in the country offered characteristics to the core of my argument. The study clarified that the instrumentalization of cultural institutions in the country generates the need for different actions against erroneous and unjust policies, especially in cases where they are reinforced by complex political circumstances and accusations of abuse of power by the governing party. In investigating these acts in the Republic of Macedonia as a research area, subversiveness was detected as set up in a given political context where several important practices were portrayed as a confirmation of performative politics which extend political struggle. This is basically a result of the ever more complicated day-to-day political situation and the impossibility of acting effectively in other ways. The acts demonstrate the ways in which individuals and groups engage in civil movements and initiatives by using the means of artists. and can be considered as a possible strategy of authentic action for the future. I showed how these practices merge in the interface of social and political change. These findings suggest in the most general sense that socio-political contexts make it possible for different artistic practices to interact in public spaces.

This study found that subversiveness can be modified and can contain new explanatory implications and connotations in the field of art. Consequently, subversion is perceived as an important activity in the political arena, offering a significant engagement with burning social questions and problems. These practices gain meaning and importance not only due to the resistance or critical positions they offer. They are important above all because they expand the space of the possible in terms of visualizing new initiatives and forms of creativity. This article discussed the possibility of renewing different art affiliations, since art today is totally usurped or interrupted by its instrumentalization, that is to say, interrupted with regards to the history of subversive practices and the idea of visual arts as an anti-systemic and social movement. The implications of the study lie in the possibility of these findings being applied to other geographical and political contexts that are undergoing political processes of transformation in different circumstances. Establishing new cases and insights of subversiveness in art will contribute to the contemporary debate regarding creativity and accomplishments of these acts.

This paper was published for the first time in the journal Baltic Worlds.
Topuzovski T. (2017) Subversive artistic practices: Visualising resistance in the Republic of Macedonia, Baltic Worlds, X: 1, pp. 9-17

Tihomir Topuzovski received his doctoral degree from the University of Birmingham UK and was a guest researcher at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, Södertörn University. He is currently collaborating on research looking at the politicization of space and artistic practices displaying a new understanding of temporary urbanism.

References

1 Jacques Ranciere, "Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in conversation with Jacques Ranciere," *Artforum 45* (2007): 256—269.

2 Alan R. Ingram, "Making Geopolitics Otherwise: Artistic Interventions in Global Political Space," *The Geographical Journal 177*, no. 3 (2011): 218—222.

3 Brian B. Holmes, *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society* (Zagreb and Eindhoven: WHW/Van Abbemuseum, 2009).

4 Gene Ray, "Toward a Critical Art Theory", in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. G. Raunig and G. Ray (London: Mayfly, 2009), 79.

5 Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 12.

6 Anthony Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics", *Third Text 21*, no. 3 (2007): 267—275.

7 Bożenna Stokłosa, "Trickster: Mythical Deity, Archetype and Figure of a Creator", in *Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice*, ed. Anna Markowska (Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies and Tako Publishing House, 2013), 27.

8 William Rosenau, "Subversion and Insurgency", *Rand Counterinsurgency Study Occasional Paper 2* (2007), 4.

9 Carl Levy, "'Sovversivismo': The Radical Political Culture of Otherness in Liberal Italy," *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 12:2 (2007): 147—161.

10 Ibid, 148—49.

11 Immanuel Wallerstein, "Antisystemic Movements: History and Dilemmas," in *Transforming the Revolution*, ed. S. Amin, G. Arrighi, A. Gunder Frank, and I. Wallerstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 16.

12 S. A. Chambers and T. Carver, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

13 Carl Levy, "'Sovversivismo'".

14 Ibid, 149.

15 Immanuel Wallerstein, "Antisystemic Movements", 36.

16 Jacques Ranciere, "Art of the Possible".

17 Ibid, 263.

18 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

19 Boris Groys "The Weak Universalism", e-flux, accessed April 2013, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/15/61294/the-weak-universalism/.

20 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Harvard University Press 1984)

21 Martinez Francisco, "Beautiful Transgressions: Thinking the Flaneur in Late-modern Societies", in *Hopeless Youth!* ed. Francisco Martinez and Pille Runnel (Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum [Estonian National Museum] 2016), 422.

22 Jacques Ranciere, "Art of the Possible", 266.

23 Irina Gavrash, "Subversive strategies in contemporary Russian art " in *Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice* ed. Anna Markowska (Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House Toruń, 2013), 77.

24 Glover Michael, "Chto Delat? What Is to Be Done? ICA, London", *Independent*, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/reviews/chto-delat-what-is-to-be-done-ica-london-2086845.html, accessed May 20, 2012.

25 E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London: Verso, 2001).

26 Boris Groys, "On Art Activism," *e-flux*, Accessed September 9, 2014, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/.

27 Ibid.

28 Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, (London: Continuum, 2010), 142; 176.

29 Ibid., 134.

30 Irina Gavrash, "Subversive Strategies in Contemporary Russian Art", in *Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice*, ed. Anna Markowska (Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, 2013), 78.

31 Irina Hasnaș Hubbard, "Curatorial Performances: Looking for Trickster Curators in Museums in Romania", in *Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice*, ed. Anna Markowska (Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, 2013), 200.

32 "We occupy museums to reclaim space for meaningful culture by and for the 99%. art and culture are the soul of the commons. art is not a luxury!", *Occupymuseums*, http://occupymuseums.org/, accessed September 2014.

33 J. Pickles and A. Smith, *Theorising transition: the political economy of post-Communist transformations*, (London: Rutledge,1998).

34 M. Simai (2006), *Poverty and Inequality in Eastern Europe and the CIS Transition Economies. DESA*, Working Paper No. 17. ST/ESA/2006/DWP/17.

35 Matthew Brunwasseroct, "Concerns Grow About Authoritarianism in Macedonia", *The New York Times*, accessed June 18, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/14/world/europe/concerns-grow-aboutauthoritarianism-in-macedonia.html.

36 Andrew MacDowall, "Fears for Macedonia's Fragile Democracy Amid 'Coup' and Wiretap Claims", *The Guardian*, accessed May 28, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/27/fears-macedonias-fragiledemocracy-amid-coup-wiretap-claims.

37 Common Media Pressing Issues in Six SEE Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, ed. Ana Hećimović and Iva Milanović-Litre (Zagreb: Partnership for Social Development, 2014), 31.

38 Author's interview with a member of political party.

39 Author's interview with a writer.

40 Krisztina Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary*, (Indiana University Press, 2013)

41 G. Deleuze and F. A. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

42 Author's interview with a political activist.

43 M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

44 Author's interview with a writer.

45 Author's interview with an art historian.

46 Ibid.

47 Author's interview with a cultural theorist.

48 Author's interview with an art historian.

49 Iskra Geshoska, "10 minuti protest", accessed June 15, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnWFgODOoEA.

50 Author's interview with an art historian and theoretician

51 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1982),127—128.

52 John Stuart Mill, "A Few Observations on the French Revolution (1833)", in J. S. Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions, vol. 1* (London: John W. Parker, 1859), 56—57.

53 Gavrash, "Subversive Strategies", 77.

54 Author's interview with an artist.

55 Author's interview with an artist and political activist.

56 Kerstin Jacobsson, ed., *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

57 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 273.

58 Ranciere, *Dissensus*.

59 Author's interview with a member of political party.

60 Jeffrey Juris, "A New Way of Doing Politics? Global Justice Movements and the Cultural Logic of Networking,", *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, accessed January 2, 2015, http://rsa.revues.org/521.

61 M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 99.

62 Ibid, 80.

63 Irmgard Emmelhainz, "Art and the Cultural Turn: Farewell to Committed, Autonomous Art?" *e-flux Journal 42* (2013), accessed May 2015, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-and-the-cultural-turn-farewell-to-committedautonomous-art/.

Dictionary of Resistance for Beginners

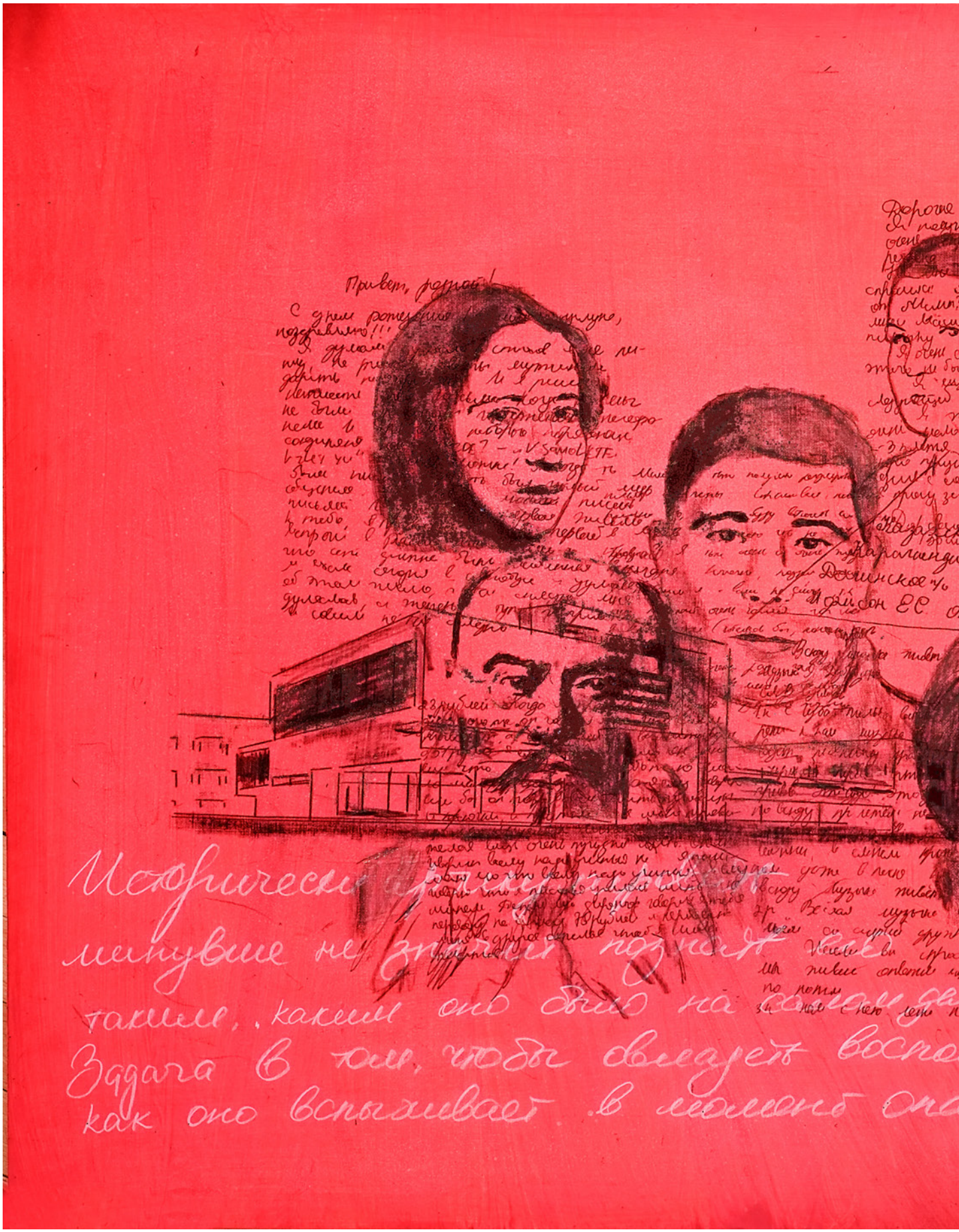
Haim Sokol

Artists' strike (common places)

Suppose a miracle happened, and a general artists' strike began. But what kind of work does the artist cease to perform during the strike? In the case of railway workers, metallurgists, teachers, the answer is obvious. However, what does the artists' strike mean? Let's say that this is a refusal to create art works. In this case, we reduce the artist's work to the work of an artisan, and the work to a commodity. Despite all the non-obviousness of this (however, very common) identification, we can, nevertheless, draw from it a useful conclusion regarding the legal side of the artist's activity. If an artwork is a product produced by an artist, then the exhibition for which this work is done is a production. This means that the invitation of the artist to the exhibition is equal to hiring an employee for the enterprise and must be carried out according to all the norms of the labor code. That is, not only the creation of work, the technical part (after all, the budget of the exhibition is the capital that its owner invests in a certain way, and this investment has no relation to the artist, just like the purchase of new machines by the owner of the plant does not concern the hired workers). The artist's time spent on the production and installation of the work must be paid for. If you consider the artist as an individual entrepreneur, then in the case of inviting them to the exhibition they as such provides an inviting institution their creation for an exhibition or loans their already finished work. This is the only way to consistently understand the identification of the artist's work with the labor of the proletarian or artisan. A strike based on this understanding can lead to a collapse or to a radical transformation of the existing institutional system.

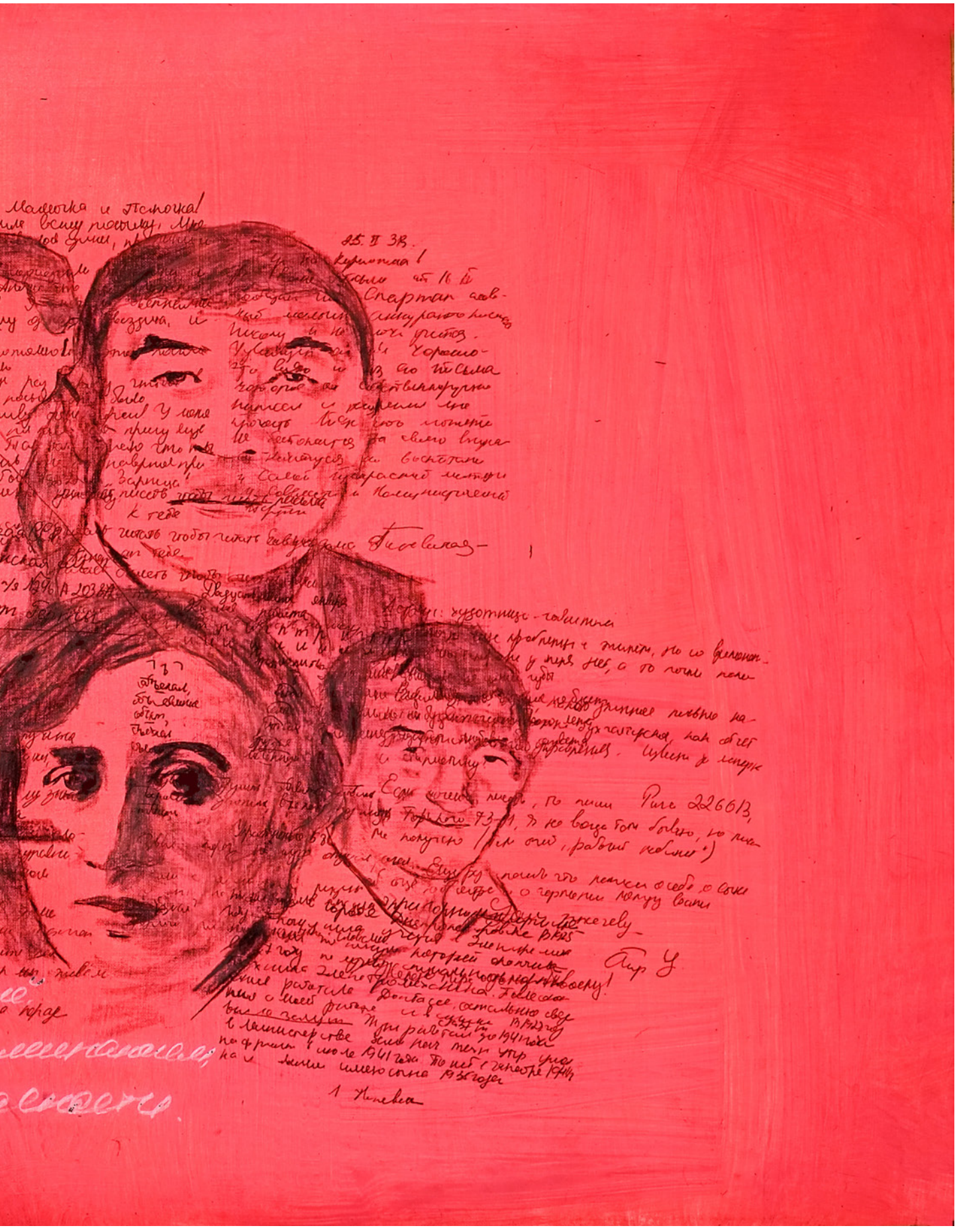
Unfortunately, artists are looking for solutions to their problems not through the law, but through art. For a long time already the refusal to create a work has turned into a form of work. Thus, it seems, this clearly demonstrates the impossibility of the cessation of the artist's work in this context. This brings us back to the question of what an artists' strike is. If we insist on the answer to this question that the artist's work is not material, then what exactly is it and how can we stop it? Does

Poster no. VI from the series "On the Concept of History". By Haim Sokol.



English translation:

To articulate what is past does not mean to recognize "how it really was." It means to take control of a memory, as it flashes in a moment of danger.



Doublepages:

Haim Sokol, "On the concept of History"

The series is titled "On the concept of History" after Walter Benjamin's last text written in 1940 not long before his death. I decided to turn these theses into a material of agitation. It can be printed out and used on ralleys , pickets, etc. I mix different historical figures like Benjamin, Hanna Arendt, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg with Russian activists like Anastasia Baburova which was killed by neo-nazis in Moscow in 2009, together with contructivist buildings and anonymous people. I also depicted Kazakh poet Abay Kunanbaev because the Occupy Moscow movement was located near the monument to Abay in the center of Moscow in 2011 and was also called "Occupy Abay". Along with Abay I depicted kazakh women-heroes of the WWII Aliya Maldagulova and Manshuk Mametova with anonymous people from the Kazakh town Zhanaosen where in 2011 a big strike of oil miners took place which was brutally suppressed by military forces. All this people meet in the poetical dimension of History. Above the drawings I wrote by hand quotes from Benjamin's "Theses" translated into Russian.

Haim Sokol is an installation, sculpture, and video-based artist whose practice addresses the dramatic social histories of Russia and Eastern Europe. Sokol roots his use of literary allusion in historical reality and the legacy of major 20th century uprisings, revolutions, massacres and genocides. Sokol has exhibited in solo exhibitions at the M&J Guelman Gallery, Triumph Gallery, Anna Nova Gallery and other galleries in Russia. He has participated in the First Indian Biennale (2012), the Third Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2009), the Second Biennale of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki (2009), the First Moscow Biennial for Young Artists (2008), School of Kyiv - the 2nd Kyiv Biennial (2015).

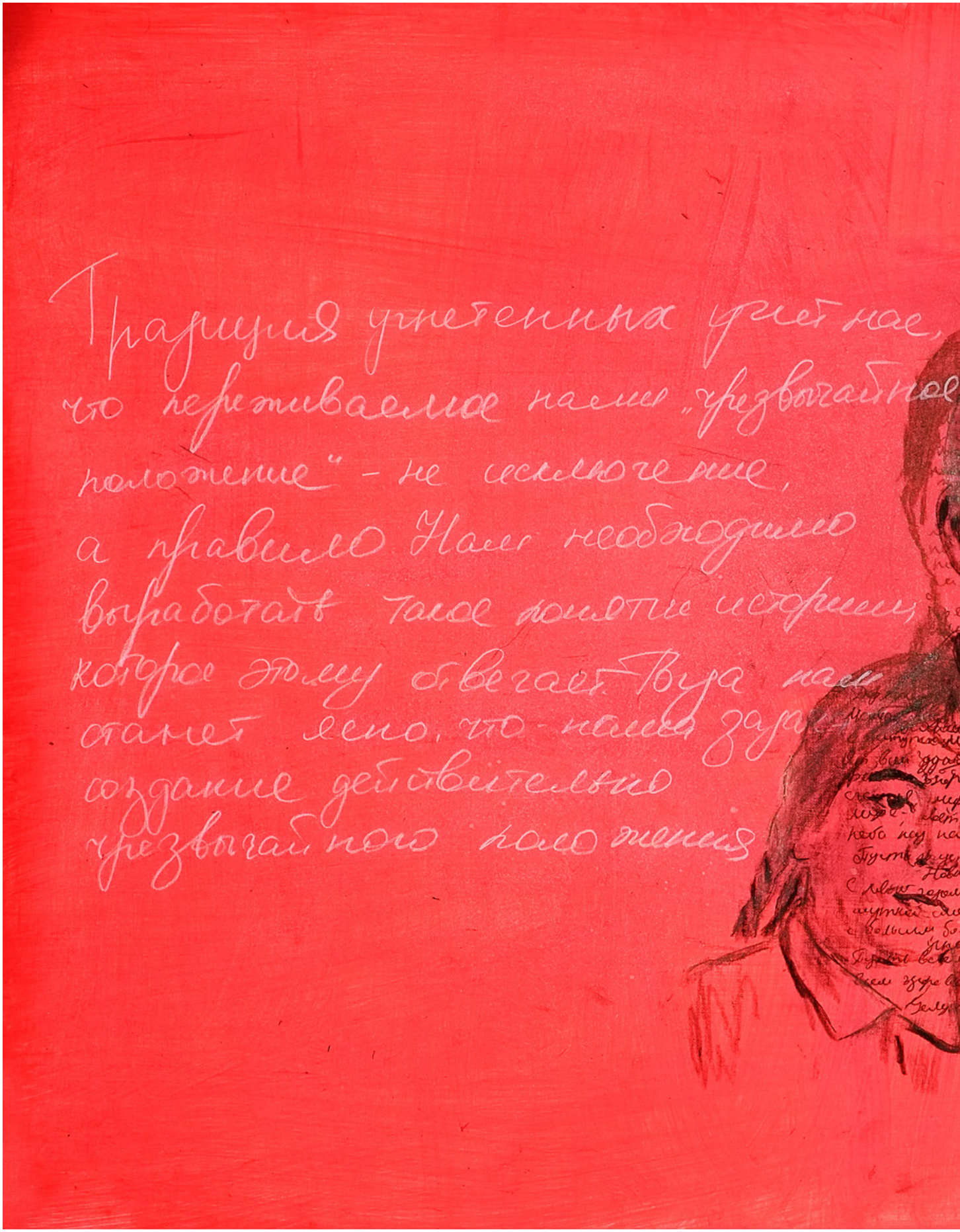
this mean a rejection of intellectual activity? And even if such a refusal is possible, what impact can it have on the world? In other words, can there be a material stop of immaterial labor? Will not this be another mental exercise, a kind of intellectual product?

Perhaps we can begin to answer these questions if we refuse to understand the strike as a complete (albeit temporary) termination of work. In the case of art, this means stopping to function in a normal mode. Art is the dream of the revolution. And if this is so, then we must get rid of such art to wake up the revolution or, more precisely, to invent a new art that will no longer distract our mind and our senses. In place of the pictorial regime, when the text dominates the image, and the aesthetic mode, when the form contains a ciphered text, a performative (political) regime should occur in which word, image and action are equal. There are times when the canvas turns into a banner. And such times have come.

Defeat

Of course, there is a lot of talk about historical defeat. There is something total, final and hopeless in defeat. In comparison with defeat, failure or error is easy, almost weightless. Failure is fraught with a second chance, a mistake - hope for correction. But defeat is hard like a fist, and crushing like a knockout. It strikes like a blow, throwing the enemy on the ground. In the story "The City Coat of Arms" Kafka describes a city, whose inhabitants are mired in destructive wars, and who forget about the construction of the tower, the main purpose of its existence. A giant fist on the emblem serves as a warning to them that one day it will fall upon them and destroy the city, punishing the inhabitants for inaction. Historical defeat - forgetfulness of purpose, betrayal of truth. Hence, being associated with oblivion, defeat is rooted in the past. Only there it is possible. We do not suffer defeat, we who live here and now, but our predecessors, generations who lived before us do. Every time, recognizing our own defeat, we inflict a powerful blow on our predecessors, helping their winners. Therefore, our task - regardless of anything, is not to admit defeat. This is the key to a historic victory, which is non-defeat. This also means that historical victory is inextricably linked with the past. Revenge, a thirst for revenge, resentment have nothing to do with it, because they belong entirely to the present. We keep our account in history. Going to the demonstration in defense of migrants, we continue the fight in the Warsaw ghetto, joining the trade union, we join the general strike of 1905, and by raising tents in the streets of our cities, we are defending the Paris Commune. We fail in our ways, make mistakes, but we do not give up.

Poster no. VIII from the series "On the Concept of History". By Haim Sokol.



English translation:
The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "emergency situation" in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history which corresponds to this. Then it will become clear that the task before us is the introduction of a real state of emergency.

Garden-City

Nothing blooms in the sand or between pavements, except words.

Jaques Derrida. Writing and Difference, 1967

If this is so, we will plow the asphalt and sow it with letters. Our words will spread around the city like poplar fluff. We'll open the windows wide. And our feelings will cease to break on the glass monitors. They will again nest in the shady crowns of trees. But for now we will save the seed letters in the alphabets. Our children will grow a garden city. We must win for them our right to this city. For this we need to return to the Gutenberg press. But only to remove the capital letters and cast bullets out of them.

Occupy

"Do not demand anything, occupy everything!". This is the psychology of the virus. The motto of a bare life. In it, all the weakness of contemporary art. Why do we need everything, if we do not want anything? Or we want, but do not demand? We are already everywhere, and we are silent. And how can we occupy what is rightfully ours? Our streets, our freedom, our future? They can only be defended or won. Because our cities have long been captured.

Occupy - what fascinated us with this word? A ringing diphthong or an iron taste of militarism? Why are we so careless in our choice of words? And if we have already opened a dictionary of war, why do not we find other words there - for example, résistance or partisans? The sound of metal can also be heard in the combination of "-an" sounds. But this is the ringing of the alarm, it is the blow of the iron pipe into the rail. Why are we so unconscious? Maybe because the iPad cannot be brushed against the grain. But the revolution is not done with the iPad in hand.

"Do not demand anything" - why do we start all the slogans and end up with nothing? Why this shyness? Our will has become entangled in social networks. We are afraid to legitimize power by making demands on it. But who said that you need to make demands that the authorities are able to fulfill?

In Claude Lanzmann's film Shoah, one of the witnesses, a former prisoner of Auschwitz and a member of the underground, tells the following story. The German prisoners who headed the underground were against the uprising and fought for an overall improvement in conditions in the camps. To some extent they succeeded. Conditions have become slightly better, mortality has decreased. But a decrease in the death rate caused a shortage of space. Therefore, upon arrival in the camp, whole echelons of people were, without discrimination, without selection, sending no one to work, sent directly to the gas chambers. Only an uprising could have stopped

the machine of death, something which never happened in Auschwitz. We have a chance to fix something. It does not matter that more than eighty years have passed since then. People, time, life have changed. But for us there is still an actual choice - the struggle for better conditions or insurrection?

Pity

We have forgotten what solidarity is. All we have left is pity. Rejecting politics and history, we have condemned ourselves to loneliness. Pity is the lot of the lonely, a refuge for the lonely. Pity is in essence an emotion, and as such is predominately private. A collective feeling of pity sounds like nonsense. To pity, to feed, to blame. Who? It does not matter! For pity you merely need an object in the accusative case. In Hebrew, the word "rachamim", meaning pity or compassion, is the plural form of "racham", meaning womb or uterus (the plural, however, emphasizes the capacity for this emotion in both parents). To pity someone is to treat them as a parent would treat a child, as a superior would treat a subordinate, as the strong would treat the weak. Pity always lives in the here and now. It does not know the past. The dead are not pitied. In the best case scenario, they are mourned. So a world filled with pity is also a world filled with evil. Pity, especially self-pity, is always subservient to evil.

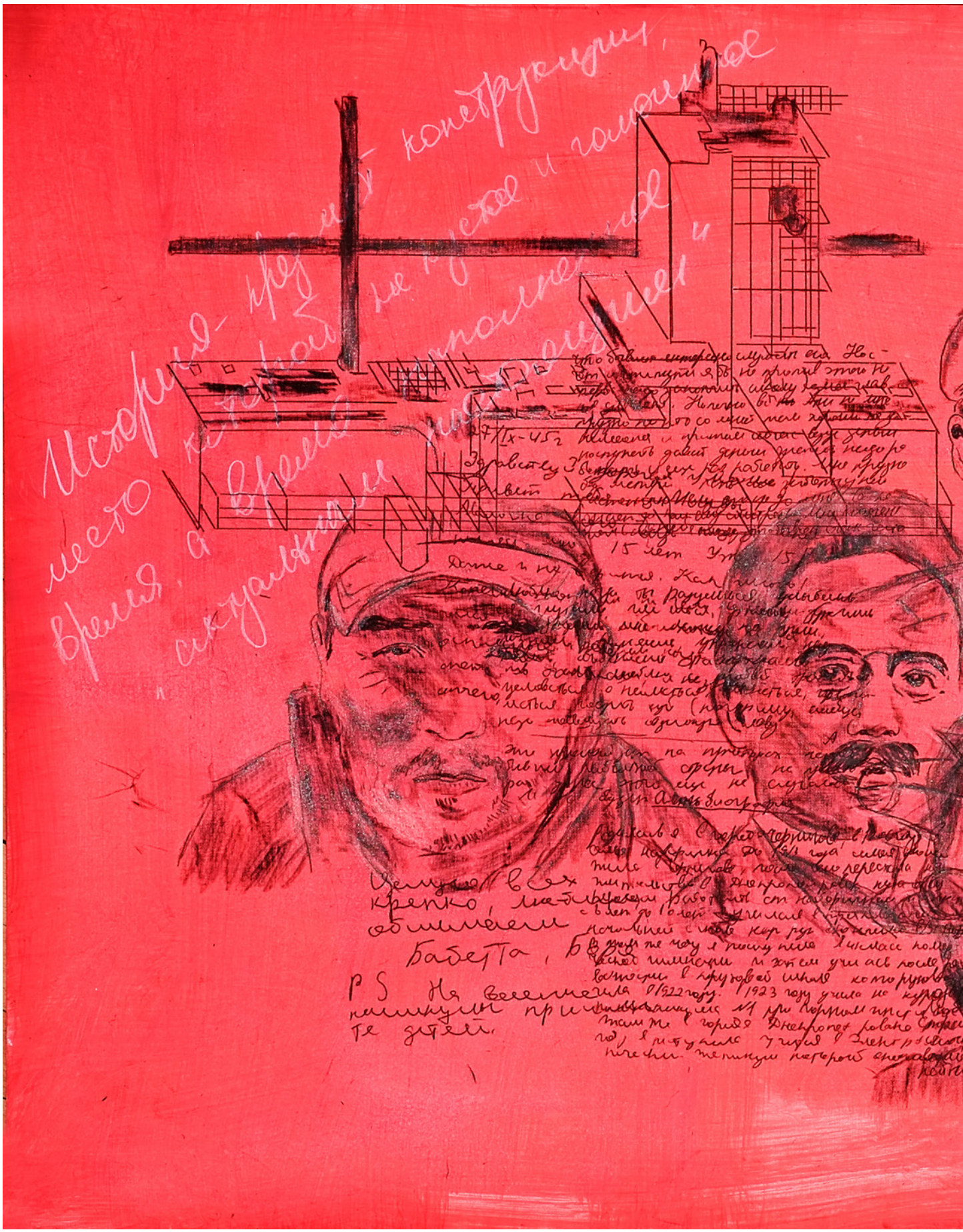
Presentiment

Historical events do not have directors.

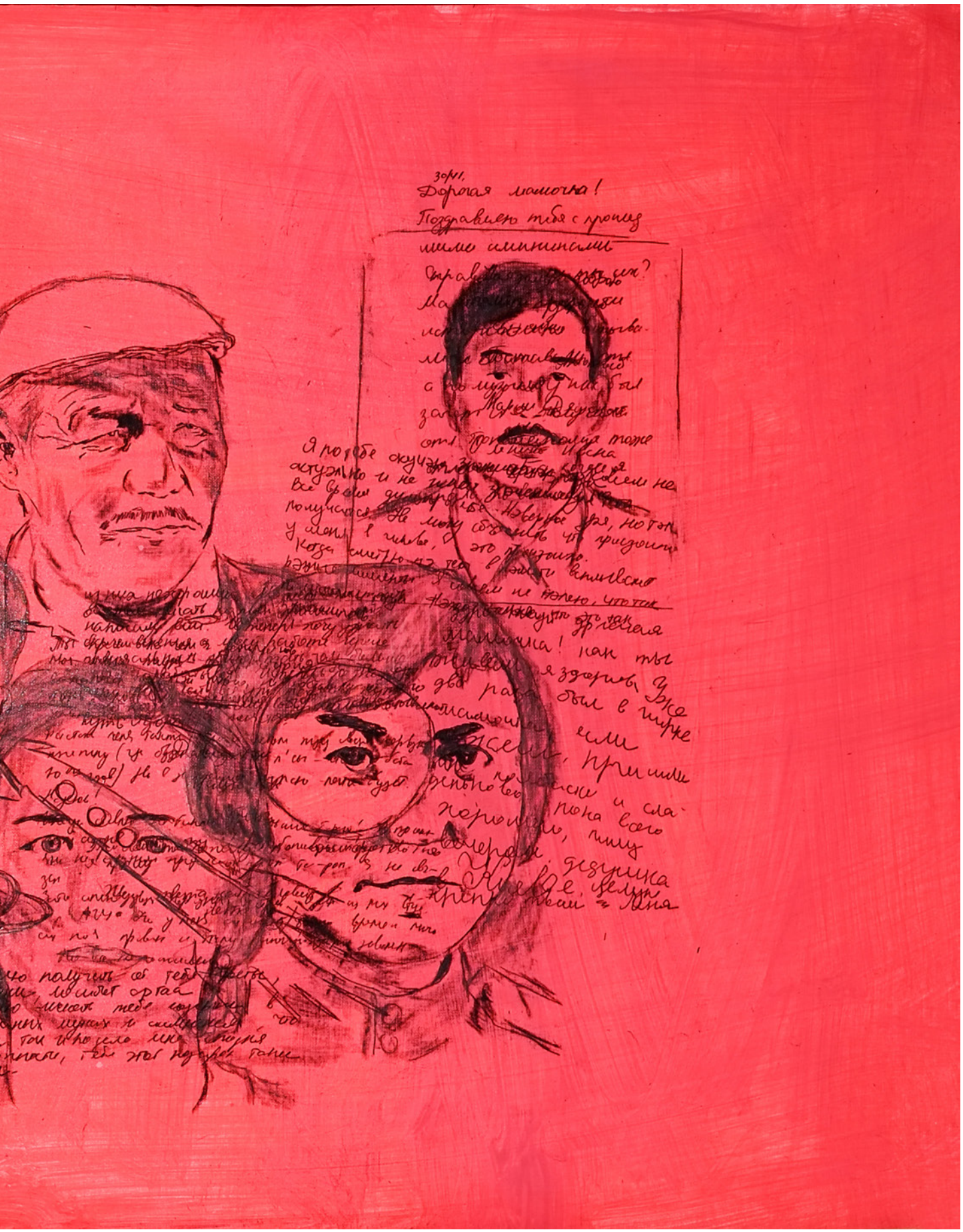
Osip Mandelstam

A premonition is a visit the day before. This state is between anxiety and expectation. Experience the future experience, knowledge to knowledge. Presentiments do not lead us to action. They torture us and often deceive us. But foreboding is the beginning, the promise. If there is pre-feeling, there will be a feeling. This is the first sign of healing from blind-deaf-dumbness. So, perhaps, this is the beginning of a sense of justice, solidarity, a sense of freedom. A premonition eats signs. As the approach of a thunderstorm can be seen before the first appearance of clouds, so future events are felt in the changed walk of people, in the noise of ventilation, in the excitement of puddles, in the alarming trolley call, in the whispers of monuments. You just have to see, listen, wake up. And, maybe, then the curtain will open in the Theater of History, and we will all go on stage.

Poster no. XIV from the series "On the Concept of History". By Haim Sokol.



English translation:
History is the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now [Jetztzeit].



Solidarity

Solidarity is a state. It has no verb, just like the words "hunger" or "happiness". Solidarity can only be. But, unlike hunger, this state is open, this is a state of openness. This is a state of multiplicity. To be solidary is to always be with someone. To be solidary means to be in the instrumental case. But more than "to be with someone", solidarity means to be someone. There is no "they", there are "we". There is no "other", there is "the same." "For the real and incredibly difficult task is to find the Same," wrote Alain Badiou in his *Ethics*. To be "the same" does not mean to be the same, but to be greater than you. It means being both yourself and the one with whom you are in solidarity. This means that the strike of the overseer's whip, falling on the slave's back, leaves a scar on your skin, the flesh of the rapist, who is torturing his victim, tears your organs, the neo-Nazi knife that attacked the migrant, stabs into your heart. And when your comrade is arrested, the iron door slams behind you. But it also means to be the one who is now in battle, on barricades, in demonstrations. This means that at the moment of truth you will rise and loudly say "I'm Spartacus!". And thousands of voices will echo "I'm Spartacus!". Solidarity is the roar of an angel of history. And the words "roar" and "speech" come from one root. And if solidarity has connected you to someone in the word "pain", become a gentle sign to alleviate this pain. But in the word "fury" become the first. Always like this. Solidarity has no statute of limitations. Solidarity knows no death.

Solitude

True solitude is not measured by the absence of people around someone. It should not be confused with isolation or seclusion. True solitude is measured by the preposition "instead of" rather than the adverb "together with". Thus the degree of solitude is determined by proximity to death. In death solitude is intrinsic and absolute. Closest to the limit, it is found in experiences that accompany it (death): pain, suffering, illness, torture, as well as giving birth, being in love, or even in dream. However, solitude is not solely a physical experience. Rather, it is an experience of the body, i.e. a body as a body is always solitary. And so it is not necessary to die or suffer to experience true solitude. It is sufficient for body to remain merely a body, a "bare life." To achieve that, a person must be formally taken out beyond the borders of life. That is the essence of exclusion. A person condemned to death is extremely alone. The Jews, walking in a line into the nearest forest to be shot, were alone not because no one could or would not save them, but because, legally speaking, they were already dead. The simple act of resurrection would not save them from solitude or bring them back to life. It is necessary to abolish those laws or formalities that took them beyond the borders of life.

Urban nomadism (Tents against the Tower of Babel)

Revolutionary nomadism of a new type. Not psycho-geography as a movement of loners who used their own subjectivities to study space, but the procession of the masses through the streets as the new Psyche of the city. "A city without a soul is unthinkable," Mandelstam wrote of the revived Petersburg in 1905. The city is dry bones. To revive them, you need to clothe them with flesh, breathe in your breath. The tent occupies not so much land as air. Many tents - lungs of the city. But we need air not only to breathe. We need it to speak, to shout. We need a new decree on language. Remove all frozen, dumb graphemes! The city is constrained by morphology. Towers are the obstacles that air strikes from our lungs, turning into consonants. But for songs you need vowels. Our squares, our streets and alleys, like our lips, will give them a shape, stretching or curling. And these sounds will breathe new fathoms into petrified root structures.

This text was first published in Russian in: Moscow Art Magazine # 91, 2013.
Translated by Corina L. Apostol.

Poster no. VIIa from the series "On the Concept of History". By Haim Sokol.

English translation:
In reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it its revolutionary chance—provided only that it is defined in a specific way, namely as the chance for a completely new resolution of a completely new problem.

We, the undersigned artists and critics, lend our support to the call for an Art Strike on Friday, January 20, 2017, the day that Donald Trump will assume the presidency of the United States.

The call reads:

#J20 Art Strike

An Act of Noncompliance on Inauguration Day.

No Work, No School, No Business.

Museums. Galleries. Theaters. Concert Halls. Studios. Nonprofits. Art Schools.

Close For The Day.

Hit The Streets. Bring Your Friends. Fight Back.

This call concerns more than the art field. It is made in solidarity with the nation-wide demand that on January 20 and beyond, business should not proceed as usual in any realm. We consider Art Strike to be one tactic among others to combat the normalization of Trumpism—a toxic mix of white supremacy, misogyny, xenophobia, militarism, and oligarchic rule. Like any tactic, it is not an end in itself, but rather an intervention that will ramify into the future. It is not a strike against art, theater, or any other cultural form. It is an invitation to motivate these activities anew, to reimagine these spaces as places where resistant forms of thinking, seeing, feeling, and acting can be produced.

We address ourselves to the people who make our cultural institutions run on a daily basis, including many of our own friends and colleagues. Those who work at the institutions are divided in multiple and unequal ways, and any action taken must prioritize the voices, needs and concerns of those with the most to lose. However you choose to respond to this call, Art Strike is an occasion for public accountability, an opportunity to affirm and enact the values that our cultural institutions claim to embody.

The disruptions of J20 are just the beginning. They will resonate with the Women's March on Washington, D.C. and other cities on January 21, and will stand as beacons of ungovernability as the darkness of the Trump era descends upon us. Let us assemble for the protracted battles that have long been underway, and those on the horizon.

Signatories (list in formation)

[Artists] [Critics] [Other]

Artists:
Noel W. Anderson
Julieta Aranda
Allora and Calzadilla
Chloe Bass
Mel Bochner
Imani Jacqueline Brown
Paul Chan
Eva Mayhabal Davis
Liz Deschenes
Ricardo Dominguez
Noah Fischer
Andrea Fraser
Coco Fusco
Mariam Ghani
Kyle Goen
Hans Haacke
Rachel Harrison
Sharon Hayes
Joan Jonas
Silvia Kolbowski
Barbara Kruger
Louise Lawler
Simon Leung
Simone Leigh
Nick Mauss
Julie Mehretu
Marilyn Minter
Naeem Mohaiemen
Tavia Nyong'o
Lorraine O'Grady
Ken Okiishi
Trevor Paglen
RH Quaytman
Walid Raad
Yvonne Rainer
Shellyne Rodriguez
Cameron Rowland
Marz Saffore
Dread Scott
Richard Serra
Cindy Sherman
Gregory Sholette
Amy Sillman
Cassie Thornton
Caroline Woolard
Anton Vidokle
Betty Yu
Or Zublasky
Jamie Bee
Tina Dillman
Nada Gordon
Tamara Gayer
Annie Felix
Anne Senstad
Jordan Weber
Cheyney Thompson
Eileen Quinlan
Aliza Augustine
Maximiliano Siñani
Benj Gerdes
Laura Elkins
Meryl Meisler
Kate Rhoades
Stephi Bones
Andrea Patricia Drechsler
Edward Hillel
Lauren Stroh
John Miller (Barnard College)
Aura Rosenberg
Despina Meimaroglou
Nika Radic
Jeff Kasper
Priyanka Dasgupta
Joyce Conlon
Myles Beecher-Pimental
Abigail Levine
Thomas Hirschhorn
Christine Marmé Thompson
Danica Phelps
Duncan House
LOUDER THAN WORDS (S.A. Bachman+Neda Moridpour)
Yorgos Maraziotis
Jane Black
Alicia Chester
Talib Fuegoverde
Ryan Vahey
Lis Brenner
William Greiner
Ruth Sergel
Renée Stout
Michelle Mayer
Kristine Woods
Carie Lassman
Diane Thodos
Alexandra Leon
Frank Johnson
Tania Bruguera
John Pietaro
Jennifer Rohn
Kim Power
Jochen Gerz
Holly Miller
Karen Donnellan
Sarah Blood
Mimi Lauducci
Richard Williams
Jean Shin
Daniel Temkin
Lucy Sexton
Liz Crossley
Ben Peterson
Jennifer Crescuillo
Drew Heitzler
Leonor Antunes
Lui Shtini
Monica Sirimarco
Nancy White
Janet Ballweg
Justin Brice Guariglia
Anita Thacher
Mimi Bai
Nora Griffin
Sandie Lee Butler
Martha Edelheit
Vázquez
Ken Ehrlich
Rocio Rodriguez
Erin Johnson
Justin James Reed
Paula Stuttman
Kay Rosen
Cheryl Gross
Dave Loewenstein
Carole Feuerman
Paul-Felix Montez
Lauren Gibbons Roll
Conn Ryder
Melanie Flood
A Yeatts Perry
Natalie Bookchin
Kerry Skarbakka
Jp Murphy
Silviana Agostini
Judith Barry
Otari Oliva Baudze
Jayne H. Baum
Edith Beaucage
Ross Bleckner
Adam Broomberg
Michelle Charles
Ken Ehrlich
Hermine Ford
Chris Garofalo
Adam Gildar
Kenneth Goldsmith (ubuweb)
Stanley Greenberg
Abou Farman Farmanian (The New School)
Jon Hendricks
Katherine Jackson
Lewis Koch
Catherine Lee
David Maisel
Amanda Mean
Anke Mellin
Gayil Nalls
Lilla LoCurto/Bill Outcault
Ian Alan Paul
Thomas Rose
Shelley Sacks
Roland Schoeny
Sean Snyder
Michael Tan
Joseph Urbach
Rebecca Weeks
Pete Driessen
Sheida Soleimani
EIDIA, Paul Lamarre, Melissa P. Wolf
Kate Fauvell
Irving Petlin
Norm Laich
Katie Commodore
Xaviera Simmons
Kate Millett
Schandra Singh
Peter Reginato
ED Sontag
Andy Miller
Adriana Varella
Maritza Perez
MOSCO UNO
Corban Walker
Raquel Vasquez
Diane Kaganova
Adam Broomberg
Dominic Gora
Jose Urbach
Chris Collins
Ben Wood
Christian Xatrec
Qiana Mestrich
Gelare Khoshgozaran
Alli Miller
Eliane Lima
Eva Bauer
Helen Hill
Alice Valente Alves
Liz Cohen
Cathy Meier Asher
Eric Baden
Peter Rostovsky
Virginia Maksymowicz
Paul Soulellis
Valarie Carey
Mark Rutkoski
Kevin Noble
Soreyda Benedit-Begley
John Willenbecher
Devin Cherubini
Joyce Kozloff
Erik Moskowitz
Avram Finkelstein
Otto Berchem
Ann B. Murphy
David Diao
Ulrike Müller
Jean Carlomusto
Red Hammond
Joan Scherman
Frances Barth
Jan Hashey
Andrea Blum (Hunter College)
Moyra Davey
Nick Nehéz
Dara Birnbaum
Shelly Silver
Blake R Baines
Ralph Lemon
Amy Stienbarger
Donald Moffett
Nathlie Provosty
Lewis Holman
Jill Levine
Laura Neuman
Or Zubalsky
Arias Alea
Drea Howenstein
Dawn Cerny
Eero Hagen
C.T. Jasper
Yoni Zonzein
Irene Christensen
Wynne Greenwood
Perry Bard
Tom Kalin
Quintan Ana Wikswo
Cindy Shih
Eli Thorne
Martha Wilson
Allison Sommers
Sam Lewitt
Lucretia Knapp
Elizabeth Withstandley
Jessie Stead
Cindy Shih
Elena Harvey Collins
Stephen Barker
Ardele Lister
Colin Self
Day Gleeson
Daniela Uremv
David Dempewolf
Rebecca Hayes
Karyn Olivier
Marcela Pardo Ariza
Adejoke Tugbiyele
Jane Weinstock
David Maes Gallegos
Robert Yasuda
C.T. Jasper
Luba Drozd
Leslie Fry
Michelle Leftheris
Cheryl Yun
Chris Anthony
Jane Kent
Carlos Motta
Ryan McNamara
Natalia V. Miranda
Hope Sandrow
Gerard & Kelly
Daryl Chin
Marilyn Holsing
Jennifer Riley, Stronger Together
Tauba Auerbach
LJ Roberts
Kaila Howell
Nicole Kempskie
Morgan Ritter
Kelly Kaiser Clingman
Larry Camp
Aleksa Mara
Raphael Fenton-Spaid
Larry Camp
Christian Nagler
Occupy Museums
Gay Isber
Inbal Amit-Palombo
Halsey Rodman
Jessica O'Hara-Baker
Carolee Schneemann
Bernadette Walong-Sene
Marketa Klicova
Johnna Arnold
Christian Nagler
Blake Russell
Polly Apfelbaum
Patricia Manos
Cassie Machado
Tom Judd
Ambre Kelly
Amanda Friedman
David Grubbs
DeeDee Halleck
Alexander Gough-Schnapp
Kelly Correll Brown
Reza Nejati-Namin
Tal Beery
Stanley Greenberg
Carolyn Janssen
Charles Atlas
Anna Dibble
Marilyn Kirsch
Andy Nasisse
Amanda Pratt
Emily Coates
Thomas Cole
Dayna Reggero, Climate Listening Project
Michael Kelly Williams
Kara Davey
Paul Mpagi Sepuya
Nurhan Gokturk
Gloria Deitcher
Claudia Hart
Deirdre Donohue
Damian Lopez
Alexandria Hafner (New Orleans)
Cecilia Mazzocchio
Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo
Jo Longhurst
Simona Aru
Vincent Zepp
Marlene McCarty
William Inhand
Ken Knowlton
Hope Tucker
Anna Palma
Jeffrey Hargrave
Ricardo Miranda Zuniga
Jane Reiter
Susan Fenton
Stephen Truax
Carrie Moyer
Tom Goodman
Merav Tzur
Nancy Lu Rosenheim
Julie E. Pincus
Ilich Castillo
Stuart Rome
Caitlin Parker
Katherine Walz
Larry Spaid
Donald E. Camp
Elyse Harary
Anthony Viti
Pedro Lujan
M Berkman
Sharon Church
Jason Andrew Turner
Gregg Bordowitz
Geof Oppenheimer
Oliver Ressler
Carole Herwig
Marsea Goldberg
Robert Fischer
Jon Kessler
Guy Mannes-Abbott
Lina Pallotta
Harold Batista
Rebecca Laine Graham
PaulaWinokur
Brian Block
Carrie Schneider
Molly Zuckerman-Hartung (Yale School of Art)
Aliza Shvarts
Jonah Groeneboer
Michael Grieve
Heywood Jablowme
Joy Episalla
Nancy Grossman
James W. Hubbard
Zachary Skinner
Terry Ensor
Kate Pruitt
Marina Berio
Ethan Rafal
Ryan Decker
Jeanne Hilary
Alejandro Figueredo Díaz-Perera
Laurie Simmons
Gregory Steel
Melinda Ring
WRRQ Collective
Jill Galarneau
Jon Kessler
A.L. Steiner
Pamela Klein (Parsons School of Design)
Vivian Bower
Clark Heldman
Vera Lutter
Tamara Albu (Parsons School of Design)
Stanley McCleave
Lynn Willscher
Mika Tajima
Joan Semmel
Dmitri Hertz
Nancy Grossman
Jennifer Parker (UC Santa Cruz)
Jody Pinto (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)
Conor McGrady
Nancy Grossman
Todd Ayoung
Diana Kurz
Natalia de Campos
Hope Martin
Jane Hugentober
Marcella Vanzo
Mark Mulroney
Renée Monrose
Lisa Corinne Davis
Todd Ayoung
Gayle Marie Weitz
Emily Roysdon

Lilla LoCurto
Becky Rosen
Cara Benedetto
Mara Goldberg
Rikki Reich
Sherry Millner
Phillip Chen
Iva Radivojevic
Elke Solomon
Ana Ratner
Melissa Louise
Robert G. Edelman
Shan Shan Sheng
Will Sloane
Yona Backer
Barbara Friedman
Marcy Rosenblat
Sophia Friedman-Pappas
Jenny Lynn McNutt
Luciana Proaño
Susan S. Bank
Joni Wehrli
Theresa Ann Panica
Matthew Langley
Zachary Leener
Beau Johnson
Cora Cohen
Alice Zinnes
Marcia G. Yerman
Beth Biderman
Victoria Lesser
Matthew Friday
Kenneth Burg
Dean P. Paradis
Walter Weissman
Nancy Haynes
Lisa Karrer
Chris Dashke
The Rev. Mr. Jeremy Grizzle
Diego Contreras Novoa
Kelly King
Lfader
Barbara E Gruber
Iman Issa
William Villalongo
Lisa Hoke
Michael Asbill
Mary Ziegler
Diane Burkov Margaret Morton
Kathy Muehlemann
Jim Muehlemann
Clara Chapin Hess
Diane Pieri
Johanna Bartelt
Fette Sans
Katharine Dodge
Michele Pred
Nancy Rourke
Olivia Booth
Laurence Bach
Gloria Tanchelev
Jennifer Monson
Kimchi Hoang
STEFAN ONE EINS H UNO
Kent Roberts
Mikael Levin
Nathan Gwynne
Lily layman
Jessi Li
Gran Fury
Jody Pinto
William Wilkins
Tryn Collins
Randall Koch
Charles Clough
Eunice Golden
Patrick Scheid
Sonia Louise Davis
Stephen Pusey
M.J. Anderson
Sam Fein
Kendra Portier
Goran Maric

Critics:
Hilton Als
Negar Azimi
George Baker (UCLA)
Yve-Alain Bois (Institute for Advanced Study)
Julia Bryan-Wilson (UC Berkeley)
Benjamin Buchloh (Harvard)
Harry Burke
Johanna Burton
Douglas Crimp (Rochester)
Ben Davis
TJ Demos (UC Santa Cruz)
Rosalyn Deutsche (Barnard)
Darby English (University of Chicago)
Hannah Feldman (Northwestern)
Hal Foster (Princeton)
Jennifer Gonzalez (UC Santa Cruz)
Megan Heuer
Suzanne Hudson (USC)
David Joselit (CUNY Graduate Center)
Chris Kraus
Pamela Lee (Stanford)
Lucy Lippard
Jaleh Mansoor (UBC)
Yates McKee
James Meyer
Nicholas Mirzoeff (NYU)
Steven Nelson (UCLA)
Molly Nesbit (Vassar)
Ann Reynolds (UT Austin)
Judith Rodenbeck (UC Riverside)
Andrew Ross (NYU)
Barry Schwabsky
Stephen Squibb
Claire Tancons
Hrag Vartanian
Andrew Weiner (NYU)
Brian Kuan Wood
Soyoung Yoon (New School)
Benjamin Young
Saisha Grayson
Rebecca Zorach (Northwestern)
Virginia Solomon (University of Memphis)
Marc Herbst
Rachel Churner
Tirza Latimer (California College of the Arts)
Julian Myers-Szupinska
Joel Neville Anderson (University of Rochester, Japan Society)
Leanne Stella
Innessa Levkova-Lamm
Elsabé Dixon
Sarah K. Rich
Diane Thodos
Philip Tan
Kerry Doran
Melissa Gronlund
Seth Kim-Cohen (Art Institute of Chicago)
Saul Ostrow
Nizan Shaked (CSU Long Beach)
Daniel Sherer (Yale School of Architecture)
Jeppe Ugelvig
Octavio Zaya
Edward Vazquez
Rick Heintz
Russet Lederman
Erina Duganne (Texas State University)
Chloe Wyma
John P. Bowles (UNC-Chapel Hill)
Peter Christensen
Julia Robinson
Saskia Verkiel
Ed Halter
Bettina Funcke
Joan Copjec (Brown University)
Anna Dumont (Northwestern)
Craig Saper
Ewa Lajer-Burcharth (Harvard)
Mignon Nixon
Susan Bielstein
Natalia V. Miranda (Sorbonne University/ Harvard University)
A. Joan Saab
Katherine Mills
Serge Guilbaut
Patricia Manos
Joseph Tanke (University of Hawaii)
Eunice Williams
Maria Gough
Kenneth White
Alexander and Bonin
Henri ZERNER (Harvard)
Branden W. Joseph (Columbia)
Faheem Haider
Maria Gough (Harvard)
Timothy Patrick McCarthy
Rob Slifkin (Institute of Fine Arts, NYU)
Amy Sara Carroll
Jiangtao (Harry) Gu
Fred Bohrer
Trevor Stark
Martha Gever
Nancy Demerdash-Fatemi
Christina Crosby
Nicolas Linnert
Ann duCille
Mary Pat Brady
Libby Rosof
David Turturo
Kim Bobier
Robert Brennan
Corinna Kirsch
Kristin Poor
Amy Taubin (SVA)
Lily Tuck
Catherine Lord
Julia Robinson
Matvei Yankelevich
Joan Copjec (Brown University)
Robert C. Rust
Karen Corrigan
Daniel Daley
April Durham
Kaira Cabañas
Miwon Kwon
William H Outcault
Mostafa Heddaya
Ernest Larsen
Cole Scanlon
Bean Gilsdorf
Michael Betancourt
Alexander Provan
Maurice Jackson
Lizzie Homersham
Bob Nickas
Max Boersma
Susanne Rosen

Other:
Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.)
Stephanie Snyder, Curator (Reed College Gallery)
Marina Urbach, Curator
Sophie Keir, Curator
Lisa Reznik, Filmmaker
Myriam Vanneschi, Curator
Rebecca Uchill, Curator & Art Historian
Maxwell Graham (ESSEX STREET)
Neal Curley (ESSEX STREET)
Thomas Beard, Curator
Justin Carter, Musician
Joel Sanders, Architect
Richard Einhorn, Composer
Caitlin Gleason, Education and Development at The Kitchen
Geoff Kaplan, Graphic Designer
Natalia Mount
Katie Hood Morgan, Curator
Peter Kruty, Fine Art Printer
Claudia Mueller, Journalist
Mary Evangelista, Curator
Jocelyn Miller, Curator
Hillary Geller, Designer
Anna Pettersson, Librarian
Eva Rado
Camilla Lu, Scientist
Paddy Johnson, Curator
Ludovica Pellegatta, Curator
Marcus Werner Hed, Filmmaker
Barbara Braun
Tish Evangelista, Designer
Beth Handler Riebe, Curator
Elise Armani, Curator
Amy Scholder, Editor
Richard Michael Weisman, Typographer
Valerie Klyman-Clark, Cook
Abigail Christenson, Curator
Anthony Huberman, Curator
Louky and Bart Keijsers Koning (LMAKgallery), Curator
Lauren Kelly
Edmund Cardoni (Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center)
Éric Aubertin
Alejandro Jassan
Jennifer Gross, Publicist
Eleanor Cayre, Art Advisor
Colin Thomson, Curator
Susan Backman
Jamie Harman, Art Advisor
Ariel Meyerowitz, Art Advisor
Christian L. Frock (CCA Center for Art + Public Life)
Natalia Mount (Pro Arts)
Monika Szczukowska (Nika Kowska), Curator
Jesús Fuenmayor, Curator
Nicole Pulichene, Art History Graduate Student
Laura Braverman, Art History Graduate Student
Fritz Dietl, Art Services
Susanna Singer, Art Agent
Joseph Tanke, Philosopher of Art
Rachel Steinberg (SOHO20), Curator
Eve Schillo, Curator
Douglas Alden, Author
Thea Westreich Wagner, Collector/ Publisher
Barbara Krulik, Curator
Myriam Erdely, Art Advisor & Appraiser
Raúl Zamudio, Curator
Rattanamol Singh Johal, Art Historian & Curator
Bobby Rainwater, Curator
Tanja Wagner (Galerie Tanja Wagner)
Alexandra S. Rockelmann (ROCKELMANN &)
Monica Espinel, Curator
Lenore Metrick-Chen, Curator
Cathleen Miller, Curator
Whitney Independent Study Program 2016-2017
Steven Henry Madoff, Curator
MA Curatorial Practice, School of Visual Arts
Michelle Lauren Kim, Art History Undergraduate Student
Zeena Parkins, Composer
Leah Pires, Curator
Thomas J. Lax, Curator
David Bemis, Filmmaker
Brooke Garber Neidich, Trustee
Shelley Young, Editor
FASHION MODA
Juergen Riehm, Architect
Marcia Lausen, Designer
Jeanine Jablonski (Fourteen30 Contemporary)
Xuxa Rodriguez, PhD Candidate
Hirsch & Associates
Red Wedge
Courtney Fink (Common Field)
Yu Yeon Kim, Curator

UNGOVERNABLE

ANTI-FASCIST

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO PARTICIPATE?

j20artstrike.org

On J20 and Beyond: A Declaration of the Arts Against Trumpism

January 20th marks the day that Donald Trump assumes the office of President of the United States. It also marks the day that multitudes will mobilize across the country in a collective disruption of business as usual, refusing to normalize the transition to Trumpism: a toxic mixture of white supremacy, misogyny, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, ableism, militarism, kleptocracy, and oligarchic rule that bears a strong resemblance to Fascism.

The disruptions of J20 — and the Women's Marches across the country the next day—build on generations of intersectional struggle within and outside the United States. Yet the advent of Trumpism has pushed these antagonisms to a new level of intensity. It has awakened even complacent sectors of society to a sense of emergency that many people—especially those who have not reaped the poisoned benefits of white supremacy—have long experienced as the norm. J20 is the inauguration of new phase of resistance at a massive scale.

Committed to invention and critique, arts of all kinds are essential to any long-term political mobilization. Yet the art world—the complex of galleries, museums, theaters, nonprofits, schools, publications, fairs, and festivals in which many of us work—is a contradictory field. It is torn between the radical possibilities of art and the constraining limits of institutions, while looming over both are the machinations of neoliberal oligarchs. Much art is mobilized by elite collectors, donors, and celebrities—liberal and reactionary alike—not only as an item of luxury consumption and speculative investment but also as a vehicle of gentrification.

The Trump regime brings these contradictions to a head. People of conscience who work in the art world must decide how to respond to current crises that are only bound to intensify: from austerity and privatization, to censorship and press intimidation, health-care cuts and abortion bans, raids and deportations, police killings and vigilante violence of every kind, all of which disproportionately impact the most vulnerable individuals and communities.

Despite its contradictions, the art world has significant amounts of capital—material, social, and cultural—at its disposal. The time has come to imagine and to implement ways of redirecting these resources in solidarity with broader social movements leading the way in the fight against Trumpism. In the process, we must acknowledge the overwhelming whiteness of most existing art and academic spaces, and work to dismantle systems of oppression within our own field, holding those with the most privilege and visibility accountable. We salute those institutions and organizations that have already begun to move in this direction, but these are structural transformations that no one entity can accomplish on its own.

Some Steps Forward

1. Hold Institutions Accountable to Their Own Public Missions
Even private institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art tout public accessibility; we must insist that they actualize this rhetoric. Like universities, museums emerged as key elements of the modern public sphere; we must demand that they live up to these stated democratic ideals, while at the same time working to democratize their own organization. This pertains not only to museums but also to nonprofits, schools, foundations, and other types of institution.

2. Work to Dismantle Systems of Oppression Within Art Institutions
The forces that brought Trump to power suffuse cultural and academic institutions in ways large and small: from trustee boards, to staffing, pay-grades, and the micro-aggressions of everyday meetings, to exhibitions, programming, and publishing, to the constitution of audiences. Our vigilance on all these fronts is necessary. This means not only calling out oppressive behaviors after the fact but also contesting their practice proactively through the restructuring of power and the redistribution of resources. Many are starting to ask: What would reparations look like in the art field? How might an an anti-racist vision of the arts extend to a global scale, encompassing, for instance, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement?

3. Name, Shame, and Divest from Trumpists and Other Oligarchs in the Art World
Despite its cosmopolitan reputation, the art world is rife with Trumpists who use the social prestige of art to legitimize power. Ivanka Trump is an art world denizen; the Secretary of the Treasury, Steven Mnuchin, is the son of the owner of Mnuchin Gallery. Anti-democratic agents David Koch and James Murdoch sit on the boards of the Metropolitan Museum and the Dia Art Foundation respectively, and other predatory oligarchs populate the landscape. Let us not forget that Trump began as a real-estate developer, and that, from the Bronx to Boyle Heights, art is strategically used as a weapon of displacement by elites who also proudly identify as liberals. With a bit of research an “artigarchy” comes into view, providing a wealth of targets for future pressure and action as shown by the work of groups like Gulf Labor Coalition, Liberate Tate, BDS Arts Coalition, and Chinatown Arts Brigade.

4. Connect to the New Sanctuary Movement
Though centered in campuses and houses of worship, cultural institutions could become spaces for the practice of sanctuary: protecting employees targeted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement; creating hubs for the harboring of targeted individuals, families, and communities; mobilizing financial support; and providing artistic media platforms amplifying the ethos of sanctuary itself, namely that justice must take priority over unjust laws. This includes aligning with the work that is already being done on the ground by refugee and migrant communities and grassroots organizations.

5. Stand With Our Colleagues Beyond Metropolitan Centers
While the arts will come under attack across the board, individuals and organizations outside of urban centers and in "red" states will be especially imperiled. Funding cuts and other reactionary measures made in the name of anti-elitism must be resisted, and we can build a "museum network" to activate art and other cultural institutions as sites of protected civic discourse and dissent. At the same time let us look beyond the United States to support those fighting similar conditions in other countries.

6. Collectivize Resources and Spaces in Support of Anti-Fascist Work
Movements need infrastructure—physical, economic, and affective—for the gathering of people, the making of art, and the work of organizing. We should pool collective resources to these ends and cultivate a network of spaces for long-term work, while also providing on-ramps for those new to the movement. In the process we should look to examples such as *Decolonize This Place*, and many others that have come before, and ask in terms of both art and activism: What is the composition of the room? Whose voices matter in this space? Who can appear freely in public? Who gets to represent "the public"? How can we work together in a way that does not recreate the conditions that brought us to the historical moment of Trumpism in the first place?

Art Workers, Art Strikes and Collective Actions

Corina L. Apostol

In 1974, the late artist Gustave Metzger, well-known for his auto-destructive art, urged his peers to join him in a three year art strike between 1977 and 1980. His action has endured in the history of art as one of the most powerful, albeit paradoxical rallying call for artists to stop making art. In his manifesto he urged his peers not to produce art, sell their work, participate in exhibition, and in general to withdraw from taking part in the art world machine:

> To bring down the art system it is necessary to call for years without art, a period of three years - 1977 to 1980 - when artists will not produce work, sell work, permit work to go on exhibitions, and refuse collaboration with any part of the publicity machinery of the art world. This total withdrawal of labor is the most extreme collective challenge that artists can make to the state. The years without art will see the collapse of many private galleries. Museums and cultural institutions handling contemporary art will be severely hit, suffer loss of funds, and will have to reduce their staff. National and local government institutions will be in serious trouble. Art magazines will fold. The international ramifications of the dealer/museum/publicity complex make for vulnerability; it is a system that is keyed to a continuous juggling of artists, finance, works and information - damage one part, and the effect is felt world-wide.[1]

Metzger's statement was written for the catalogue of the exhibition "Art into Society/Society into Art: Seven German Artists" at the London Institute of Contemporary Art. Metzger stated he decided to participate in the exhibition only after pressure from the curators, as he became critical of being subsumed by the capitalist art world. The artist's strike proposal was understood as utopian by his peers and the art strike did not bring about the cessation of all artistic work. Metzger was the only artist who took it up for the entire three years. In his later writings however, he also emphasized a productive aspect of the strike, that of creating a critical understanding of the artist's practice and theory production. Metzger's call for strike was not simply about escaping the (art)world, but stemmed from a desire to change it. The question of the politics of art production has also been put under scrutiny

John Cox (author of photography), Gustav Metzger practicing for a public demonstration of auto-destructive art using acid on nylon, 1960.

by art workers coalitions, syndicates and communes since at least the nineteenth century. Some of these self-organized groups argued and criticized, in the form of protests and public interventions, for artists' rights and the transformation of cultural institutions embedded in power and capital. The emergence of these groups and initiatives occurred at a critical historical junctures, on the backdrop of social movements from around the world. Central to their arguments was an attempt to position the historically reoccurring notion of the "art worker," in shifting labor relations bound to the production and dissemination of art and culture.

In the second half of the nineteenth century reactionary appeals to an art for art's sake clashed with principles of an emerging avant-gardism. During the revolutionary period in France, artist Gustave Courbet penned the famous Realist Manifesto (1855),[2] immediately after Marx's famous Communist Manifesto (1848). Those were turbulent times of class and political conflicts, from the moment the working class entered the scene as an autonomous political force to the French workers'

Charles Soulier. The fallen Vendôme Column, May 1871. From the series Paris Incendié.

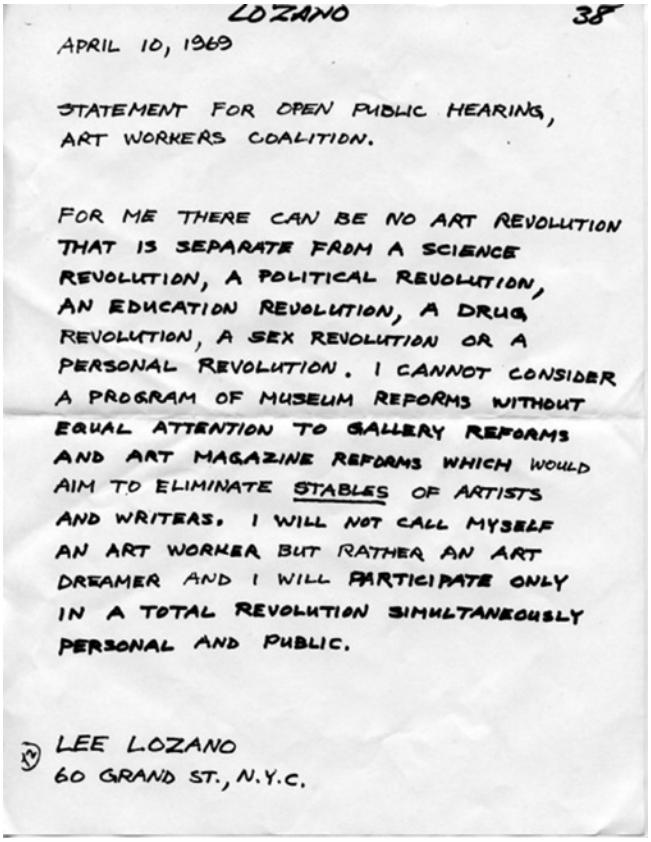
brief, yet powerful Commune – which was brutally suppressed by the bourgeoisie. Courbert's confidence in the artist's role in changing society towards a liberated, socialist future were strongly shaped by his participation in the Commune. In 1871 he called on Parisian artists to "assume control of the museums and art collections which, though the property of the nation, are primarily theirs, from the intellectual as well as the material point of view."[3] Courbet's statement responded to the paradigm shift of the economic framework, wherein the transfer of capital accumulated by capitalist organizations created a new class, the bourgeoisie, whose image was built through the salon culture. Emerging as new spaces for the presentation and enjoyment of bourgeois art, the salons operated autonomously from the church and the monarchy, as powerful, independent entities. Courbet challenged this system and the political classes it upheld through his support for the communards' removal of the Vendôme Column (a the memorial to Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz in 1805) in 1871, as commissar of culture in the Commune committee. For his role in this event Courbet was heavily fined and imprisoned for half a year. In 1873 it was proposed to re-erect the column (the bronze panels had survived) at a cost of 323,000 francs, which Courbet was to pay off in installments of 10,000 francs a year. Instead he escaped to Switzerland, where he died in 1877. The transformation of the artist's subjectivity as art worker and activist during the latter half of the 19th century was a landmark moment that continues to define the relationship between art and social movements today. Courbet's appeal was one of the first instances when artists' aspiration for social change led them to align themselves with a wider workers' movement and break with the bourgeois institutions of art and with the monarchy. Transgressing from artistic praxis into political action, artists could be

Marc Riboud, 1968 Atelier Populaire, Ex-école des Beaux Arts, Paris, 1968.

considered as a counter-power, occupying political functions in a new order, no matter how briefly this lasted.

In the turbulent 1960s and 1970s artists were once more among the first to self-organize, identifying with the workforce under pressure to accept pay cuts, pension cuts and to disband unions. In 1968 France, artists, workers and students, pent up with anger over general poverty, unemployment, the conservative government, and military involvement in Southeast Asia, took to the streets in waves of strikes and demonstrations. Factories and universities were occupied. Atelier Populaire (the Popular Workshop), an arts organization founded by art students and faculty on strike at the École des Beaux Arts in the capital, produced street posters and banners for the revolt that would: "Give concrete support to the great movement of the workers on strike who are occupying their factories in defiance of the Gaullist government." The material was designed and printed anonymously and distributed freely, held up on barricades, carried in demonstrations, and plastered on walls all over France. The Atelier intended this material not be taken as, "the final outcome of an experience, but as an inducement for finding, through contact with the masses, new levels of action, both on the cultural and the political plane."[4]

In their actions, the students were also influenced by ideas presented in the L'Internationale Situationniste, a periodical written by Guy Debord and a groups of


LOZANO 38

APRIL 10, 1969

STATEMENT FOR OPEN PUBLIC HEARING,
ART WORKERS COALITION.

FOR ME THERE CAN BE NO ART REVOLUTION THAT IS SEPARATE FROM A SCIENCE REVOLUTION, A POLITICAL REVOLUTION, AN EDUCATION REVOLUTION, A DRUG REVOLUTION, A SEX REVOLUTION OR A PERSONAL REVOLUTION. I CANNOT CONSIDER A PROGRAM OF MUSEUM REFORMS WITHOUT EQUAL ATTENTION TO GALLERY REFORMS AND ART MAGAZINE REFORMS WHICH WOULD AIM TO ELIMINATE STABLES OF ARTISTS AND WRITERS. I WILL NOT CALL MYSELF AN ART WORKER BUT RATHER AN ART DREAMER AND I WILL PARTICIPATE ONLY IN A TOTAL REVOLUTION SIMULTANEOUSLY PERSONAL AND PUBLIC.

LEE LOZANO
60 GRAND ST., N.Y.C.

Left: Anonymous, La Beauté est dans la rue (Beauty is in the streets), May 1968, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Right: A statement by Lee Lozano, a central figure in 1960s conceptual art and the Art Workers Coalition.

like-minded artists between 1958 and 1969. A key idea was subversiveness. Everything could be subverted: authority and its representatives, of course, be they politicians, parents, trade unions or trendy intellectuals, but also behaviour and art forms. Situationist graffiti scrawled on the Sorbonne walls proclaimed "Ne travaillez jamais" (Never work) and "Il est interdit d'interdire" (It is forbidden to forbid).[5] Unlike its predecessor, the 19th century Artists Commune, Atelier Populaire did not seek to become a political power, but functioned as a critical cultural frame around the left-leaning social movement in France at the time. However, they expressed support for several positive objectives: self-management by workers, a decentralization of economic and political power and participatory democracy at the grass roots. They sought to resist the absorption of any and all critical ideas or movements under a contemporary capitalism, which was capable of bending them to its own advantage. Hence, the need for provocative shock tactics. "Be realistic: Demand the impossible!" was one of the May movement's slogans.

In 1969, a turbulent socio-political global climate, an international group of artists and critics formed the Art Workers' Coalition in New York. Hundreds of artists who self-identified as art workers participated in the AWC's open meetings.

The Art Strike on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, May 22, 1970. Robert Morris and Poppy Johnson, strike co-chairs, at right, debate museum vice-director Joseph Noble, at left beside striking artist Art Coppedge. Photo by Jan van Raay.

Perhaps the most radical form of refusal that coincided with the formation and agitation of the AWC was General Strike Piece by Lee Lozano. In a statement read during the AWC's meeting in April, Lozano declared herself in excess of the limits of the "art worker" identity, identifying herself as an "art dreamer" who would "participate only in a total revolution simultaneously personal and public." As curator Helen Molesworth pointed out, her "word pieces" inverted the artist's role of attending their gaze upon the art object and instead "train(ed) her attention on the public and private functions of herself as an artist."[6] Beginning with Dialogue Piece, Lozano laid a foundation for moving away from the problem of the art as a commodity, not purely by the "dematerialization" of art, but by the flight of the artists themselves. With 1969's General Strike Piece, Lozano began exiting the art world by refusing to attend "uptown functions" be they openings, parties at museums and galleries, screenings, concerts or any other "gatherings related to the art world," while simultaneously initiating a "boycott of women" which resulted in her leaving New York for a life of relative isolation in Dallas where she continued to refuse any interaction with either the art world or any woman in public life. Molesworth, who describes this double refusal as "consummately idealistic" and "utterly pathological" (respectively) recognizes both things being refused, capitalism and patriarchy, as "incredibly powerful parameters of identity... systems with rules and logics that are public with personal effects."

On May 15th, 1970, Robert Morris, a well known sculptor and conceptual artist, closed his solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum stating: "This act of closing ...a cultural institution is intended to underscore the need I and others feel to shift priorities at this time from art making and viewing to unified action within the art community against the intensifying conditions of repression, war and racism in this country." Morris's exhibition took place at an especially charged moment in American history: the Whitney show opened, the United States bombed Cambodia, the National Guard shot and killed four students at Kent State, and, in a highly publicized confrontation, New York City construction workers attacked antiwar protesters. Morris decision to shut down his show two weeks early in a self-declared strike stemmed from debates about art labor and laborers in the United States.[7] It inspired a city wide day of action undertaken by the AWC: "The New York Art Strike against Racism, War and Repression." In the spring of 1970, artists felt that their collective organizing as art workers offered a platform for major change, as vital reconsiderations regarding the valuation of artistic labor were being debated. The Art Workers' Coalition was formed in 1969 to debate questions about museum policy and leftist politics. It became a powerful organization through which New York artists voiced their discontent with institutionalization, gender bias, and the art world's stance on the Vietnam War. The war became a focus and rallying point, and the Museum of Modern Art in particular increasingly came under fire because of the members of its board of trustees and their economic connections to industries that profited from the war. The group presented the museum a list of demands: subsidies for universal employment, rather than support from private capital from wealthy patrons,[8] the introduction of a royalties system by which collectors had to pay artists a percentage of their profits from resale, for the creation of a trust fund for living artists, and that all museums should be open for free at all times, and that their opening hours should accommodate the working classes. They also demanded that art institutions make exhibition space available for women, minorities and artists with no gallery representing them. In 1970 the AWC formed an alliance with MoMA's Staff Association and by working simultaneously from both inside and outside the institution, they established PASTA (The Professional and Administrative Staff Association). This was one of the most significant unions of art workers in the United States, as it joined together the interest of artist with those in similarly precarious conditions who are involved in different aspects of artistic production.[9] Although the Art Workers Coalition folded after three years of intense activities, their legacy endured.

In February 1979, two years after Metzger's unanswered call for an art strike, Goran Đorđević mailed a circular asking a variety of Yugoslavian and English-speaking artists if they would take part in an International Art Strike to protest against repression and the fact that artists were alienated from the fruits of their labor.[10] Đorđević received forty replies, the majority of which expressed doubts about the possibility of putting the International Art Strike into practice. Because so few artists were prepared to pledge their support, Đorđević abandoned his plan for an International Art Strike.

Art Strike Action Committee, Cover of the Journal Yawn, 1991

British artist Stewart Home's Art Strike of 1990–1993 was inspired by the language of Gustav Metzger's and Goran Đorđević's proposal and its importance as a symbolic gesture, due, in part, to its embrace of the absurd.[11] This Art Strike was a stand against capitalism's ability to recuperate any image or action, yet, instead of targeting the institutions of art as the main perpetrators, Home looked to artists themselves for their complicity in their own economic manipulation and co-optation. The journal YAWN, co-published by Art Strike Action Committee centers in San Francisco, London, and Iowa City, among other locations, launched its first issue in September 1989. Home's manifesto, contained within, declared: "We call this Art Strike in order to make explicit the political and ethical motivations for this attempted large-scale manipulation of alleged 'esthetic' objects and relationships…to connote and encourage active rather than passive engagement with the issues at hand." Each subsequent issue was filled with the similarly assertive language of his manifesto, and all images and texts produced in support of the Art Strike were of an explicitly propagandistic nature. The arguments presented around the demonstration's concept, however, were intentionally inconsistent and contradictory. As suggested in the preceding quote, the active engagement of Home's Art Strike is not a withdrawal at all. In fact, Home continued to create artwork during the period of the strike under the pseudonyms of Karen Eliot and Monty Cantsin, thereby challenging the privileging of a singular author in the production of art,

and the celebrity status that this enables.[12] Home was interested "not in the prospect of the art world collapsing" but, like Metzger, in the effect the strike might have on his and other artists' "identity."

I will now return to the concept of the art worker and its historical associations with the left, exploring the class contradictions inherent in this form of artistic subjectivity. I explore the affinities between twentieth century avant-gardes and the organized left, and their continuing legacy in the present, given economic and political changes. Between calls for non-participation and withdrawal, on the one hand, at to create new art worlds on the other, today's art workers are seeking to affect social transformation in myriad ways and through various ideas about what this entails. These efforts can be enriched by a renewed understanding of the past endeavors as important consciousness raising experiences and models for organizations.

In May 2012, the self-organized Citizen Forum for Contemporary Arts (Obywatelskie Forum Sztuki Współczesnej - OFSW), staged a one-day art strike – a day without arts and culture.[13] The aim of the strike was to influence the public discussion of cultural matters, including the symbolic and political, but also economical place of artists and cultural producers within the public sphere and social hierarchies. Around the same time, a proposed change to tax law meaning a reduction or elimination of a flat-rate allowance to reclaim up to fifty percent of costs from revenue on contracts was announced. Such a change would further harm the majority of artists and cultural producers who are often reliant on commission contracts and need to then recoup the costs of their production, materials, etc. This provided further impetus for the OFSW action. 'The day without art', the first to ever take place in Poland, followed the aforementioned well established, if sporadically enacted and relatively little-known tradition of artists' refusal of work. Such actions attempted to disrupt the role and position of artists themselves, or to address issues in the cultural economy and creative industries in more general terms. Most recently, in 2012, the London-based Precarious Workers Brigade[14], a group organizing for several years around the issue of precarity within cultural and creative work, called for a Cultural Workers Walkout, in solidarity with other casual and public sector workers taking part in a national strike the same day. The Polish art strike was, by all accounts, quite a small and seemingly insignificant event, relatively speaking. A number of galleries and institutions did however express solidarity, and some did indeed close their doors for the day, in addition to a handful of protesting OFSW members, some bystanders, and one banner. In terms of media coverage or turnout it certainly did not stand out amongst demonstrations and strike actions staged that year by workers in other sectors. However, the strike did kick-start a non-going debate about cultural and artistic production in Poland. It brought, once and for all, the often-invisible working conditions in the arts and culture into the public domain. Most importantly, it cemented the credentials of the autonomous, horizontally organized OFSW as an effective and credible model for artists and cultural producers to represent themselves and each other in a field that is unstable, mostly reliant on decreasing amounts of public funding, and characterized by increasing levels of competition and individualism.

This first public action of OFSW not only brought the economic conditions of artistic and cultural work into open discussion, but also into the streets of Warsaw, where contemporaneous protests, be it by nurses or taxi drivers, were taking place. Thus, not only were their often obscured working conditions and labour made visible, but also the ideological distance between the labour of artists and cultural producers, and that of workers in general, was dramatically reduced. Artists and cultural producers on contingent, casual and temporary contracts, without health insurance or pensions, increasingly without the ability to own a home or afford the mortgage and burdened with debt, are, in terms of employment law and economic survival, often leading the way for workers in other sectors. Therefore, when some twisted joke on the original mission of the art avant-garde casts artists are new models of employment in an increasingly deregulated, neoliberal job market, an erasure of the ideological gap between art and labour, and the dismantling of the myth of artistic genius could be an important political strategy.

OFSW joined forces with the trade union movement, or rather, one of the new unions, the recently formed Inicjatywa Pracownicza (IP/ Workers' Initiative), which began in 2001 as a continuation of various self-organized grassroots and anarcho-syndicalist groups active mainly in and around Poznan. In 2004 it became an officially recognized union. IP was formed as a reaction to the crisis of Poland's official union movement–its bureaucracy, passivity and links with the antisocial and anti-worker governments – but also as a union that recognizes new forms of employment and contracts not recognized by traditional unions, also paying attention to specific issues concerning female and migrant labour. IP allows for the formation

Citizen Forum for ContemporaryArts / OFSW, Strike - Call for the government to negotiate with artists, 2012.

of autonomous collegial commissions that can then support workers on casual contracts, or those who are self-employed. To date, the biggest success of the commission has been with regard to the issue of guaranteed minimum fees for artists. In February 2014 four institutions—Art Museum, Łodz, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Zachęta National Art Gallery, Warsaw and Arsenał Gallery, Poznan—signed an official agreement regarding such fees. A further five institutions pledged to sign the agreement as well. While this leaves artists in Poland far off the relative security of other countries' models, for instance the German system of social insurance for artists, or organizational models, such as the Scottish Artist Union, the commission is definitely a first step towards some more concrete solutions. The formation of such a group, in a sector so heavily reliant on competition and individualism as the art world, and where even a few years ago it would have seemed scarcely achievable, can be counted as a success in itself.

Art workers' groups and collectives have for the last few years moved towards thinking more critically in the direction of how this system could be transformed, and meaningful ways of engagement in the art world today. What does it mean to re-claim the institutional space, to disrupt the business as usual of auction houses, big galleries, or even take over corrupt state institutions in the long term? What kind of artistic education exists outside the private academia, and can it create real social alternatives and ways of thinking and doing an engaged art, opening the possibilities for resistant political subjectivities? Similarly as it is the case of post-Occupy era activists who grapple with common issues of the ephemerality of their actions when transforming public spaces in cities across the globe, so do present-day art workers strive towards finding depth-reaching strategies to transform culture and society. It seems ever more important then to insist on the yet not consolidated openings and alternatives engendered by the social movements of the past few years, in which art and culture played important roles.

My aim in this text has been to chart different strategies of art workers whose ideas and visual languages go against the grain of the usual aesthetics and discourses. Emphasizing the international character of a growing resistance calling for a different way of making art, running institutions and therefore doing politics, these art workers translate their aspirations into a renewed cycle of struggles. Finally, my research may serve as a tool for connecting and mapping different active groups and initiatives, which do not necessarily come together into a composite solution to all problems. Rather, much is to be learned from areas of overlap and tension between ways of organizing, alternative economies and alternative art production, and cultural and political ties between different groups and sectors of the present-day artistic working class. We can then begin think through coordinating these struggles, and perhaps even how an international union of art workers could function. While there is more awareness of these activist initiatives around the world, many art workers' struggles continue to be local/regional and remain atomized. We must continue to act and imagine a larger, international union or coalition that can offer resistance and solidarity.

Corina L. Apostol is a Mellon Editorial Fellow at Creative Time, where she plans the publication of an exciting book on socially engaged art from the last decade. Previously, she was a Dodge Curatorial Fellow at the Zimmerli Art Museum. She has also organized exhibitions on art and social engagement at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University and the Newark Arts Council. Corina obtained her Ph.D. at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She is the co-founder of the activist art and publishing collective ArtLeaks, and co-editor of the ArtLeaks Gazette.

References

1 Gustav Metzger, "Art Strike 1977-1980," *Art Into Society, Society Into Art: Seven German Artists - Albrecht D., Joseph Beuys, KP Brehmer, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Gustav Metzger, Klaus Staeck*, Christos M and Norman Rosenthal Eds. (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1974).

2 Gustave Courbet, Realism, Preface to the brochure "Exhibition and sale of forty paintings and four drawings by Gustave Courbet," 1855, republished in T.J. Clarke, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the Second French Republic, 1848–1851*, (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society), 1973.

3 Courbet, Gustave. "Letter to artists of Paris, 7 April 1871". In *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, ed. Petra ten-Doessachte. Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1992.

4 Henriette Touillier Feyrabend, "Un discours d'agitation par l'Image: Les affiches de Mai 68," *Ethnologie française*, 1983, pg. 251-264.

5 Yves, Pages, "Sorbonne 68." *Graffiti. Documents réunis et présentés par Yves Pagès*, (Geneve-Suisse: Editions Verticales, 1998).

6 Helen Molesworth, "Tune in, turn on, drop out: The rejection of Lee Lozano," *Art Journal 61.4*, 2002, pg. 64-73.

7 Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970," *The Art Bulletin 89.2*, 2007, pg. 333-359.

8 For a more detailed history of the Art Workers Coalition, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press), 2011

9 For a more detailed history of the Art Workers Coalition, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press), 2011

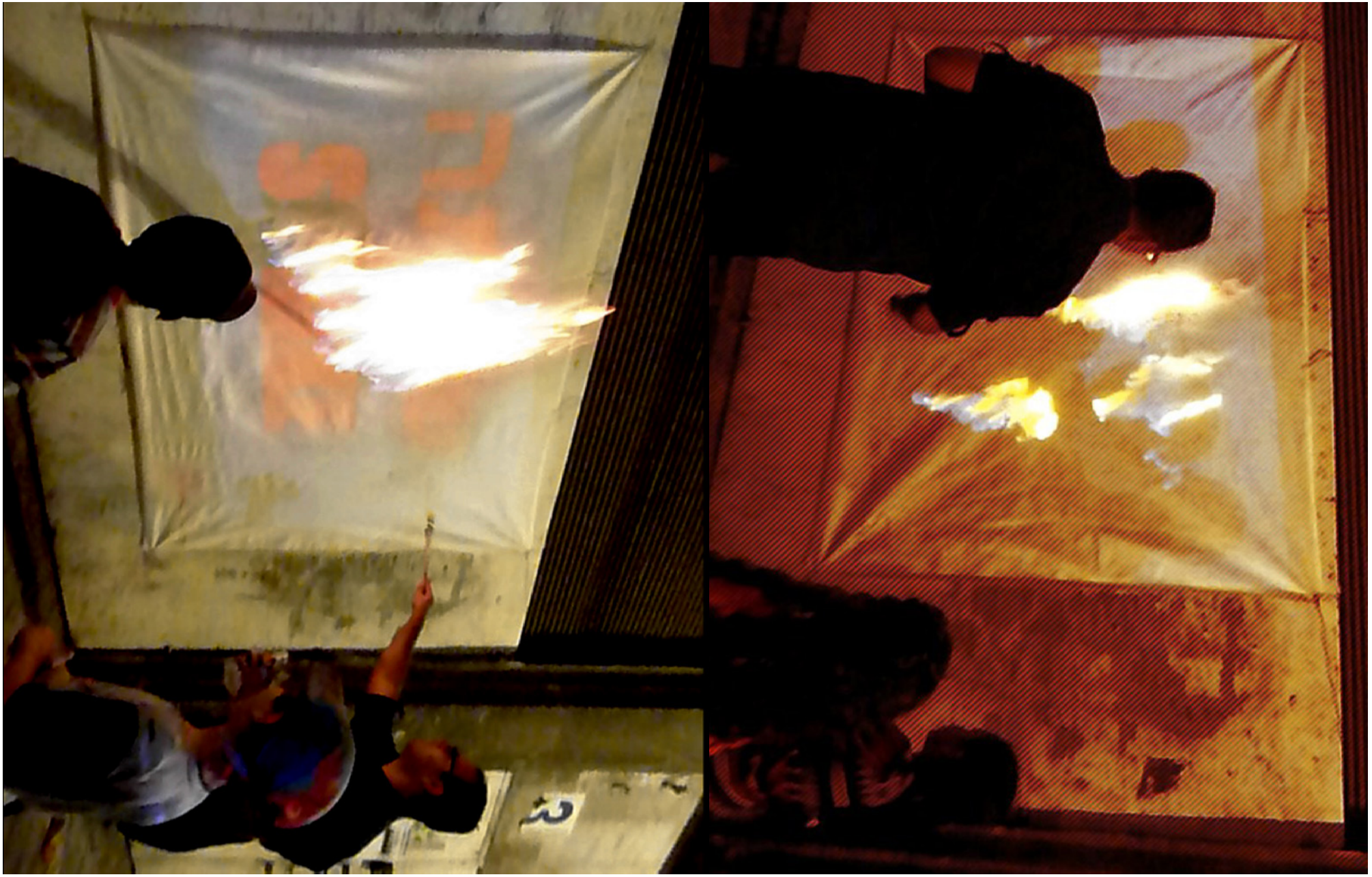
10 Goran, Đorđević, "International Strike of Artists?," 3+ 4 (b), 1980, pg. 43-85.

11 Clive Phillpot, "Artists' magazines: News of the Art Strike, Monty Cantsin, and Karen Eliot." *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America 11.3*, 1992, pg. 137-138.

12 Kirby Olson, "Comedy and Political Identity in the Work of Stewart Home," *Performing Gender,* 2014, pg. 167.

13 See the Citizen Forum for ContemporaryArts website: http://forumsztukiwspolczesnej.blogspot.com/, accessed April 2017.

14 See the Precarious Workers' Brigade website: https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/, accessed April 2017.



Gil Mualem Doron, Artist Strike, or How Close Are We to Bouazizi?

Previous page:

Artist Strike, or How Close Are We to Bouazizi?
An Urban Intervention by Gil Mualem Doron (Canvas, paint stripper, fire, projections), 2011
"On The Fence II", Jaffa

"On the Fence" was initially an art guerrilla event where local artists and residents took over a major street in Jaffa. Before 1948, Jaffa was the cultural centre of Palestine, after which it was annexed to Tel Aviv and suffered years of neglect, disinvestment and house demolition. The success of "On the Fence" prompted the city to incorporate it into Tel-Aviv's White Night festival. However, while the event was advertised as part of the municipality celebrations, no money was invested in it and the artists were not even paid for setting it up. Moreover, the White Night festival took place at the same time as the evictions of the street and square occupations by Movement for Social Justice (equivalent to the Occupy movement in Barcelona, London, New York and the Arab Spring).

The Performance Artist Strike, or How Close Are We to Bouazizi? was a critique of this exploitative situation. Originally the event was suppose to be a screening of a documentary film about the Arab-Jewish Jaffa's camp for social justice but the lack of funding for Arabic subtitles meant the screening was impossible.

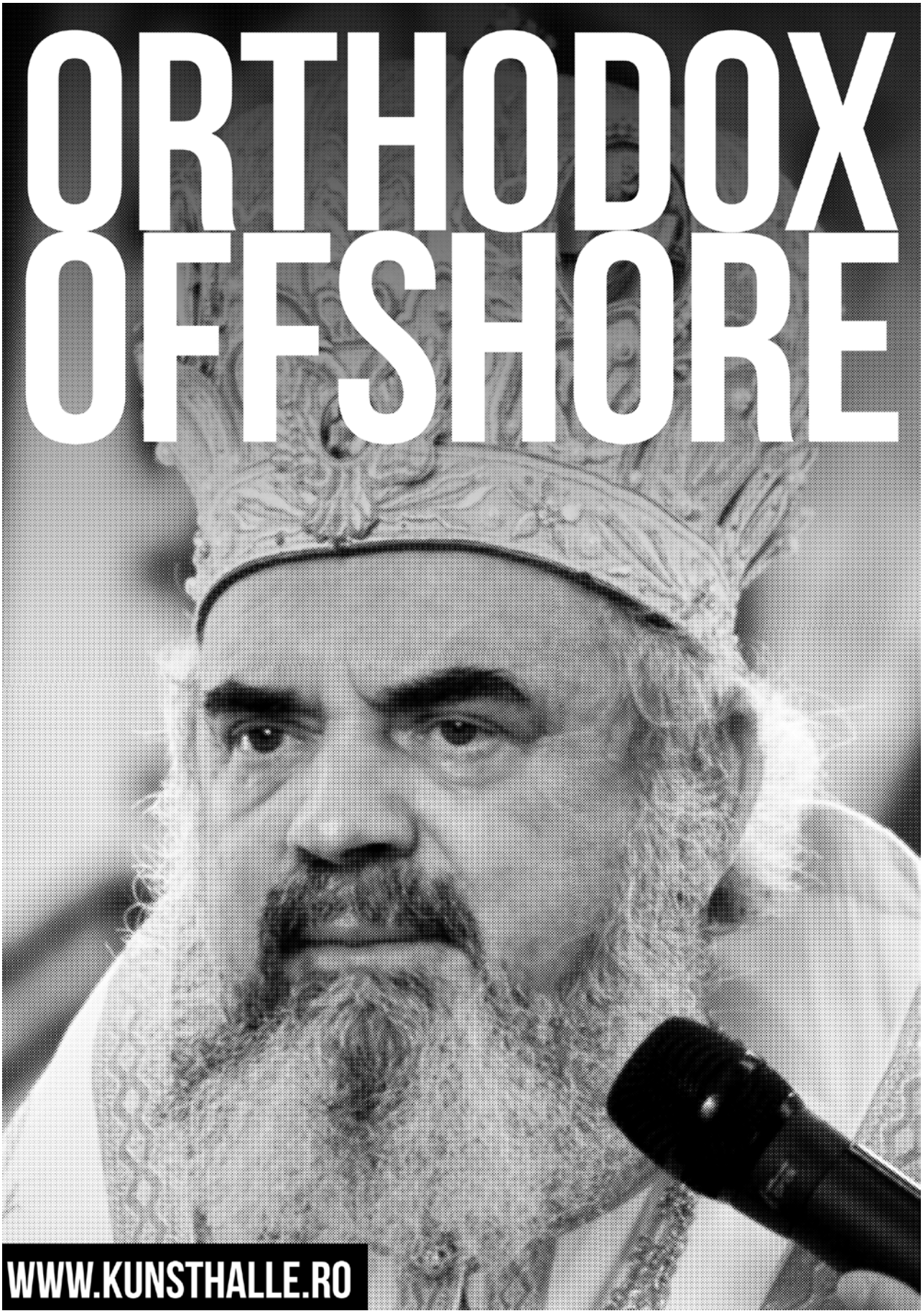
Using the language of high art, Jackson Pollock's action painting, the expensive paint was replaced by paint stripper, and the strikes left hardly any visible marks – until the paint stripper was set alight on the canvas. The canvas was signed then not with the name of the artist, nor with Jackson Pollock, but with Sam Pollock, a renowned American labour leader. The work's subtitle and the use of fire as painting material also memorializes Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation which sparked the Tunisian revolution and the "Arab Spring" in late 2010.

At the end of the performance, the canvas, now covered with abstract burning marks, was cut into pieces and put on sale.

p.s. Four months after the installation posed the question, "How close are we to Bouazizi?", the answer came in a demonstration marking the anniversary of the Protest for Social Justice Movement. On July 14, 2012, Moshe Silman, one of the movement's activists, burned himself to death, in the centre of Tel-Aviv, in front of press cameras.

Gil Mualem Doron (1970 UK) is an artist, researcher and a community facilitator. He is the founder of SEAS – Socially Engaged Art Salon in Brighton. He works in various media including photography, print, painting and mix media installations. Most of his work is as socially and politically engaged. His work has been exhibited in private and public galleries and museums in the UK, Europe and the Middle East, and several of his works are in private collections. http://a4community.org, https://seasbrighton.com.

Poster by Claudiu Cobilanschi



Poster by Claudiu Cobilanschi

Poster by Claudiu Cobilanschi

Previous pages:

www.kunsthalle.ro, posters by Claudiu Cobilanschi

Printed newspapers are an endangered species, while the online media is extremely unstable and can be altered anytime. Today's journalistic world lost contact with its audiences. The editorial agenda cannot cover constructive social criticism anymore, which is a part of the partnership based on trust with the citizens. The "house dog of democracy" job is diluted by the acid rain of the private equity.

I decided it is time to do something, to reclaim my share of public space. I realized that the indignation I felt must find a breach, a way of expressing itself. I designed the first A0 poster and placed it in the middle of the city, in one of the most crowded squares of the central area. I resisted answering to the opinions of those who praised or cursed me, I answered to all the questions regarding the subject of the poster.

After more than 50 interventions of this kind, it became clearer to me why I started to publish these political posters and where the boundaries of this gesture are. I discovered that Romania is not friendly to political posters. These interventions ended up on social networks and, soon enough, I was contacted by similar intentions from other parts of the world. I learned that it is quite simple to make a poster and that the impact is huge if the subject is in concordance with the public conscience of the moment.

Moving forward with this "pseudo-campaign," the appearance of the posters started to change. If the first posters tried to copy the first page of a newspaper, as I tried to say more and more things, the aesthetic aspect of the posters became more simple and accurate, and the aesthetic character ended up losing its importance. The "beauty" of the poster became toxic to its message. The more aestheticized the content, the weaker the response.

I also discovered the portability of poster interventions. They became one of the social and political instruments that I carry in most of my international projects. The poster is a guerilla-media type instrument that can be printed anywhere. My ambition to transform this "campaign" accompanies me everywhere I go and it's my own way of making journalism. Thus, the most important circle of silence in which I was a prisoner broke and became closed in another spiral. If anyone can create a poster, then the idea of public space press is saved and we are able to once again communicate with our neighbors.

Claudiu Cobilanschi works at the boundary between art and the press, using, as a journalist, various media of expression applied to the unfolding and debate of socio-political themes, and is interested, as an artist, in the analysis and aesthetics of the influences of those themes. He approached favorite topics, like thinking stereotypes, mass media and ego-casting, immigration and poverty, a.s.o., by using techniques and methods such as photography & performance, super-8 cine-experiments, guerilla publishing & poster bombing. He has collaborated with institutions from Romania and abroad, like ParadisGaraj Bucharest, Kunsthalle Winterthur, Salonul de Proiecte Bucharest, Depo Instanbul, Rotwand Gallery, idea.ro, GallleriaPiu Bologna, IG Bildende Kunst Vienna, kunsthalle.ro, Tranzit/Erste, Romanian Cultural Institute, MotorenHalle Dresden, Prototyp Prague, a.s.o.

Dark Matter Games

An Interview with Gregory Sholette, Kuba Szreder and Noah Fischer by Marco Baravalle (S.a.L.E. Docks)

From 11th - 15th of May 2017, S.a.L.E. Docks (www.saledocks.org), an independent and activist art centre in Venice, hosted the Dark Matter Games (www.darkmattergames.net). The project was co-curated by S.a.L.E. Docks and Workspacebrussels (http://www.workspacebrussels.be/).

Artists, activists and researchers animated a program of interventions in the public space, round-tables and activities that responded to the urgency of focusing on the political economy of the contemporary art system, on the gender issues linked to it (issues of discrimination on one side, but also the emerging of powerful practices against any normativity on the other), on the effect of big art events on the urban space and, last but not least, on the need to create new models of cultural production that are autonomous from the neoliberal logic.

Here we publish the interview Marco Baravalle, a member of S.a.L.E.-Docks, conducted with three Dark Matter Games participants: Gregory Sholette, Kuba Szreder and Noah Fischer.

Gregory Sholette and Noah Fischer are New York based artists, the former suggested the metaphorical use of the term *Dark Matter* to describe the functioning of the art world, the latter presented DebtFair, a collective project by Occupy Museums that addresses the effects, the nature and the consequences of debt on the life and work of thousands of U.S. and Puerto Rican artists. The other researcher interviewed is the Polish curator Kuba Szreder, who co-curated the project of the Dark Matter Super Collider (https://www.darkmattergames.net/single-post/2017/04/23/Give-us-more-reclaiming-creative-surplus-Open-call-to-build-a-dark-matter-super-collider-at-SaLE-Docks-Venice), an open call for the construction of a permanent collection of expressions of dark matter (activist, queer, unconventional...) creativity.

Marco Baravalle: *On May 12th, in the context of Dark Matter Games you launched your new book titled Delirium and Resistance. Here you claim that a new cultural economy emerged parallel to a new global political phase within these times of crisis, a phase marked by an apparent rupture with the neoliberal order (you mention both Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as examples). You call this cultural economy the "bare art*

Dark Matter Games, S.a.L.E. Docks, Venice, May 2017. Photo Greg Sholette.

world". What do you mean by that and in what way this definition develops your previous reflection about dark matter?

Gregory Sholette: In my 2010 book *Dark Matter* I addressed the fascination that the arts held for neoliberal enterprise culture, arguing that this attraction was not entirely based on the "imaginative out-of-the-box thinking" or "restless flexibility" of cultural workers, qualities cited by most analysts for capitalism's cultural turn, but it also involved:

> the way the art world as an aggregate economy successfully manages its own excessively surplus labor force, extracting value from a redundant majority of "failed" artists who in turn apparently acquiesce to this disciplinary arrangement. There could be no better formula imaginable for capitalism 2.0 as it moves into the new century. [1]

Thus extrapolating from, but also not completely agreeing with Boltanksi and Chiapello's "artistic critique" argument, in which capital appears to assimilate the social and affective aspects of art's Bohemian-inspired refutation of capital itself, I argued

instead it was the extraction of value from a large surplus population that drew neoliberalism towards artistic production as much as, or more than any other social factor. [2] This integration of art and capitalism is more than a new and inverted work ethic in other words. It brazenly illustrates capital's fundamental need for *constant expansion*, a process analogous to the unfettered compound growth that is inherent to all capitalist forms of economic organization. Simply put, capital, David Harvey writes, requires an ever-expanding output of social labor, "a zero-growth capitalist economy is a logical and exclusionary contradiction. It simply cannot exist. This is why zero growth defines a condition of crisis for capital."[3] But this process also means attempting to integrate the so-called dark matter or archival surplus agency marginalized by the mainstream art world system.

The concept of *dark matter creativity* focuses on three type of cultural producers with differing relationships to the disciplinary regulation of high art, including: [4]

1.) Professionally trained "pre-failed" art students whose academic education most likely emphasized subversive "avant-garde practices," while in reality preparing them to be part of an apparatus of reproduction in which the majority of artists serve the multi-billion dollar industry as museum-goers, magazine subscribers, art supply consumers, part-time art instructors or as poorly paid gallery assistants, art handlers, fabricators and so forth.

2.) Informal, amateur, "non-professional" zinesters, live action fantasy role-play gamers (LARP), "craftavists" knitters, devotees of Goth, Punk, and Do It Yourself (DIY) sub-cultures, fan filmmakers and cyber-geeks who are engaged with creative practices focused on pleasure, fantasy and networked communalism, and therefore seemingly in conflict with both the career artist as well as the work ethic of capitalism and its markets.

3.) A smaller number of artists and artist groups, both professional and also informal, who explicitly link their artistic practices to radical social or political transformation and therefore have traditionally been positioned at the outermost *margins* of the mainstream art world, its history and discourse, and most of all its political economy.

These three marginal forces resemble what astrophysicists describe as *dark matter* (and also *dark energy*): an gravitational force of unknown makeup that makes up as much as ninety-five percent of the known universe. Without the weight of this "missing mass" the visible cosmos would have dispersed into space long ago. Like its astronomical namesake, *creative dark matter* can be said to makes up the bulk of the artistic activity that is produced in contemporary societies. However, this type of dark matter is invisible primarily to those who lay claim to the management and interpretation of culture – the critics, art historians, collectors, dealers, museums, curators and arts administrators. It includes makeshift, amateur, informal, unofficial, autonomous, activist, non-institutional, self-organized practices – all work made and circulated in the shadows of the formal art world. Yet, just as the astrophysical

universe is dependent on its dark matter, so too is the art world dependent on its dark energy. This is a phenomenon sometimes called the "missing mass problem."[5] The question my thesis asks therefore is this: if celestial dark matter is the principal anchor that slows down cosmic expansion, what role then do redundant artistic producers play in stabilizing the art world?

All of these questions are compounded by the current state of the multi-billion dollar art world industry. As the American based artist Caroline Woolard and member of the group bfa.mfa.phd asks with incredulity "What is a work of art in the age of $120,000 art degrees?" [6]

Whether or not today post-Fordist capitalism now resembles art, or visa versa, virtually everything we thought we knew about "serious" culture has been peeled away with astonishing force, leaving behind a raw, and in some ways vulnerable thing. Today artists are simply another worker, no more or less. Following Giorgio Agamben's notion of bare life we might best describe this new *mise en scène* as simply "bare art." It is a new cultural reality in which art's celebrated autonomy and exceptionality have vanished, and in which artistic production has become fully congruent with the political and economic emergency that marks our contemporaneous present. Claustrophobic, tautological, our bare art world is our bare art world is our bare art world. It emerges in successive and accelerating predicaments that keep pace with capital's ever-quickening swerves from crisis to crisis. But this does not mean all artists like it, or that all are willing to yield to the harsh realities bare art imposes on their practice or their lives.

What I believe we are witnessing under these conditions of bare art is also happening within the ongoing capitalist crises more broadly. It is capital's aggregating compulsion in overdrive. Our world – both art and everyday world – is evolving into an accelerating demand-machine that seeks to extricate ever more marginal and dispersed gains from an expanding pool of widely distributed participants including indebted art students, underpaid cultural workers, unpaid artists and interns, as well as the innumerable networked contributors, with or without credentials, who assist in reproducing an increasingly bare art world.

Yet it is here that we glimpse the danger capital brings onto itself by subsuming such non-productive, creative labor. For if the latest iteration of system failure has left art naked, with no clear way of restarting the old narrative about art as an autonomous sphere of ideas and creativity no matter how entangled its system is with the marketplace, then this rupture also reveals a significant negation at work for all to see. Because once art's mimetic non-productivity is subsumed within capital its real threat materializes: *art becomes the single most conspicuous demonstration of capital's delirious con game*.

And clearly a growing number of previously invisible cultural producers have begun to see themselves as a hazardous category that is capable of operating in and for itself as the social nature of art is unavoidably made visible. Like some weird re-

Dark Matter Games, S.a.L.E. Docks, Venice, May 2017. Photo Kuba Szreder.

dundant agency, this no-longer dark matter creativity is at once commonplace – the art fabricators, handlers, installers whose own art practice always takes a back seat – and simultaneously bristling with a profound potential for positive change as well as an unpredictable and deep-seated sense of resentment.

Therefore as much as the condition of bare art yields predatory behavior and panic, so too does it give birth to "bad deeds" in the form of boycotts, strikes, occupations and demands for equality. And here, in a nutshell, sits the delirious potential of dark matter in a bare art world. A fully cognizant and ultra-accelerated dark matter agency inevitably questions who is supposed to fabricate the art projects of the art world's successful 1%? Who will be disciplined into subsidizing museums and conferences and industry journals? Who would be expected to teach the next generation of dark matter surplus artists? *It will not be us* this shadow agency responds, not under current conditions of the art world's hierarchies and its system of value extraction.

In the world in which we live what was previously (and perhaps in some instances thankfully) hidden from sight now becomes painfully manifest in the bare art world, for both better, and for worse.

Marco Baravalle: *You recently focused your attention on the existence of different art worlds beyond the one characterized by the gallery-exhibition nexus. I'm particularly interested in knowing on what premises these other art worlds are based. Do you think that*

Dark Matter Games, S.a.L.E. Docks, Venice, May 2017. Photos Kuba Szreder.

ontologically it is really possible to define a zone completely outside the neoliberal devices of valorization? Especially when these devices have proven to be various and not limited to the aforementioned nexus. And finally, is the dark matter super collider an attempt to create a space of visibility for the creative power of the dark matter? How should this accelerator work?

Kuba Szreder: I will respond with a question - how would you locate activities of such groups like S.a.L.E.-Docks, Macao, Isola or countless other independent art centres in relation to the institutions composing art market and their business models? The theory of art worlds, first coined by an American sociologist Howard Becker in 1984, and recently picked up by such action research projects like Plausible Art Worlds (Basekamp & friends), provides a viable intellectual framework for understanding the ground operations of such alternative, artistic systems. To explain

this in a language of operaismo, one can hark back to Antonio Negri and his concepts of *art of the multitudes* as a form of action/imagination aimed at rebuilding our social world and building new ones. Another useful concept is self-valorisation of artistic labour. This is really at stake here – do you really need apparatuses of evaluation embedded in emptied out, speculative biennale-fairs circuits, in order to feel positively valorised as a creative labourer? Obviously, these apparatuses do have their pull, and also are exploitative by nature.

Coming back to our question, the term "world", especially in plural, sounds controversial. People tend to deride this term as an idealistic theory of alternative universes, supposedly located both outside capitalism and separated from the dominant sectors of art industry (which is far too often simply conflated with neoliberal capitalism per se). But "art worlds", sociologically speaking, are defined as networks of social cooperation, with their own division of labour and value systems, which enable creation and distribution of what people call "art". So for example, when S.a.L.E.-Docks organizes a protest in which you make use of radical creativity, which has a mixed status of art and action, you do it by mobilizing labour, attention and resources in a way differing from what happens in the gallery-exhibition nexus. If such activities are not a one-off event, they tend to build up into a social pattern, which Becker proposes to call an art world. In this way, S.a.L.E.-Docks, Isola or Macao constitute what Stephen Wright calls as "art sustaining environment". Basically, these art worlds are not separated and localized, but also intersect globally, in a network of affinities and alliances. They constitute value-systems with their own distinctive aesthetical concepts and even ontologies, alternative or even conflicting to the value-systems operational for the gallery-exhibition nexus. Just think about it – people tend to make use of the word "art" to denote many differing things – on the one hand we call as art twenty meters high bronze sculpture which look like a tacky B-movie set design, like the recent line of Hirst-labeled-commodities, on the other we have such actions like Precarious Workers Pageant, which harks back to politicized aesthetics of avantgardes. The problem is that far too often we decry some of the hybrid activities (which happen on the one to one scale of artistic performance as social action) as "just art", using blanket definition of blue chip art as the only possible and imaginable art. The theory of art sustaining environments (art worlds) tries to deal with this slippage. To repeat – it is about modes of self-valorisation, imagined as an expression of living labour, as art of the multitudes, as a *creative* surplus, which exceeds exponentially what is defined as an artistic commodity by the market-related art world.

Interestingly, the speculative and self-referential tendencies of the blue chip gallery nexus undermine its own systems of valorisation. In what Greg Sholette calls as *bare art world*, one does not need to pretend that art differs from a luxury commodity. Not surprising that art thus defined and peddled is so repetitive and utterly degraded. One needs to remember that markets mark the things marketed through them, like Neil Cummings like to say. In other words, art worlds do have some ontological effects. Things produced as art in different economic systems are tainted

Dark Matter Games, S.a.L.E. Docks, Venice, May 2017. Photo Greg Sholette.

by the systems by which they are produced and distributed. They are coloured by political intentions and radical economies of S.a.L.E. Docks or Macao, or flattened by price tags attached to them in blue chip systems (as the market marks the minds of people thus marketed).

There is another element in your question - about the general, totalizing framework of neoliberal capitalism. Just to make it clear. Every social world, including every art world down there, is currently located inside and framed by the global, capitalist world-system. Dominating art worlds are dominating because they ride capital flows and maintain social hierarchies based on huge disparities of wealth and status. The members of radically politicized art worlds do struggle precisely against these tendencies, with which the gallery-exhibition nexus is integrated. Art labourers populating these art worlds might be exploited by various sectors of capitalist economy (from housing to labour to educational markets), depending very much on their positions in the global system (f.e. for people in mainland Europe student debt is not such an issue as it clearly is for our American colleagues). One also needs to take into account global disparities in wealth, and North-South divide. It is much easier to make art and mobilize free labour and resources when one lives in Brussels than when one lives in Kinshasa, in New York and not in Kabul - and this disparity is a defining element in the emergence of art worlds.

The concepts such as bare art world, art incorporated or art factory, are well tuned to emphasize links between art worlds and global capitalism. The problem is that - in my opinion - they tend to be too generalist and might for example conflate a particular, localized iteration of dominant art worlds with the art world in general. I

do not think that our art worlds look, operate or exploit in a precisely same manner nevertheless if we are in London, New York, Warsaw or Milano. Even in Venice, there are huge differences between what happens in Giardini, in Hirst exhibition, and in S.a.L.E.. It does not mean that there is no exploitation or inequality or wars for dominance.. But we need much more grounded theory of apparatuses and mechanisms of exploitation, struggles for distinction and emancipation – in order to deal with them appropriately. These apparatuses and nexuses are transversal, they run across differing social worlds, enabling exploitation of many by the few. We need a kind of string theory of artistic universe, which would support both our understanding and our struggles against the dominance of capital both in economy, politics, and arts. And the Dark Matter Collider is such an exercise in struggle for self-valorisation of artistic, of living labour, of art of the multitudes, which always flows underneath, through and beyond a white box called "just art".

Marco Baravalle: *Together with the Occupy Museums collective you recently presented the DebtFair project at the Whitney Biennial in New York City. Could you briefly explain what is DebtFair and could you please tell us how do you evaluate its impact within such an institutional framework and major art event?*

Noah Fischer: The impression was that in the aftermath of Trump's election even some very institutional parts of the art world were mobilized, taking part in demonstrations and protests. After 100 days what is the state of the art? Beyond the initial shock, what about important issues such as debt, race and gender? Are they gaining visibility within the art debate? Are they fuelling cases of self-organizing?

In 2011 and soon after, Occupy Museums's direct actions continually clashed with museums from a movement-oriented position that primarily saw them as leverage-points onto a larger undemocratic system ruled by capital. Since this system needed to be called out, and its spaces democratized and revolutionized museums looked like accessible 1% sites that were more penetrable than Goldman Sachs. For years we operated outside rather than from a critical position inside the Art World. However, when the movement wound down, both our community and our practice became more narrowly art-focused. Our project Debtfair at the Whitney Biennial is an outcome of this transformation of our group and of history. It also begins to address the question of how to politicize the atomized community of artists rather than simply hitting the big art institutions.

Debtfair was also quite a personal project for me. During years of planning direct actions with Occupy Museums, I would continually return to my studio and here was a conundrum. I knew that studio art practice and art objects hold value but the actions against art institutions had radially altered how I understood this economy. On one hand there is therapeutic, intuitive value in art practice; its an activity in which the end-result – the artwork – may even embody a personal way of seeing,

even a personal political understanding – as any other format cannot, clearly that is valuable. But can you square this with a fully transactional system? It seemed that objects when installed in most white box art spaces were fully captured by the game of capital. Most people know this and think its only about the art market – the speculative potential for sales and the creation of an art asset class as common measure of success (or more likely measure of failure). However the capture of art into financialization runs much deeper – most artist's time is literally under a kind of financial control via personal debts paid as price of entry into the art world.

Occupy Museums did a study of this year's Whitney Biennial for example – As far as we know, 100% of the artists went to college and most went to grad school and a large portion went to the best art schools. Most top art schools have the highest tuition of all colleges in the US, so all this education means debt, but artists don't pay debt back very effectively, so we stay in debt permanently and this is one way art itself becomes a subject of financial control. This isn't a conundrum that one could easily avoid. It doesn't solve it to run away from the studio. I was always thinking that for the Left to give up the whole idea of art object creation to the hyper-capitalists in favor of political direct actions or community projects would be the definition of true defeat as if we have no right to the value of making (or enjoying) artworks.

So Debtfair came out of this sort of personal conundrum as an artist who had largely left the studio for the park. I tried to model a system for artists to shift the potential value of art from speculative to sustainable, proposing a kind of art-currency to trade art objects directly against personal debts. Then I realized this has to be a community project and brought the idea to Occupy Museums members and we decided to bundle artists together and do the whole system collectively just as debts themselves are bundled. Just before this, an OWS group called Strike Debt had initiated their Rolling Jubilee project which seemed to create a mini debt-bail-out economy. We developed the Debtfair exchange system for a few years-at first it was based on trying to rethink how an art sale could work. Then we realized we needed to first create a new way to see the artworks – how can you see the invisible debt behind artwork? We would issue an open call for artists in debt, and then organize the participating artists based on their banks. So you have for example a bundle of JP Morgan Chase artists with a debt of ten million and so on. We decided to install these bundles inside of the gallery or museum walls rather than on top of the walls.

We were invited to stage a Debtfair exhibition in Art League Houston and this led to public debates about debt and responsibility. That seemed like a necessary first level of consciousness toward organizing around debt resistance in the art world. Then, last Spring, the Whitney Museum got interested in Debtfair. Most often in the US, Occupy Museums prefers to work with museums from an uninvited position – that is how we retain full agency for our actions and push campaigns as far as needed. However, exhibiting in a museum like the Whitney which is intimately tied

Dark Matter Games, S.a.L.E. Docks, Venice, May 2017. Photo Greg Sholette.

into hedge funds and real estate mega-companies through their trustees and corporate sponsors wasn't a problem for us in this case. We had in fact designed Debtfair as a kind of Trojan Horse – a machine to reflect back on the visibility system of the museum itself. Debtfair meant bringing "Dark Matter artists" into a bright space as a lens to reflect on the overall value and selection system. The museum accommodated our project and we felt that they understood it.

In the middle of the process, Trump was elected. Perhaps the least among the many painful outcomes, it changed the political calculation of Debtfair because the project was aimed more at a Clinton Presidency where Neoliberalism could be on full view and targeted. In fact, we had found a specific target: a corporation called BlackRock which is an asset manager at a scale of 5.1 trillion. Much bigger than any bank, BlackRock was like the death star that connected all the types of debt situations American artists might find themselves in: from the colonial debts of Puerto Rico to student debt and credit card or medical debt. All this debt was traded by BlackRock and its CEO, Larry Fink (who is a trustee of MoMA) was talked about as Clinton's treasure secretary. But then the Trump bomb fell and all of

Dark Matter Games, S.a.L.E. Docks, Venice, May 2017. Photo Greg Sholette.

a sudden the neoliberals became the protectors of the "sanctuary cities" rather than our corporate enemies from 2011.

As the inauguration approached in a form that looked Fascist it appeared politically strategic to create a large coalition in the arts- a blend of all the left groups and even neoliberal institutions that were willing. Many museums in New York such as MoMA and Met were officially silent. Some others such as Queens Museum, which serves a large immigrant population, were mobilizing very directly to protect their workforce and take on a resistance role. I called up the Whitney curators and discussed Occupy Museums hosting a Counter-Inauguration centering the voices of radical arts activist community at the museum. This was quickly organized as part of the #J20 art strike (or resistance events) around the country. The overall mobilizing against the inauguration as well as the successful Airport protests that pushed back Trump's anti-immigrant legislation created a feeling that the culture was shifting to one of sustained resistance. Currently however, we seem to be in a lull but in any case we have a long-term problem and need long term solutions.

When Trump was elected networks began to form. Now there are networks between institutions based on defining and supporting sanctuary spaces. There are

networks of academics like "Art Professors of America" preparing to defend both their students and themselves from right wing attacks. Most of the work I have carried out in the last years – in New York and in Europe (for example the occupation of Guggenheim Venice in 2015) came as a result of the 2011 Occupy/Arab Spring/M15 networks. Effective resistance completely depends on them. But online networks provide structure, not content and here is where the challenge for the Left lies. Occupy Museums' experience trying to highlight the politics of debt at the Whitney Biennial so far shows that organizing around debt and class is much more difficult in the art world of the Trump Era. Or at least, it's more difficult to make such politics go viral. As everyone knows, the race debate around "Open Casket" achieved historic levels of traction. Before that, the event we organized for J20 seemed to resonate as well and people can and do rally against some of Trump's more violent policies. We don't seem to have a very effective language, attention, or energy reserve currently to respond to the takeover of all levers of power by a group of billionaires and the system that continues to concentrate their capital.

However, part of the problem I think has to do with the way that art activism has over-aligned itself with the feedback loops of news media which are so highly influenced by the algorythms of Facebook and Twitter: a problem which was laid bare in the US election. This makes it incredibly hard to parse what kind of organizing is truly effective in the long run from what is simply sparking people's momentary need for outrage. We are trying to take a long term view with Debtfair.

Occupy Museums is a platform focused to expose the transfiguration of art by financial power in the arts because its grip keeps tightening. We see sharply increasing debts and the boom of luxury real estate and rent prices in "sanctuary cities." This means that such spaces to be continually less safe, there's really nowhere to run. Now and in the future we have to organize and fight.

Marco Baravalle is a central figure at S.a.L.E. Docks, an independent space for visual arts, activism, and experimental theater located in what had been a former salt-storage facility in Dorsoduro, Venice. Baravalle is a member of Comitato No Grandi Navi (No Big Ships Committee), which protests against large cruise ships in Venice. He is also involved with the NO MOSE (No MOdulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico, Experimental Electromechanical Module) front, which opposes an impractical Venetian flood-protection project that was at the center of a national corruption case. Baravalle researches creative labor and how art is positioned within neoliberal economics.

Gregory Sholette is a New York City based artist, writer, and core member of the activist art collective Gulf Labor Coalition. He is the co-author of It's the Political Economy, Stupid; and Dark Matter: Art and Politics in an Age of Enterprise Culture, and author of Delirium and Resistance. He currently teaches in the Queens College art department at City University of New York.

Kuba Szreder is a curator, writer and editor. He holds a practice-based PhD from Loughborough University School of the Arts, England. In 2009 he co-founded the Free/Slow University of Warsaw. In his most recent book ABC of Projectariat, Szreder scrutinizes economic and governmental aspects of project-making and their impact on an 'independent' curatorial and artistic practice.

Noah Fischer works at the crossroads between the political road of economic and social inequity and poetic pathway of art practice. His sculpture, drawing, performance, writing, and organizing practice fluctuate between object making and direct action as well as an ongoing theatrical collaboration with Berlin-based andcompany&Co. Fischer has a particular focus on art institutions; He is the initiating member of Occupy Museums and a member of GULF/ Gulf Labor; his collaborative work has been seen (with and without invitation) at MoMA, Guggenheim, Brooklyn Museum, ZKM, and Venice, Athens, and Berlin Biennales among other venues.

References:

1 Sholette, *Dark Matter*, 134.

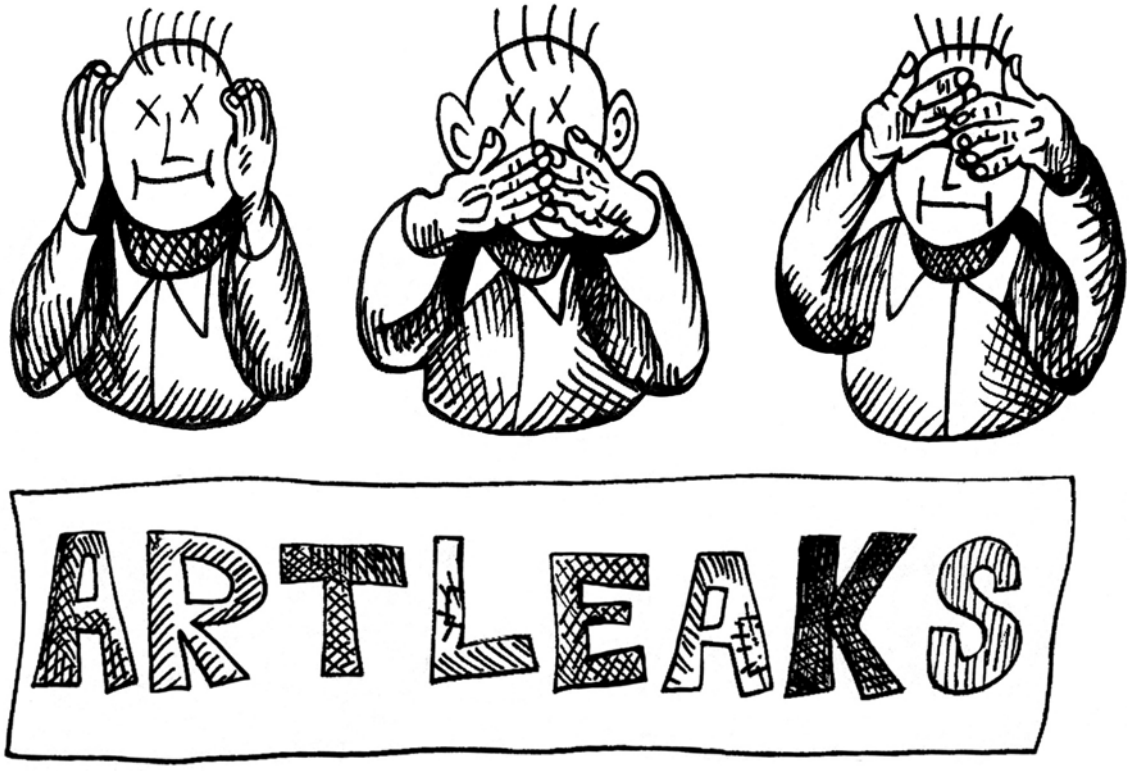
2 Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, 2007. However, not all observers agree. For example, Art historian Karen Van Den Berg stresses post-Fordism misappropriates the concept of artistic labor production by denying any difference between autonomous art practices and capitalist labor, an argument she and Ursula Pasero explore in Art Production Beyond the Art Market? California: Ram Publications, 2014.

3 David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, 2014, 232.

4 See Chapter 3.2 "Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter-public Sphere," as well as the book *Dark Matter*, 2010, op cite.

5 The term used by some scientists to describe the solution dark matter and dark energy brings to the standard model of cosmic formation. See "The Mystery Of The Missing Mass," National Aeronautics and Space Administration website, USA: http://history.nasa.gov/SP-466/ch22.htm

6 BFAMFAPhD/Caroline Woolard, "Pedagogies of Payment", The Enemy, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2014: http://theenemyreader.org/pedagogies-of-payment



http://art-leaks.org