

# **The Second World Congress of Free Artists**

In Three Acts

Camel Collective

AARHUS KUNSTHAL, AARHUS, DENMARK

THE PLAY WAS FIRST PERFORMED AT AARHUS  
KUNSTBYGNING IN NOVEMBER 2010, DIRECTED BY  
CAMEL COLLECTIVE WITH ROBERT OCHSHORN, AND  
THE SUPPORT OF KARIN HINDSBO AND THE DANISH  
INTERNATIONAL VISITING ARTISTS PROGRAM  
(DIVA)

CAST

IZA MORTAG FREUND, WANDA JAKOB,  
ZAKI NOBEL MEHABIL, ROSA SAND MICHELSEN,  
VIVI NIELSEN, AND MIKKEL TRIER RYGAARD,  
WITH MICHAEL ASHKIN, ZACHARY CAHILL, AND  
JOHANNES RAETHER

A SECOND PERFORMANCE OF ACT I, TRANSLATED  
INTO SPANISH BY CARLA HERRERA-PRATS, TOOK  
PLACE AT CASA DEL LAGO, MEXICO CITY, IN  
FEBRUARY 2013, DIRECTED BY CAMEL COLLECTIVE,  
CURATED BY FABIOLA IZA AND VICTOR PALACIOS.

CAST

ELSY JIMENES, ALONSO NAVARRO MENDOZA,  
JOSÉ MARÍA NEGRI, JACQUELINE SERAFÍN, AND  
GASTÓN YANES

SPECIAL THANKS TO DORTE KIRKEBY ANDERSEN, LARS BAY,  
AND KAREN FRIIS HERBSLEB (MUSEUM JORN, SILKEBORG);  
CECILIE LÆRKE ASAA, SARINA BASTA, MAARTEN BREUM,  
GIULIA CRISCI AND LILIANA DEMATTEIS (ARCHIVIO  
GALLIZIO); STEPHAN DILLEMUTH; JENNIFER GONZÁLEZ;  
NATE HARRISON; KATRINE HEE; KARIN HINDSBO; FABIOLA  
IZA; JAKOB JAKOBSEN (COPENHAGEN FREE UNIVERSITY);  
KAREN KURCZYNSKI; TONY MULLIN; ROBERT OCHSHORN;  
VICTOR PALACIOS; JUDITH WIELANDER; AND EMILY VOTRUBA.



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# Foreword

Anthony Graves (Camel Collective)

*So it would be necessary to learn spirits.*  
— Jacques Derrida <sup>1</sup>

The Second World Congress of Free Artists is a loose collection of scripts representing a number of ventures on the topics of artistic pedagogy, alternative forms of education, and teaching art under the new conditions presented by neoliberal universities and colleges.

The idea to create a congress germinated in 2005 during one of the early meetings of Camel Collective, which then numbered between two and twelve on any given afternoon in Lower Manhattan. Our model was the *first* World Congress, organized by the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus—essentially made up of the Danish artist Asger Jorn and the Italian chemist-artist Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio—in 1956. The first congress has been historically overshadowed by a meeting the following year in Cosio di Arroscia, of Guy Debord, Jorn, Pinot-Gallizio and others, which marked the formation of the Situationist International. That this first meeting was such a little-known chapter in the history of avant-garde art and critical politics was reason enough to resuscitate it.

Initially, we wanted the Second Congress to take place in New York, with the intention of politicizing the ideas of collectivity and self-organization. Our impulse was, much like the first congress, to see if a platform could be organized, potentially around the banners of unionization, urban activism, and a

demand for universal health care, at least at the local level. The project developed slowly and grew in unplanned dimensions through the various interests and availabilities of the people in the collective and through what we perceived to be a shifting front in the debates on education.

Then came the mortgage crisis and the general financial collapse, whose effects many people are still suffering. While doing research in Denmark, we watched anti-austerity protests spring up across the European Union, then, the student occupation of the Millbank Tower in London and the inspiring student demonstrations in Chile. It became clear that a “global financial crisis” was being used as an excuse to gut education—in the arts and humanities in particular—and to justify a particularly North American capitalist form of higher education. In conjunction with the standardizing aspects of the Bologna Process, we imagined this would involve privatization, eventual increases in tuition, and the creation of the debt-generated indentured servitude many of us in the U.S. face. Europe is witnessing the economicization of higher education. Obviously, the MFA who can pay back a \$100,000 student loan through the sale of her work is a very rare case, yet this carrot of gallery sales is held in front of many students as a measure of success. This is merely a detail. What is less immediately obvious is that debt has become an effective form of social control and the industry that higher education has become is one of its sharpest instruments.

While in Copenhagen, we called on an international group of artists, researchers, curators, and pedagogues to submit papers to the congress. But we came to the conclusion that it was unnecessary to add another conference on art and pedagogy to the ones we had been attending in New York. We’d grown tired of conferences and suspected others had as well. Perhaps it was exhaustion, but they all seemed to end in the same drowsy suburbs of academicism. On later reflection, they also seemed

to be rehearsals for how to behave professionally. *Our own presentations included.* Sitting in the audience, it was hard for me not to feel an uncomfortable sympathy for those performing at the podium. Much in the way professional academics have to hit the conference circuit to prove themselves to the university market, the lines between a conference presentation and a job interview are blurry—as artists, we didn’t want to reproduce this professional scenario unless it was on our terms. Better to make something new and to experiment with the form *as a form*. All the same, it became clear that not only was it impossible and contradictory to reenact a situation of spontaneous creation and Euro-beatnik avant-gardism as at Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio’s meeting, but our initial perceptions of the gathering at Alba in 1956 were off the mark. We hadn’t anticipated the degree to which irony and serious play were involved in their game of generating experimental institutions *ex nihilo*.<sup>2</sup> We wanted to invoke the *spirit* of the Alba meeting rather than subscribe to Jorn’s theoretical program. His goal to create an arm for theoretical and artistic experimentation on par with scientific institutions—while growing another appendage to strike a critical blow to Max Bill’s functionalist Bauhaus school—could be translated into our context and inflected with our experiences and with the numerous interests and experiences of our contributors.

Jorn could not have anticipated how free-form artistic experimentation would be tamed into the disciplinary trees we find ourselves hanging from today. The intensification of division in art education has been heralded by calls for branded items like interdisciplinarity, collaboration, degrees in social practice, and participatory art that make it possible to invent new departments and increase student numbers with little overhead. The artistic avant-garde of our day is quite amenable to neoliberal institutions. While many excellent things have developed from what has been called the educational turn in art, the latter has also become a revenue

producing mechanism in cultural institutions hoping to boost their numbers. Perhaps it's time to be critical of the happy marriage of pedagogical artistic practices and their coziness with bureaucratic institutions in general.

\*

All the scenes that follow in this book are the inventions of our contributing authors, and were later dramatized through an intensive editorial process. With regard to politics and aesthetics, there are numerous and divergent ideological positions represented in this book. At times we found ourselves at odds with a text. (It is a rare day when the three of us agree on anything.) Nevertheless, we have done our best to sustain all the conflicting viewpoints, approaches, and polemics, even if we do not always share them.

We have kept stage direction relatively simple in order to emphasize the openness and interpretive aspects of the dramatic form. Some sense of continuity has been built in, though the three acts do not follow an Aristotelian narrative format—a whole made up of a beginning, middle, and an end. The three acts in this book represent loosely curated selections that are grouped according to three imaginary stages: the Imaginist Bauhaus, the Big Store, and the Workers' Theater (based on theater productions of the 1930s). These acts were performed at Aarhus Kunstbygning in November 2010, on a low proscenium stage in the museum. At the writing of this, the first of the three acts was performed in Spanish at Casa del Lago in Mexico City, where the Imaginist Bauhaus stage was fabricated and served as an integral sculptural element in the performance and exhibition.

This text is anything but a traditional play. The construction of the book is meant to mimic what we witnessed as a certain crisis in spectatorship brought about by the live performances

of the Congress. Spectators were presented with a choice between two poles of reception—one, in terms of the aesthetics of experience, and another, in terms of the usefulness of the information presented. This difference can also be thought of in terms of J. L. Austin's distinction between *performative* and *constative* utterances. The performative speech act gets something done, it issues a curse, an oath, or names something or someone, where the constative refers to states of affairs, i.e. descriptive discourse.<sup>3</sup> In the broadest sense, this text plays with the difference and boundaries between the two modes of expression, particularly as it relates to artistic pedagogy. In other words, Should I be watching this or should I be taking notes? Is this an experience or is it an object of study? This text is meant to work along similar lines. It is both a book of essays and a work of dramatic fiction. We have included two introductory essays; one, by the historian Tom McDonough, provides a historical context for the congress, and a second, by the artist and writer Douglas Ross, speculates on the epistemologically spurious nature of narration.

A text is always a contingency, and a script is nothing if not material for labor, production, and creative experimentation.

1 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

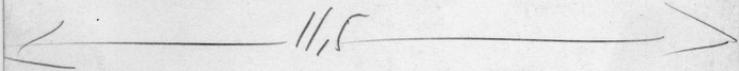
2 For example, the London Psychogeographical Association was invented by the British artist Ralph Rumney. “To make our movement sound international I suggested that we should mention the London Psychogeographical Committee. (...) It was just me. I said: ‘Okay, I’m the London Psychogeographical Committee.’ It was pure invention, a mirage.” Ralph Rumney, *The Consul*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 37.

3 See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). Also, Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 19.



Sala del Consiglio Comunale. Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio welcomes the participants to the First World Congress of Free Artists, Alba, Italy, 1956. (Courtesy Archivio Gallizio, Torino)

Galizio talu, Settembre 1956, Congro, Alba,



+++

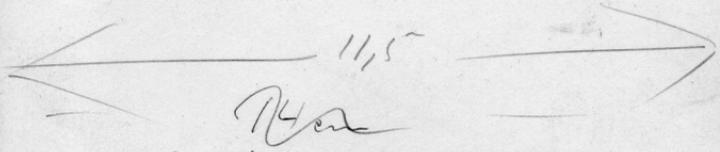
1286  
FOTO - CINE - OTTICA  
CANALE LUZZI  
CON. BBA - CANALE  
ALBA - BBA - CANALE  
STIFANO BERO  
1926



Sala del Consiglio Comunale. (from left to right) : Franco Garelli, Gil Wolman, Asger Jorn, Constant, Elena Verrone, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, Ettore Sotsass Jr., Piero Simondo. Alba, 1956. (Courtesy Archivio Gallizio, Torino)

3  
FOTO - CINE - OTTO  
Cov. LUZZI  
ALBA - BRA - CANALE  
S. STEFANO BELBO  
ALBA - Telef. 13.26

Kongres, Alba.  
septembrie 1958



w 2 fra vuciri wolman +++  
w 3 fra vuciri Joru, avrăți Constant, Elevea Verrone (?),  
Galizio, Simonda (?)

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# New Forms of Community and the Situationist Conferences

Tom McDonough

*New forms of community appear tentatively—in action, in politics—but in our country, France, they have not yet been consolidated or made to enter into life, except in the case of the most advanced and lucid “militants.” In their work as in their “private life” and leisure activities, most people remain imprisoned within narrow, out-of-date frames of reference.*

— Henri Lefebvre<sup>1</sup>

This opening quotation from Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* was written ten years before the founding of the Situationist International, but it constitutes a prescient diagnosis: that exploitation takes place not only in the capitalist workplace but also in the seemingly free realms of private life and leisure. It also suggests the subject I would like to explore here, namely, the opposition to these forms of exploitation in the “new forms of community” that were tentatively taking shape at the same moment—in particular, those new forms developed within the SI.

The “conferences” that punctuated the history of the group were privileged sites for articulating this question of community. The SI held eight such conferences, beginning with its founding conference at Cosio d’Arroscia in July 1957 and concluding with a conference in Venice in 1969, three years prior to the group’s official dissolution. These meetings were marked by discussions of internal organizational issues and broad policies, and they provided a place in which to hash out positions and plan actions—but none of this is what I would like to investigate here. It is not the *content* of the conferences, but their *form*, that interests me. This might sound superficial, but then we have the evidence of the SI journal, *Internationale Situationniste*, itself, which quite regularly published images of these conferences in the form of photographs but also, notably, of in the form of appropriated comic strips. Clearly something in their structure was considered important enough to find expression in this, their only public manifestation. (The SI’s conferences were definitively *not* open to the public.) And that something was precisely a complicated suggestion of what a radical form of community might be.

It might be helpful to begin by recalling what these meetings were *not*. In a sense, and without putting too fine a point on it, they were *not* “artists’ congresses.” This is perhaps what distinguishes them from the “First World Congress of Free Artists,” that 1956 gathering that preceded the SI’s formation; as fascinating as this meeting was, it nevertheless could not escape the gravitational pull exerted by the well-established tropes of twentieth-century artistic vanguards. But alongside the SI’s own meetings, we find a series of tracts denouncing the normative professional life of the postwar neo-avant-garde. We can cite two examples. First, we might note the SI action at the 10th General Assembly of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), which was held April 14–19, 1958. This was an early action, taking place in the spring after the group’s founding. The AICA assembly was held in Brussels against the

backdrop of the first world's fair since the Second World War; during it, the SI distributed a tract within the hall where the critics were meeting and also read it over the phone to selected members, who were called for the purpose late at night in their hotel rooms. The tract concluded, "Vanish, art critics, narrow-minded, incoherent, and divided fools! [...] Disperse, fragmented art critics, critics of artistic fragments. The unitary artistic activity of the future is now being organized within the Situationist International. You have nothing more to say. The Situationist International will leave no place for you. We will starve you out."<sup>2</sup> This text, on the verso of the tract, appears over a grid whose axes are labeled *banques* and *coups*—although I am uncertain of the exact reference here, it would certainly seem to be related to gambling, perhaps to baccarat. In that case, there would seem to be a distant echo of Marcel Duchamp's *Monte Carlo Bond* (1924), that is, the SI's image stands somewhere between Duchamp's bond, with its drawing together of art making and finance, and the idealist grid of modern abstract painting ... but this will have to remain a subject for another place.

Our second example dates from almost three years later, from January 1961, when the German members of the SI from the Gruppe Spur—mostly painters based in Munich—intervened in a panel discussion on the theme of the avant-garde that was being held in the Werkraumtheater of the Münchener Kammerspiele. They rained a tract, "The Avant-Garde Is Not Wanted!," on the heads of the audience. The text consisted of thirteen points, opening with a denunciation of "the pseudo-avant-garde" that can be bought by the ruling society. The tract continues: "The aesthetic rubbish of the avant-garde, such as pictures, movies, poems, etc., are now desirable but futile; what is undesirable is the program of the complete redesign of living conditions that changes society at its foundations." And it concludes with a call to "artists and intellectuals" to

support the SI, “the only movement that abolishes the present state of culture.”<sup>3</sup>

So, we have some idea of what the SI’s own meetings would *not* be. The first appearance of the Situationist’s conferences in the pages of their journal dates from the end of 1959, in a report on the third conference, which had been held in Munich in April of that year, apparently in a private room of a bar in Schwabing, then the city’s bohemian district. A variety of images were published, and in all of them the visual emphasis is on *dialogue*—on gestures of speaking and of listening, and on *sociability*—hence the ubiquitous cigarettes and glasses of beer. (Except for Constant, who is seen with an anomalous Coke bottle!) We might also note the modesty of the space, with the group intimately crowding around three tables arranged in a U; the lack of hierarchy; and the presence of a tape recorder. (Discussions from the conference could be heard during the opening credits of Guy Debord’s 1959 film *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*.) All of this, it seems to me, is shown in order to provide a counterimage to that offered by the established avant-garde, and especially by postwar surrealism, which was centered on the charismatic personality of André Breton. Whatever comparisons or analogies might legitimately be made between the positions of Debord and Breton, it is crucial to note that within the pages of the SI journal, Debord does not appear in a central position—rather, the conference is figured as a conspiracy of equals.

The official report of the meeting ends this way: “Speeches by Pinot-Gallizio, Jorn, Constant, and Oudejans mark the closing session of the conference. An experimental alcohol made for the occasion by Pinot-Gallizio is immediately distributed around the room. Far into the night, classic favorites succeed it.”<sup>4</sup> We can call this sociability, as I have above, but something stronger is at work: drunkenness, excess, dissipation. The

“serious” work of the conference was not located merely in the discussions, but also in the drinking—that is, in a refusal of productivity, a refusal to perform the “professional” role of the avant-garde artist. This is what unites the seemingly disparate photographs documenting the SI’s early conferences and those taken by Ed van der Elsken some six or seven years earlier of the “tribe” at the café Chez Moineau. We must recognize that throughout these early years of the SI, Debord was returning continually to his first years in Paris and the experience of Chez Moineau, as in his collage *Memoirs*, made in 1958 in collaboration with Asger Jorn, or in his aforementioned 1959 film, *On the Passage ...* The link between that moment and the early years of the SI is made clear when a photograph of the group’s 1961 Gothenburg conference is published in their journal. The image is banal enough, with the group once again sitting around a large table, talking over some point of theory or practice, but its caption, appropriated from *Elle* magazine, lends it a rather different resonance:

*A mere reduction of one liter of wine per day or one liter of aperitifs per fortnight would free up annually an amount equal to the price of a refrigerator. Even after three months, the savings achieved would allow the purchase of either a vacuum cleaner or a phonograph or radio ... Each year, the French drink the price of the construction of a town like Arras or Brive.<sup>5</sup>*

Here we find an implicit conflict between the domestic space of the home, with its pseudofunctional amenities (refrigerator, vacuum cleaner) and to shared spaces of conviviality; between household labor (as well as the atomized leisure of the phonograph) and the unproductive space of the café, the preferred SI meeting place—although the Gothenburg conference seems to have been held in a room at the city’s university.<sup>6</sup> The official account ends on a note similar to the

one that concluded the report on the Munich conference: “After the close of the last session, the conference ended much more constructively, in a celebration for which unfortunately there is no record. This celebration, which turned into a *dérive* starting from the crossing of the Sound, led many to the port of Frederikshavn, and for others extended to Hamburg.”<sup>7</sup> There may have been no direct record, but the fête did not go unrepresented: In the pages of the journal, it is illustrated by a “diverted” image from the Bayeux Tapestry, of William the Conqueror feasting with his Normans—an allegorical image, we might say, and one that assists in producing a “myth” of the SI. (Its resonance as a mythic image of the group would be confirmed four years later, when students in Strasbourg reused it for a frame in the four-page comic *Return of the Durutti* [sic] *Column*.)

This image, of an assembly around a table, recurs again and again in visual records of the SI conferences. We saw it in the Munich and Gothenburg photographs as well as in the appropriated Bayeux Tapestry scene, and we also find it in the “allegorical” images drawn from science fiction comics to depict the London conference of 1960 and the Antwerp conference of 1962, which uses a frame from the Legion of Super-Heroes. These images respond to others from the same moment—for example, to photographs showing the diplomatic posturings of the Cold War. Hence we find the report on the 1960 London conference accompanied by an image of the Soviet minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Gromyko, speaking in May of that year to the United Nation’s Security Council after the USSR shot down an American U-2 spy plane. (The prominent figure on the right side of the photograph is Sir Pierson Dixon, who represented the United Kingdom.) What we seem to be looking at here is an image of *nondialogue*, the opposite of the sort of exchanges the SI was seeking to foster at its conferences. But it was not just the Security Council that the SI targeted—they attacked UNESCO too. In the report on

the London conference, we find a floor plan of the recently completed Y-shaped Secretariat building reproduced; it figures as something like the inverted image of the “integral” or “unitary” art sought by the Situationists. The building was the work of a collaboration of architects (Marcel Breuer and Bernard Zehrffuss) an engineer (Pier Luigi Nervi), and a string of prominent artists (Miro, Calder, Picasso, Noguchi, Moore, etc), in which each retained his professional role, whereas the SI sought precisely to break down these distinctions. No wonder the group made UNESCO a continual target in these years, even proposing to take it over!

One final example might suggest what the SI was reacting to in these conferences, that is, the nondialogue instituted by spectacle culture, which was founded, as Debord wrote, on *separation*. The poster for the sixth SI Antwerp conference features a gold ground on which we find a reproduction of a publicity shot of Marilyn Monroe, who had committed suicide that summer—the star as the epitome of unidirectional communication. (And we might note the almost exact coincidence of this poster with Andy Warhol’s first exhibition at the Stable Gallery in New York, where he showed his new Marilyn paintings.) This is the star as mass-commodity fetish, but also, at least implicitly, a recognition of the toll this takes on the individual—as evidenced by the remarkable “obituary” published in the SI journal.<sup>8</sup> But it is from the same moment that we possess perhaps the most poignant records of the alternative offered by the SI: a large series of photographs taken at the Antwerp conference by Dutch photographer Leo Dohmen, a close associate of the surrealists.

Most of these photographs remained private—only one was published in the journal’s account of the meeting. Indeed, we need to grasp the *paradox* of these images: They are photographs of dialogue, of a “new form of community” (to return to Lefebvre), but they are *only* photographs, only

images. We need to read them through the lens of a passage in Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, in which he writes that "the language of real communication has been lost" and "a new common language has yet to be found." The point is not to speak "to others of what had been experienced without any real dialogue"—as in art, as in photography—but "in a praxis embodying both unmediated activity and a language commensurate with it. The point is to take effective possession of the community of dialogue, and the playful relationship to time, which the works of the poets and artists have heretofore merely *represented*." We must understand "representation" here in both its aesthetic *and* its political senses—that is, not only in the dichotomy "lived/represented" but also in "participation and direct democracy/party-based representation." The SI might have been a project, it might have been a "society," but it was never a *party*—something suggested by a 1966 image of the group, again seated around a long table engaged in animated discussion. Beneath it is a caption taken from the 1759 indictment of the prosecutor general of the Parlement de Paris against the *Encyclopédie*: "Can you deny that there was a project conceived, a society formed, to support materialism, to destroy religion, to inspire independence, and to feed the corruption of morals?"<sup>10</sup> But there is no simple triumphalism here; indeed, the iconography we have been tracing is haunted by a continual awareness of its very distance from the social world, its isolation, as in one appropriated comic frame showing an installation on a barren planet, with the bubble caption "... on a base installed on the asteroid GX lost in space ..." All those bars, bistros, and cafés were also, in a sense, heterotopias.

I would like to give the final word to Jean-Luc Nancy, who in an essay from the 1980s on the "inoperative community" elucidates the true meaning of Marx's famous comment that in all previous societies, a person had been "a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic," but in communist society

“nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity, but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes,” so that “it is possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic.”<sup>11</sup> As Nancy writes,

*Capital negates community because it places above it the identity and the generality of production and products: the operative communion and general communication of work. ... As I have already said, it is a work of death. It is the work of death of both capitalist communism (including when it goes under the name of “advanced liberal society”) and of communist capitalism (called “real communism”). Standing opposite and to the side of both of these—and resisting them both, in every society—there is what Marx designates as community: a division of tasks that does not divide up a preexisting generality (as though society, or humanity, could have a general task that could be given, and known, in advance—only capitalist accumulation has ever tried to represent such a general task), but rather articulates singularities among themselves. This is “sociality” as a sharing, and not as a fusion, as an exposure, or as an immanence.*<sup>12</sup>

“A ‘sociality’ as a sharing”: Here is the horizon of the community formed within the SI and given form in its conferences. It is precisely why we must examine the structure these meetings assumed, which was nothing less than a playfully ironic appropriation or *détournement* of the chivalric feast, the diplomatic assembly, the superheroes’ lair, and so on, and it may be one of their most provocative—if least understood—legacies for now.

- 1 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. John Moore. London and New York: Verso (1991), 247.
- 2 “Nouvelles de l’Internationale: Action en Belgique contre l’assemblée des critiques d’art internationaux,” *Internationale situationniste*, no. 1 (June 1958), 29.
- 3 “L’avant-garde est inacceptable,” *Archives situationnistes*, vol. 1, trans. Luc Mercier. Paris: Contre-Moule / Parallèles (1997), 43–44.
- 4 “La troisième conférence de l’I.S. à Munich,” *Internationale situationniste*, no. 3 (December 1959): 21–22.
- 5 “La cinquième conférence de l’I.S. à Göteborg,” *Internationale situationniste*, no. 7 (April 1962), 26.
- 6 At least according to Christophe Bourseiller. See his *Vie et mort de Guy Debord*, Paris: Plon, (1999), 177.
- 7 “La cinquième conférence de l’I.S. à Göteborg,” 31.
- 8 *Internationale situationniste*, no. 8 (January 1963), 19. Monroe appears again, briefly, in Debord’s 1973 film *The Society of the Spectacle*; see Guy Debord, *Complete Cinematic Works*, ed. and trans. Ken Knabb, Oakland, CA and Edinburgh: AK Press (2003), 59–60.
- 9 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: Zone Books (1995), 133.
- 10 *Internationale situationniste*, no. 10 (March 1966), 52.
- 11 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C. J. Arthur, New York: International Publishers (1970), 53.
- 12 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor et al., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1991), 75.

# Near and Far Version

Douglas Ross

*Everything said metaphorically is unclear.*  
— Aristotle <sup>1</sup>

Reading Notes (Jeu De Théâtre)

WHO: Speaker-actor-audience-teacher-student-  
reader-director-writer-narrator-Listener

1. ACTOR \* enters the stage or clearing from AUDIENCE (seated or standing).
2. ACTOR activates a projection of the text “Near and Far Version” so that it is legible to AUDIENCE. (ACTOR and AUDIENCE only see the section of the text that ACTOR is reading or referencing.) ACTOR has not read or rehearsed “Near and Far Version” prior to the reading-performance.
3. ACTOR (seated or standing) silently reads the text to himself or herself.
4. When ACTOR sees fit (thoroughly attending to the entirety of the writing), he or she addresses the audience, verbally summarizing each section and subsection of “Near and Far Version.”
5. When ACTOR finishes reading and speaking about “Near and Far Version,” AUDIENCE is given (or takes) time for asking questions and speaking its mind.
6. ACTOR exits the stage or clearing away from (and not rejoining) AUDIENCE.

\*This designation may be established beforehand by invitation, or by lottery involving all who are present on the occasion of the reading-performance.

For the anecdotalist, confusing and conflating report and story means stirring up, lumping together and cleaving apart a surplus of expressions and events that will finally serve some sensible conclusion; any confusion is ideally intended convolution. When the news correspondent confuses *report* and *story*, we might decide it's unintended. When the seismologist's or meteorologist's telltale tools—the accepted climatological properties and factors, historical models and, conceivably, the assimilation of observable conditions are all put to use and yet still exposed as flawed and inaccurate, this is presumed unintentional. Regardless, the meteorologist delivers predictions trusting that a receiver will make sense of their particular argot and logic. The synoptic scale for forecasts being vast and dynamic, hours or days could pass before the specialist discovers and revises a misguided projection already conveyed to the public. In addition to the capriciousness of “acts of God,” there might also be time and space enough for a listener to simply misremember or misinterpret the initial forecast.

*Within the narrow margins*

Physical, bodily action and deception will be altogether something else. When, as with the sumo wrestler, bullfighter, and tennis player, face and extremities are aimed or motioning in opposing directions, it might be intended. The consequences of this mixing-up is the hair's breadth between sudden death, “sudden death” and/or victory. Apprehension and comprehension, what is sensed and calculated within a fractional instant, as we know, is thought through strictly within the narrow margins of the game or confrontation, and then branches into further intention, further consequence. The players will always look for more wiggle-room, and for as yet unseen, previously unachievable feats of speed or illusion ... That is, they wish to be superhuman. But the rule-bound precincts where the action takes place and where the spectators

take it in remains welded to its own complete, unwavering, and reliable terms.

\* \* \*

Who is the narrator but the one who tells the story? For reasons of authority linked to or enabled by context or milieu, and other causes identifiable merely through a command of character that some people perceive as “charisma,” the narrator is the one presumed to know the story, unless or until he or she intentionally or unintentionally signals otherwise. Yet even in situations where a narrator is or starts out well informed and of sound mind, an untold variety of thoughts, verbalizations, delays, and exchanges complicate telling and listening.

Between conviction and hesitation—“I know and I’ll tell,” “I won’t let on that I know until ...,” “I don’t know,” “I thought I knew, but ...,” “I won’t let on that I don’t know,” “I’ll behave just for the time being as if I know ...,” “I know well but will fuck his shit up, jejune little undergrad ...,” and so on. That cusp, region, or marker thought of as “accuracy” (and therefore bordering “inaccuracy” on all sides) is degree zero of the unreliable, and is subject to incalculable conditions and whims.

### *Some space for the Early Latin*

Apparently, the word for the teller, transmitter or vocalizer didn’t come along until centuries after the words for the ability to narrate and the act of narrating. The root of *narration* is *gnarus*: *having knowledge of or acquaintance with a thing; skillful, expert*. Who was this expert? Then, too, a Latin word that has its origins in Sanskrit, *narro*, means *to tell* or *to convey*. *Narrator* evolves later, out of Old High German. And from those times, somewhere within the early root of the noun *narrator*, is also found *clown*.<sup>2</sup> You’re at the edge of the road trying to herd your meandering sheep, oriented in one

direction, when a minstrel (the anchorman of former times) slowly ambles by, crooning his report. It turns out that Louis the German will succeed to the throne of Louis the Pious.

\* \* \*

Because grasping what distinguishes a narration from a narrator, a narrator from speaker, a listener from a receiver, hearer, and eyewitness, eyewitness from witness, a witness from a protagonist, a reader from a writer—be they actual, implied, known or assumed, concealed or identifiable—means first acknowledging, however imprecisely, that we are all of these. Also consider, we're thinking here of living, not literature, so that our perceptions, talents, and cares are not likely to be fully developed or balanced across all of these roles.

Any exploration of unreliability, or of the unreliable, ideally entails clarifying some nominal characteristics of reliability, but what would this offer? Trustworthiness and accuracy are commonly thought of as antithetical to the unreliable—irreconcilable with the notion that the unreliable comes closest to *truthfulness*.

Our understanding of literary narration, of reliability, trustworthiness, and so on, can only be grasped or informed by nonliterary, lived encounters, even when the complex world of a written work demands that we adjust to or triangulate anew customary ethical, moral and political ideals in order to move through the tale. Some narrators are repeatedly self-appointed, invariably monopolistic, and righteous—rarely ever narratee or listener, they have a listening posture that is well practiced and illusory, and espouse forms of democracy while practicing paternalism. And what is more of an offense or tragedy—the refusal to speak or the refusal to listen? Ideally, not all effort is given to narration. Other narrators have utopian aspirations

of delivering their narration and their listeners from pedagogy to andragogy, andragogy to othergogy.

The unreliable (and its psychological significance) can be considered here as a kind of matter persisting in unknown quantity. If there is a legitimate starting point, it is the individual, living or dead, who contributes to the continual deformation of this matter, a manufactured substance that has heretofore not necessitated such a description—a living concretion throughout this unnatural, human world.

There is no irony in the presumption that in some cultures each spoken word, each utterance, each gesture is measured for its degree of sincerity. Call it a practical defense. Conversely, in other societies, earnestness and authenticity expression are respectfully assumed and maintained in all contexts except within the safety of public entertainment, and in very close personal relationships, where some deviation is possible, making such expressions in those instances into sincere irony, sincere parody, sincere mockery, sincere cynicism. (Can't the same be said about other forms of representation?) It is also the case that in time, given time, the cues and capacities for sensing and comprehending the unreliable will change, if not evolve, and who and what are thought to be stable, well meaning, cognitively capable, and sane will differ between “way back when” and now.

### *Where “I’m” coming from*

Who is the narrator but the one who knows? The narrator’s knowledge is assumed, but is it essential? When the narrator is not or is no longer trusted, when the narrator’s knowing is no longer trusted, *unreliable* is placed before or rather added to his or her designation. This compound label, *unreliable narrator*, which emerged relatively recently, provides either the necessary distance to proceed safely, or the warning to flee. And who proceeds or flees but the narratee? The one

commonly considered innocent, even naïve, whose place is primarily that of reception and judgment. “Unreliable reader” or “unreliable listener” are comparatively uncommon notions, and hence these figures are comparatively scarce.

One does not unreliably exist no matter how one might feel.

Beyond the narrator, the reader’s reliability cannot be easily estimated. The feedback that would be required to ascertain it might only be garnered face-to-face and over an extended period of time. Under what circumstances and upon what terrain might narrator and narratee meet in this way? Whatever the circumstances, they are doubtless external to literature (and its world making), in a place where a reader is a listener. Philologically speaking, fiction is postulated to be the tenancy and primary occupation of narrators who are “unreliable”; nonetheless the variety of characters in literary fiction or “paraliterature” is only of metaphorical interest here if fiction must be distinguished or isolated from “everyday experience.” In contradistinction, in nonfiction literature, “unreliable narrator” is merely a euphemism for *liar* or *impostor*, which is also not necessarily accurate or identical in meaning from one narrator to the next.

There is no reason to argue here with Henri Lefebvre’s assertion, “There is no truly unmediated fact, interior or exterior.”<sup>3</sup> Every culture is a place, organization, and elaboration of “as ifs” and “fictional facts.” Nonetheless, because at present the “blurring of reality and fiction” can’t be invoked or glamorized any further, we can feel free to abandon those grounds to frolic once again in the intensities and vulnerabilities of interiority and exteriority, however untimely and unembellished they sound (and without making these spaces analogous to “subjectivity and objectivity”).

The narrator, acting as an implied or apparent whole—living, dead, or prosopopoeial—will produce and access the narration, but in fragments. The narrator, living and breathing, will, as in literature, be potentially both homodiegetic (“surely they were interested in my work”) and heterodiegetic (“she stands calmly, speaking to the press”) depending on his or her situation and psychology.

The narrator’s homodiegesis becomes apparent in several ways, such as the narrator’s belief and absorption in the narration. Homodiegesis transmutes to mythification when narrators are convinced of their inseparability from the narration, when the narrator can claim or see evidence that he or she is constitutive of the narrative—for example, as a primary ingredient of cultural history.

Conversely, the narrator will be heterodiegetic, that is, not participating or “appearing” in the narration, only to the degree that the listener acknowledges a fulfillment of impartiality, a first-person limit within the narration, an agreement to narrate another’s points of view as accurately as possible without expressing his or her own. Still, a narrator’s unreliability is already implicated through the willingness to narrate.

Endeavoring to secure a state of heterodiegesis, a narrator might quit the narration, quit narrating. In such cases the veracity of the preceding homodiegetic substance might be called into question and thus also the reliability of all (previous) narration. Some narration will endure or transcend such an event, but this will not verifiably complete some heterodiegesis on the part of the narrator.

Being completely and convincingly the character-narrator and one’s own author means writing the lines, memorizing the lines, speaking the lines, believing the lines, revising the lines. Who doesn’t know this multiple-being? Perhaps a young

baby or child; the ones who are only slowly and sensorially becoming accustomed to the narration.

While not a chronicler per se, the narrator, by inscribing narration in others, concurrently displays his or her own relationship to—among other things—the unreliable. This is not necessarily negative. Still, the narrator might try very hard to be an explicator, although this is where the narrator might misconstrue his or her function or individual fulfillment.

*Hiding is sharing*

The *trickster*, so frequently obliged to reveal *the truth*, a moral or spiritual lesson, is stuck in the job. The spotlight is always on the trickster. The trickster is the one to watch, at the expense of others; without the trickster, the story is meaningless. Not every trickster asked for this, arriving fully as a preternatural manifestation. Some simply ended up becoming the trickster one way or another. Overidealization of the trickster today serves as our lamentation over our own conformity and obedience. Might we need the trickster now more than ever?

The elucidation of concepts and customs; the invention and enactment of ideas and ideals; the recollection and sharing of what can be transmitted, learned, recovered, and remembered; the articulation of goals and expectations; the forecasting of potential future conditions, be they rewards or pitfalls; the telling and foretelling for those who have volunteered or even paid to listen: This is the occupation of the narrator, who passionately or perfunctorily conceives, creates, dictates, and assigns the unfolding narration.

For example, an era or event regarded as historical appears to be or is narrated as if it were completely self-contained, completely containable.

That which is unreliable, pliant, plastic, and at times inscrutable is, we know, reflexively, unconsciously, willfully transmitted. All of these conditions make the unreliable a subjective property or layer, a human conceit, and a tangible actuality.

The narrator and the unreliable exist before and outside of literary fiction, or at least outside of its particularized attributes and structures. It is frequently assumed that in the case of the narrator and the narrative, the unreliable most often pilots someone into the negative, into peril. *The unreliable* might bespeak some contiguous mass—in much the way evil is spoken of as a largely undifferentiated, unified field.

A redemptive disputation of this can be formulated: reliability and unreliability, fallibility and infallibility, interiority and exteriority, truth and fallacy—considered interreliant, interrelated pairings rather than diametrical oppositions—give form to the unreliable.

The unreliable does not distinguish intellect from emotion, but rather makes space for their communication, convolution, and homogenization.

The unreliable is largely void of clear or linear intentions. The unreliable is detected, comprehended, and used comparatively. For the narrator and the listener, phatic communication, erudition, fabulation, and emotion mix together here. The unreliable is at once a property, a quality, an amalgam, and a variable.

The narrator, consistently employing and risking the unreliable, demands and exercises the listener's compensatory and fabulative capacities. They meet not in total wilderness, but within a small controlled burn. Serving various ends, the

narrator works to gauge the listener's aptitude in sensing and predicting, among other things, the unreliable.

The narrator, in using the unreliable, might seek to draw the listener into the light of self-realization.

The narrator intending and using the unreliable might not have your back.

Narration of a certain kind or order deterministically reinforces the unreliable, and the narrator might unwittingly and reliably reproduce some approximation of this. Such predestination and perpetuation can be as true of "rumor" as it is of "historical fact." But what story or means has not been inherited? What in total can one make exist that has not been bequeathed?

The narrator works to gauge the listener's aptitude for predicting discrepancies in and between narrators, implied narrators, and the narration, such as a body of knowledge.

The listener might expect that the narration has been derived from the narrator's firsthand experience, even when the narrator is not a part of the narration. His or her participation in the narration is in repeating, negating, reinforcing—positively, negatively, neutrally.

The narrator's use of or entrapment within the unreliable is not dependent on his or her own (time-space) proximity to the narration or its becoming.

The narrator and the listener outgrow the significance, the message, or form of the narration, and so, rather than being adapted, translated or transformed, the narration does not survive their progress through it.

The listener taking in only part of the narration dismembers and misremembers. The narration mutates into the mere story of its alteration and potential untrustworthiness for future narrators—fallible, trustworthy, or otherwise. These acts will define relationships to the unreliable.

The listeners rediscover and retrace discarded or splintered narration. They revive it, while those who knew or lived its previous manifestations find pleasure, solace, and/or fear in this.

*Interpretation, interpolation, interpellation*

The narrator might expect that when intended to do so the listener will ascertain, invent, and fill in that feature of the unreliable, what's left unspoken, and will, when necessary, transform the unspoken into vital, intended meaning. "The listener (or reader) must be involved in a process simultaneously entailing disordering, decreation, and reordering."<sup>4</sup> The narrator will expect that when invited, the listener will break the porous surface of so-called literal denotation, as if there were such a thing, to reach the embedded, intended meaning.

In some environments and bonds, the narrator and the listener might presuppose that what remains unintentionally unspoken will either be forgiven or noted as an offense, without an in-between. The narrator and the listener might suppose the same with regard to what is unintentionally articulated. A two-way street, clearly marked.

The narrator expects that the unreliable will reside in both the narration and listener. The narrator might presume and endeavor to assemble nonnarrative signs into the narration. The listener might be unable to digest the montage. The narrator and listener might expose their anxiety that such things as nonnarrative signs cannot exist. A narrator may presume that

the unreliable, taken as positive material (without materiality), is the only way out of a given situation.

The more the narrator's intentional unreliability makes the listener feel excluded from the narration, from a body of knowledge, for example, the more a listener seeks empirical access to, participation in, and understanding of the narration.

*"I" for one*

A narrator's disposition to act out of self-interest and against the listener's interest is, depending on the situation or context, untrustworthy. Whatever secrecy masks a narrator's thought may produce unintended articulations and utterances colored by the listener's anticipation and reactions, as generalized or postulated. An oversaturation of this color will expose the unreliable. However intermittent or fragmented the contact between narrator and listener with the narration, the narrator's concealment and obscuration of access will reveal his or her own untrustworthiness. This is fully exhibited or exposed when the narrator's fragile access to the narration initiates the final breakdown of concealment, thereby revealing the narration, or when the listener's aptitude for receiving the narration and gauging the unreliable outgrows the narrator's previously skillful camouflaging. Still, the unreliable is in some measure separate from and parallel to both the narrator's untrustworthiness and the narration itself.

The narration, thought of as a body of knowledge, is not a body, as it turns out, but a nervous system, and a very restless one indeed.

The listener's inability or failure to take up and interpret the narration as fictional facts—no matter how frivolous or gravely serious the narrative might be—to be molded and redirected as necessary or to be left productively useless is a failure to embrace the unreliable.

The listener's desire or drive to make the unreliable reliable, to steady the ground, when pushed to a certain limit will express and signify his or her own fallibility. The narrator's fallibility and a listener's fallibility are without choice with regard to type and magnitude. This is "in their nature"; it is not a reflection of their actual or potential untrustworthiness or their relationship to the unreliable. The unreliable asserts its very own factorial and characterological influence, though without a cause of its own.

The narrator derives pleasure from fictionalizing facts, from exaggerating the narrational particulates. The listener feels free to play along. The unreliable allows the listener to not take the narration literally or too seriously. The *not too seriously* allows for redescription of the narration as ever newer fictional facts.

We know that the problem with calling a narrator unreliable here "in the living world" is that what is unreliable for one listener is purposive, instructive, useful, and reliable for another. This is not ideal in a novel. In this sense the unreliable may or may not definitively belong to or reside within the narrator, the narration, or the information of which the narration is comprised.

\* \* \*

### *Some beauty*

The unreliable at its best, at its most positive and persuasive, is: Those aspects of the narration what cannot be agreed on is the case. The unreliable remains what narrations (representation, and making present) must aspire to. The generation and maintenance of the unreliable, of some quotient comparable to an aesthetic or art quotient that insures its own reformulation, ensures its survival by taking place through what cannot be agreed upon. This not being agreed upon is the marrow of the unreliable.

Some narrations, and therefore some quantities and kinds of the unreliable, are accessible only to the listener, the individual listener, whereas others are available only a group or a society of listeners. The unreliable is warm or cold, and also hot. In being all, either, or any, it can be molded and adapted, and so it molds, it adapts.

The unreliable slides between thinking, asking, telling, and teaching—between very modest ideas of independence, then sociality, then maieutic methods and intents, and finally straightforward pedantry and didacticism.

*Code of faith rather than honor*

For the listener, continuously assuming and attributing the unreliable, using this identification tactically in meeting narration of any kind means receiving and deforming the form and the content of the narration. One listener may fear his or her own blindness to the unreliable; others will presume and embrace this unawareness or unknowing and, therefore, the unreliable.

Ours is no longer the time when “he who knows the names knows also the things named”<sup>5</sup> and when much narration evolves, plays out, and dissipates on its own. The unreliable can be *wrong place, wrong time* as frequently as *right place, right time*.

What the unreliable shares with the narrator and the listener are types of positive or negative charge, or even a neutral valence, yet its differences lie in the range of its illegibility.

\* \* \*

Unreliability might be assumed in a narrator who is jealous, angry, drunk, or not fully awake. In literature, narrational breakdown might indicate, among other things, psychosis in the narrator.

Outside of literature, narrational breakdown might indicate unforeseen, paradigmatic developments in the narration.

Voids and hesitations separating the narrator's utterances, gestures, timbre, and physicality, along with the narration motivating and moving these reactions, will illuminate specific features of the unreliable. The authenticity of narration will be largely unrelated to the sincerity of the narrator. Authenticity persisting through the unreliable is not suffocated like the narrator's intended and amplified earnestness. The unreliable and the authentic can be aligned.

The possibility that the narrator and the listener will remain silent and immobile by no means halts the narration. That the narrator and the listener are equally reliable may or may not be evidenced by or within the narration. Know this possibility: the narrator and the listener can be equally trustworthy when the narration is unreliable. Know this possibility: the narrator and the listener can be equally untrustworthy and yet the narration reliable.

The narrator's lifelong trustworthiness might suddenly become the opposite through the narrator's own or others' further narration. The narrator's lifelong untrustworthiness might suddenly be deemed the opposite, again through his or her own or others' narration in the present and the future. The narration, echoing off walls, deflected off and reflected in windows, bouncing down halls, will be transmuted. The narration, unyieldingly committed to a political belief, foreshadows and forces the unreliable. The unreliable remains friend, foe, and acquaintance.

The narrator is fallible to the degree that the listener must enact compensative measures to make the incomplete whole. The listener's aptitude for supplementing and reconstructing the narration when faced with the unreliable, is identical to the

ability to sense differences between one hardness and another hardness, and against a softness of some degree.

The narrator, having no talent for factual accuracy or ideological consistency, calls the narration reliable, thereby exposing his or her fallibility and untrustworthiness.

The narrator's fear of the unreliable. The listener's fear of the unreliable.

The distance separating the narrator and the listener equals the height, width, and girth of the unreliable, its gambles and generosities.

In expressing or acting on values that contradict those purported to be the narrator's guide, the narrator reveals or produces the unreliable.

The listener takes or mistakes the unreliable for the inspirational and the reliable for the ineffectual.

The narrator is so thorough and infallible in his or her narration that the listener's capacity for comprehension is exhausted, hence the listener finds the narration unreliable and the narrator fallible.

The narrator perceives the unreliable in the listener and issues an irrevocable dismissal.

Boredom of reliability and the pleasures of the unreliable.

The unreliable specific providing or evoking the reliable universal.

The listener assists the unreliable simply by being available, by listening little or not at all—unintentionally aiding the narrator's intentional unreliability.

The listener, detecting and appreciating the narrator's strategic unreliability, shares in the subtleties of the narration and learns to make further use of the unreliable.

The listener willfully or unconsciously ignores the unreliable until its consistency and magnitude can be fully ascertained.

The listener, centuries away from the narration, intuits its details clearly, while the narrator, only steps away from the narration, renders its details unreliably.

The narrator discredits his or her own exceptional understanding of the narration and the unreliable, causing the narration to sound or appear unreliable.

The listener, pitying the narrator's fallibility, hopes not to be present when the narrator comprehends his or her own unreliability.

The narrator, utilizing the unreliable, deliberately turns away from what has been inherited in order to force redescription of the narration.

The narrator's silence is an invitation for some and a disconcerting alarm for others. The narrator's movement or proposal to reverse roles with the listener may be met with unease, distrust, and embarrassment.

The ethical, moral, aesthetic substance of the narration will in some contexts have an inverse effect on the listener, and therefore on the narration's reliability, depending.

Against remaining the silent partner, the listener takes up the narration, relieving all of this prosaism.<sup>6</sup>

1. Aristotle, *Topics*, book VI, 139b, 34–35.
2. [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com), [en.wiktionary.org](http://en.wiktionary.org).
3. Henri Lefebvre, Eleonore Kofman, Elizabeth Lebas, Stuart Elden, ed., “Mystification: Notes for a Critique of Everyday Life,” *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group (2006), 80.
4. Edward Said, “Michel Foucault as an Intellectual Imagination,” *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments, Volume 1*, Barry Smart, ed., London: Taylor & Francis (1994), 42.
5. Plato, *Cratylus*, 435a, Hong Kong: Forgotten Books (1977), 88.
6. “Conversation strives toward silence, and the listener is really the silent partner. The speaker receives meaning from him; the silent one is the unappropriated source of meaning ... whose features are inexhaustibly earnest and good, whereas he, the speaker, blasphemous against language ... Silence is the internal frontier of conversation.” Walter Benjamin, “The Metaphysics of Youth,” *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, Marcus Bullock, Michael W. Jennings eds., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (1996), 6–7. “Where the story-teller is loyal, eternally and unswervingly loyal to the story, there in the end silence will speak. Where the story has been betrayed, silence is but emptiness. But we, the faithful, when we have spoken our last word, will hear the voice of silence.” Isak Dinesen, “The Blank Page,” *Last Tales*, Harmondsworth-Middlesex, UK: Penguin (1986), 100. “Unlike beings (Seiendes) which *are*, language as Being (Sein) is *not*, for it is that whereby beings exist without itself being something that exists. Logos, in short, is the *nothing* which lets *things* be, the voice of silence.” Richard C. Kearney, *Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, Manchester University Press (1984), 39.



# Act I

*the* *stage*  
*s* *h* *o* *u* *l* *d*  
*b* *e*  
*a* *n*  
*i* *m* *a* *g* *i* *n* *e* *d*  
*b* *a* *u* *h* *a* *u* *s*

# Opening Address

Camel Collective

*A podium to the left on which are a microphone and a bottle of water. A folding chair stands slightly behind. MELISSA enters. She wears a gray blouse with a black jacket, dress pants, and black flats. She is carrying notes. Her hair is tied away from her face. She wears heavy-framed glasses. Her bearing is that of a Ph.D. student at an important conference—confident, youthful, and nervous. She reads from her notes in an even voice.*

*MELISSA has prepared for this and it is obvious she knows the text by heart; she is inaugurating a colloquium on the subject of art and pedagogy. (She is aware that there are professionals in the audience as well as on the stage.) Things have not gotten under way yet, and she is attempting to set the tone for what is to come.*

MELISSA. Good morning. Can you all hear me? Yes?

Good morning. My name is Melissa, and I'm a representative of the Camel Collective. I'd like to thank you for coming to this, the *Second* World Congress of Free Artists. And thanks for coming out tonight in this terrible weather. I know it wasn't easy. I would also like to thank each of the participants, who have in some cases traveled very far to be with us tonight. Thailand ... Copenhagen ... Atlantic City ... *[trailing off]*

We have a lot to cover, and so, although we would like to leave ample time for questions and discussion, I ask that you reserve your questions and comments until after the presentations. Camel Collective would also like to thank the museum. Thank you, Fabiola. This is really a wonderful opportunity and as appropriate a place for this congress on the current state of art and pedagogy as I can imagine. There will be wine, coffee, and pastries afterward, and I hope to see you all then. Before we begin, I'd like to make a few preliminary remarks.

*Uncaps her water and takes a few sips. Lights dim slightly.*

*[clearing her throat]* On our way to the panel discussion, we wander through exhibitions that appear to us like empty classrooms. We are living in the midst of an “educational turn” in art, which congeals democratic processes into the semblance of classrooms—in our experience, among the most undemocratic of situations—and into line items on an artist's teaching résumé.

It's been some time since we last convened: fifty-four years, two months, and eighteen days, to be exact. What took us so long? In our first meeting, Asger Jorn levied his opening address against the academic formalism of the Bauhaus and its training of artists into the artisans and engineers of capitalism's dreamworld.

*[pause, another sip of water]* We are no doubt in a different world today.

In Europe, the Bologna Process, combined with the alibi of an ongoing financial crisis, is leading to the privatization of universities and academies. The current protests and occupations at universities in the United Kingdom, and those that have taken place in Germany, in Austria, in France ... and in Chile attest to a general refusal by students to accept this situation.

In the United States, students of the arts are asked to pay extortionate tuitions, ensuring their future status as indentured workers, while artist-teachers host panel discussions on pedagogical methodologies. These colloquiums invariably end in the enervating consensus that art is an unteachable subject. But students are hungry for a more social and equitable world. We have seen moments where that world forms in universities and in art schools, but only in brief flashes and often in spite of the institutional structures that claim to guarantee it. We make students pay dearly for this.

Of course, we are not opposed to an examination of art in its turn toward pedagogy. On the contrary, we applaud those who work with and without educational institutions to reorient the training of the “good artist” from an adequate performer in a world she did not create or ask for to a transformative agent in a social process.

*Turning, she removes her jacket, which she folds over the chair.*

Here, you know, I would just like to interject that art is not a disciplinary subject outside of its application in the world.

*Back at the podium, she continues.*

Right. [*with vigor*] What is the “good artist” today if not a traveling salesman? An artist today is expected to be as much a globe-trotting lecturer as a committed pedagogue, as much an administrator as a creator, as much a public relations department as a critical intellect.

[*as she takes a note*] Can one exist as a critical intellect in a public relations department?

[*to the audience*] Is the “good artist” today just an effect of institutional cutbacks?

[*quoting*] “We have organized a Congress here. Why? What reason can there be for artists, the freest, most independent people in society—people who live like the lilies of the field—to come together, organize themselves, and undertake theoretical discussions?”

Perhaps this quote from Asger Jorn had a pertinence in its time, but today the description of artists living like “the lilies of the field” must be tempered by that of artists who now live like canaries in a coal mine.

The most independent are also the most vulnerable. But the most vulnerable are not always the most independent.

We take it for granted that we begin as free artists at our own peril. And yet to avoid nihilism, and the various fundamentalisms of the present, is to take *this* world as if it were the *best of all possible* worlds.

*She pauses and looks out over the audience, letting it sink in.*

The teaching of art must entail the transformation of the “good artist” into the free artist, which is to say, a free agent. Which is to say, a vanishing point.

[*gathering herself*] So, why have we convened here today, we the most free of individuals?

Why are we here, if not to exert for a moment a certain degree of autonomy, to learn from ourselves, and to bring together a few bodies in tentative proximity if not solidarity?

Thank you and welcome.

*Lights. Curtain.*



# Factastic Pedagogy

Gareth James

*A curtain hangs parallel to the audience close to the edge of the stage. A spotlight illuminates a microphone stand center stage. The slight aroma of glycol that fills the air originates from an idling smoke machine partially visible offstage. GARETH JAMES enters stage right and stands near its edge, giving the mic and spotlight a long look.*

*JAMES is dressed in jeans, a dark jacket, a white open-collared shirt, and a Yankees cap. He has a Welsh accent and speaks softly and slowly, with irony.*

JAMES. Probably the second most common thing you'll hear at art schools nowadays is a variant on the following: "Well ... there's no such thing as right or wrong in art." Sounds very democratic, antiauthoritarian and so on. But it's also a quick route to the problematic politics of pedagogy within the art school. [*to the microphone*] Luckily, one of comedian Stewart Lee's best jokes is about this problem. In a way.

*At the microphone, JAMES's delivery transforms into an uncanny imitation of the British comedian Stewart Lee's.*

You do meet people with very fixed notions about other groups of people. I'll give you an example of what I mean: I got in a cab in London, in December, and about five minutes into the journey, apropos of nothing, early on a Sunday morning, the cab driver turned around to me and said, "I think all homosexuals should be killed."

Now, whatever you think about that as a statement, you have to admit it's a **bold** opening conversational gambit. You know: with a stranger. And, I was a bit taken aback. I went, "Oh, ... why do you think that?"

*Long pause.*

And there was a pause ... because he'd never had to go to the next level of the argument before ... fraternizing mainly with cab drivers ... where that was just accepted as a point.

After a moment he said, "Well, homosexuality is immoral." And I said ... this is honestly true ... I said, "Erm ... I'm not sure how much weight you can afford to place on the notion of morality in this argument, because morality's not a fixed thing, it changes its parameters culturally, historically, over time." I said, "For example, look at ancient

Greece: to this day we still take most of our fundamental principles about ethics, aesthetics ... uh, philosophy, medicine, science ... whatever, from ancient Greece, and yet,” I said, “in ancient Greece, love between two men, far from being immoral, was actually considered the highest, the most ethical, the most profound ... if you will, the most moral form of love that there could be.”

*He takes a long while to seat himself at the edge of the stage and singles out a member of the audience.*

“So all I’m saying,” I said to him, “is that I’m not sure how useful morality is (given its flexible nature) as a cornerstone of your argument on this subject.”

*Pause.*

“And then he said to me (this is honestly true) he said, “Well, you can prove anything with FACTS, can’t you?”

*[standing and crossing the stage to the microphone]* For a minute I went, “Yeah,” but then I thought “HANG ON! ... That’s the most FANTASTIC way of winning an argument I’ve ever heard: “I’m not interested in FACTS ... I find they tend to cloud my judgment ... I prefer to rely on INSTINCT and BLIND PREJUDICE.”

*He slips out of his anecdote, stepping away from the microphone, explaining.*

Of course, we, the presumptive audience, all know that Stewart Lee is right and the cab driver is wrong: All homosexuals should *not* be killed, et cetera, but let’s just acknowledge this point and move right along, because the game of challenging

the special status claimed for art in relation to questions of truth and verification is no longer played by shaming these formal conceits with some concrete political ground or another for truth claims, for rights.

Instead, it is the fact that facts *cannot* appeal directly to truth without arriving by way of value that is obscured by our laughter at what appears to be the slightly extended victory lap of the joke's punch line.

[*to the audience*] This necessary exclusion (the price of our constitution as an audience appropriate for the joke) can be made to return as a challenge to this cab driver's pedagogy, or to an artistic one. One *can* after all (as is common knowledge) prove anything with the judicious use of facts. *Partial* truths, not *untruths*, are the effective (and affective) motor of ideological falsification. So the one we are tempted to hate for being hateful isn't exactly *right* (because he apparently hates facts in much the same way he hates homosexuals), but he is less wrongheaded than we ourselves would be if we thought that blind prejudice is the cause of an aversion to facts.

Morality, such as it is, has almost always tended to represent partial interests as though they were universal ones, and we could come up with a very long list of the constitutive exclusions of any given regime of morality. And all of these excluded things are therefore immoral, drawing us into temporary agreement with the cab driver, but the first and last to be excluded would have to be truth itself. We know this, more or less, and it allows us to laugh at the cab driver rather than be drawn into hating him in return. We may even feel pity for the cabbie, because he is right to feel threatened—not by the damage homosexuality might do to morality, but by the damage his moral order will eventually do to him when it finally gets around to measuring *him* for exclusion.

The pedagogical challenge is to know how to be partisans for truth, or militants, as Alain Badiou would say, without thereby constitutively excluding ourselves from agreeable working relations with the truth. Neither claiming special consideration for an art and pedagogy that puts the decision in abeyance, nor staying silent on the matter and laughing at bigots will do. The Situationists, following Lukács's conceptualization of revolutionary organization, understood that "If they are to be realized in practice, 'theoretical' tendencies and differences must immediately be translated into organizational questions."

Far from the absence or deferral of questions of right and wrong, pedagogy and art share an interest in making legible their coemergence.

*Bows as lights dim. Exit .*



# Panel Discussion: Between the *Of* and the *On*

in order of speaking

Eva Díaz, Sam Gould/Red76, Lee H. Jones, Sande Cohen, Javier Toscano

*Lights are dim. The stage is set with a podium and conference table large enough to accommodate four speakers. There is a live microphone at the podium, and two on the table along with bottles of water. Also on the table are four name tags that read, left to right: SAM GOULD/RED76, EVA DÍAZ, SANDE COHEN, and LEE H. JONES.*

*JAVIER is seated in darkness on a beanbag chair off to the side of the stage near some papers, a jar of ink, chalk, a brush, red tape, and a long white banner. Spotlights should be positioned so as to single out each figure at the table. The podium is equipped with an adjustable reading lamp.*

*EVA wears a chic black dress, high heels, and a silver chain necklace. Her hair is attractively haphazard. A young, independent curator and art historian from New York City, EVA has a few excellent publications under her belt and tenure on the horizon. She writes regularly for international art journals and carries herself with the confidence of a cosmopolitan abroad. Few in the audience would imagine the existence of her lightly furnished studio apartment in Brooklyn, which her grants, art reviews, and teaching salary just cover. A black rolling suitcase is perpetually ready in her hall closet.*

*SAM wears a porkpie hat, plaid logging jacket, and frumpy clothing in general. He carries an old suitcase and should look as if he's been traveling for some time. He sits slightly off to the side of the conference table. He hasn't made a lot of money from his profession, but he has made contacts. His demeanor should suggest that he is an autodidact, an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense. His accent is urban and thick, and he should be played as not altogether comfortable in an academic setting, though not unfamiliar with it. Thus, SAM should exhibit an air of amiable impatience with the situation. He likes interrupting. He has brought a thermos of coffee into the conference. His place at the*

*table is indicated by a pack of American Spirit cigarettes and a disposable lighter.*

*LEE is dressed in a dark wool frock, black boots, and a pillbox hat. LEE wears thick-framed spectacles on a chain; the hair is up. LEE's accent is European, though it should be difficult to determine LEE's nationality—it could very well be London via Lahore, or Monte Carlo via Iqaluit (or vice versa). LEE's voice and demeanor shift throughout the monologue, at times imposing, at others humorous and warm. It should be clear that LEE is occupying different subject positions from one moment to the next, surfing the very crest of global homogenization.*

*SANDE is an intellectual, scholar, and polemicist recently expatriated to Southeast Asia. This should be indicated by his sandals and worn T-shirt, good travel clothes for a warm, humid climate; these items should be in strong contrast to the urbane attire of EVA, or anyone else's clothes at the conference, even SAM's. He wears wire-framed glasses and a bandanna on his head. He is energetic and bobs with Dionysian enthusiasm when he speaks. One should be able to tell from his age and demeanor that he has weathered a good share of public controversies, though he hasn't come through them unscathed. SANDE, as a professional critic, should*

*be played with an ironic and biting good humor that has pessimistic undertones. JAVIER is dressed in black Converse sneakers, black jeans, and a black hoodie. He paces as he speaks, sometimes stopping, but rarely looking up. He walks in angular patterns throughout the space, sometimes crossing into the audience, whose members must move to avoid him.*

I

*EVA takes the podium and is illuminated from above.*

EVA. Thank you. [pause] It has been long evident that education policy in the United States is in need of an overhaul. The chronic disinvestment in public schools reads as an epic tale of neglect, with schools inadequately and unequally financed by community property taxes at the K–12 level and higher education institutions precariously dependent on revenue from state lottery ticket sales.<sup>1</sup> The cost of private education, on the other hand, is well-nigh astronomical, with private elementary and prep schools often charging over \$25,000 per year, while the cost of many private universities now approaches nearly \$50,000 per year including tuition, room, and board.<sup>2</sup>

*Light up on SAM.*

SAM. My own education began flawed and fragmented. This had as much do with genetic disposition as it did with institutional rigidity. I was often uncomfortable in school, not sure where I fit in. I was afraid to offer the wrong answer. I was stubborn and also scared. I often wonder what life I might be living had I experienced school differently. Not in opposition, not in fear. Sunday evenings frightened me.

EVA. The ideology of equal opportunity in mass education was predicated on a meritocratic ideal. Poor but promising students (promising as determined by their high performance in IQ or other standardized tests) would be invited to enroll in top universities with scholarship support. However, talent-based selection did not promise an equality of outcomes. The sociologist Michael Young, in his seminal 1958 essay “The Rise of the Meritocracy,” contended that in the meritocratic economy, “every selection of the one is a rejection of the many.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, although most private colleges subscribe to need-blind policies, no parallel guarantee exists that colleges will provide sufficient fellowship money to cover underprivileged students’ attendance. A notion of sacrifice has attached itself to the earlier, *aspirational* model of education, now construed as personal betterment and a transformative agent within the existing class system. Parents are expected to save money to send their kids to college. Poor students are expected to assume large debts to fund their education. The question arises—in this economy, can students afford the debt?

SAM. [*pouring a coffee from his thermos*] In what way would my educational experience—and my life experience as well, as so much of primary school is geared toward assimilating us into outward culture—differ from what it is now had I been provided with a more expansive explanation of how one can experience learning? What if I had been asked to consider more seriously the possibility that learning and learning environments existed all around me, instead of being told as I really was, that all outward (that is, out of the classroom) learning was in service to the School and not a school in itself?

EVA. These demands are in the air, not only in response to egregiously unaffordable tuition costs but also as part of the outcry against national fiscal spending priorities, in the wake of ballooning bailout payments to the auto and finance industries as well as the expense of ongoing wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan. I also want to point out the necessity for reinvigorating claims to universal access and economic justice in the face of the privatization schemes that dominate education policy. A consideration of the economics of higher education is essential when dealing with the long history of progressive educational institutions and experiments, particularly those related to pedagogy in visual art and art history.

SAM. As soon as I was over eighteen and disaffection appeared to be too much to bother with, I severed ties and (unconsciously for quite a while) began to look for a new educational life for myself. I can't believe I wrote this nineteen years ago ... [*reading from an old notebook*] "My education came in the form of working in bookshops and video stores; in periods of itinerancy; in forming, losing, and maintaining friendships; and definitely in drinking ..."

EVA. What can be meant by "progressive arts education" today?

SAM. "... in being upset with my drinking habits, in taking hallucinogenic substances both organic and man-made ..."

EVA. This question is particularly pressing in the face of economic pressures that limit access to quality education and thus limit access to the superior professional outcomes resulting from such privilege. Can we imagine a model of pedagogy where learning is regarded as enhancing personal growth *and* stimulating progressive social change? So prevalent is the lament that a consumer model of education has supplanted the notion of future producers of art and culture having a stake in progressive social change, this question is more pressing today than ever. At the very least, those producers have a stake in making apparent the connections of art and culture to social, political, and ethical issues.

SAM. *[interrupting EVA, reading again from his notebook]*  
Christ! Listen to this: "... in playing and listening to music; in talking endlessly, in listening, in looking; in searching through antique shops and thrift stores; in writing film scripts, in writing bad, angst-saturated poetry; in making films with friends; in driving cross-country and in doing it over again and again; in having sex and not having sex; in bad relationships and then a good one that has lasted; in exercise; in considering the deaths of others, in considering the deaths that others live with; in looking through bookstores, the bookshelves in others' living rooms, bedrooms, hallways, basements; in buying books, feeling books, searching for books, stealing books from shops I worked at; in justifying the theft of those books and in time questioning that justification yet not returning the books I had stolen; in getting into fistfights and questioning how those brawls began; in confronting my anger, my depression, and my sudden periods of overwhelming happiness; in fatherhood and the bond with my children that I fall short of being able to explain to anyone; in the study of history, in the study of the uses of the past, in the study of the prostitution of our past; in taking hikes and learning to be absorbed by the landscape; in cooking, in eating, in thinking about the food I eat, in searching for the best taco trucks in whatever city I may be in; in searching through record shops, in finding old vinyl; in learning through the skills, lived experience, flaws, and grace of others; in seeking out people who are devoted to music, ecstasy, energy, writing, poetry, film, food, fucking, nature, political action, a sense of honesty, being humane, being pragmatic, being contradictory; in the work of others, in how the work of others operates, how it moves, how it interacts; in the language others use, in how the language expands or retracts from the experience, in how the language helps to create narrative in consort with the world; in confronting the intersection of politics, geography, and time; in living through war, in walking through the invisibility of war at home, in encountering the visibility of war through the

lives of veterans, through the lives of refugees and rape victims and through living with veterans trying to come to terms with their complicity in actions they abhor; in recognizing my own complicity; in finding ways to manifest these experiences and not sublimate them, in finding ways to examine them with honesty and criticality in public and in private; in creating media and action and movement—art that brings to light these experiences and speaks of them as replicas of the experiences of others; in celebration of the contradictory expectations of our public and private selves.

*He rummages through his bag. A cigarette. He lights it and takes a few drags.*

I can smoke in here, right? I mean, I don't know what the customs are ...

LEE *motions to bum a cigarette.*

SAM. [*to a disappointed LEE*] It's electronic ... all vapor.

EVA. The predicament of American higher education extends to institutions of art education in general and to what has come to be known as curatorial studies in particular. If tuition fees are kept low, one hurdle is removed for those already burdened by the high cost of supporting themselves as full-time students. I don't want to argue that a low tuition is the *most* progressive element of any curatorial curriculum. But, taken in conjunction with other elements of the first curatorial studies program instituted by the Whitney Independent Study Program, the radical nature of low tuition should not be underestimated in an era in which affordable education is being eroded.<sup>4</sup> In the interest of transparency, I should state that I, too, made the transition from student to faculty member during nearly ten years of affiliation with the ISP, eventually serving as an instructor for the curatorial program until 2008.

The Whitney Program was formed in New York in 1968 as an initiative by the Whitney Museum's first education department director, Doug Pederson, following the museum's move to its current location in the Marcel Breuer building on Madison Avenue. As art historian George Baker notes, the education department "understood its original mission to include the reform and critique of existing forms of art education,"<sup>5</sup> a particularly salient claim in '68, when women's and minorities' access to education was shoddy at best. Initially, the program was divided into art history, run by David Hupert, who in '68 took over directorship of the Whitney's education department, and a studio program run by Ron Clark. The Art History Program was renamed Museum Studies in '73 and then retitled the Curatorial and Critical Studies Program in 1987.

Several organizations have been inspired by the Whitney Program's model to varying degrees.<sup>6</sup> In the past several years, masters-level curatorial and critical studies programs have sprung up as supplements to existing museum studies and art history departments in many universities in the U.S. and abroad.<sup>7</sup> I mention these changes in order to situate the history of curatorial studies and to trace its progressive possibilities in the present. This means asking, Why is there such a global proliferation of postgraduate curatorial programs today? Although the Whitney Program was certainly a bellwether, I would argue that it acts as an oppositional force to some key aspects of curatorial studies manifesting today. This prompts the related question, What exactly might curatorial studies be as a discipline? And this raises the disturbing thought that perhaps curatorial studies isn't a discipline at all.

Perhaps it's easier to begin by considering what sort of professional outcomes curatorial studies programs offer their graduates. The curatorial studies qualification, as a masters degree or credential, doesn't offer much professional security. Academia generally reserves permanent or tenured positions

for the art history Ph.D. or art practice MFA. The close connections and often asymmetrical alignments between Ph.D.-less curatorial studies programs and Ph.D.-granting art history departments means that the professional aspirations of those who graduate from the former are not located in academia but elsewhere. Where is that elsewhere?

*A beat.*

Simple answer, right? Curating—that is, organizing art exhibitions, arguing ideas spatially, and producing and perhaps writing for art catalogs resulting from these exhibitions. This happens in but a few sites ... art museums, nonprofit or university art centers, and commercial art galleries. Curatorial studies feeds students into these three institutional contexts.<sup>8</sup> Working as a curator generally means intersecting with at least one of the types of institutions geared to the display of art, [*indicating the stage, the gallery, and her colleagues*] whether or not the curatorial work is independent or salaried. These sites have different employers, different *masters*, so to speak. The alternative art space and the museum field in particular share certain professional similarities, yet curatorial studies doesn't seem designed to educate students about the expectations of these institutions.

Curatorial studies is perhaps best understood as a process of attempting to prepare students for the professional demands of curating today—in roles that can be described schematically as follows ...

One, the underpaid arts administrator.

*Light on SAM, who seems surprised.*

EVA. This is ultimately a powerless position in a system of compromises in response to fiscal and ideological pressures

from home institutions, pressures that often originate in fund-raising or market demands. The position itself is subject to related pressures from artists for curators to act as administrative agents and supports for artist's careers by facilitating professional opportunities in interior decorating or architectural design, social networking, and publicity. Such activity counterbalances the position's desultory reality of meetings, grant writing, paper-pushing, et cetera.

*Light out on SAM.*

EVA. The star supercurator.

*Light on LEE, who appears not to notice.*

EVA. This role is dangled before students as a lure, suggesting that the field provides a lifestyle of fame, affluence, and leisure. Successful—read charismatic and exceptional—curators globe-trot to exotic locations, putting together financing and deals [LEE notices] without having to do much real intellectual work, scholarship or writing. In this role, charm goes a long way. These folks must be good at entertaining wealthy trustees in search of cultural edification or other “transgressive” experiences.

LEE. [*not amused*] Hoh!

*Light out on LEE. Light on SANDE, who notices.*

EVA. The scholar or intellectual: a role with a stake in the production and circulation of knowledge. This is the curator as someone who marshals expertise in the discipline of art history toward a form of spatialized and textual argumentation. A creative practice that at its best connects the history of art to its present while maintaining intellectual freedom and conveying a kind of activist zeal. [SANDE *pshaws, light out*]

Even so, jobs fitting any of these described roles are available only infrequently to the annual parade of graduates of curatorial programs.

It isn't solely the fault of curatorial studies. The life of the intellectually creative scholar is under siege in most quarters. Curatorial studies isn't actually part of an academic department or discipline. Museums and nonprofits, at least in the U.S., frequently append other criteria to curatorship. Curators are used to finding revenue for their own shows and for the operation of the institutions in general. This is where most of our time and energy goes, leaving little space for ideas, creative work, or even basic scholarship. I hear this complaint from curators with depressing regularity. Undoubtedly, the role of curator has been squeezed too narrowly between administration and deal making. The greatest travesty may be that curatorial studies programs fail to acknowledge this when they recruit students and collect their sizeable tuition fees. Shouldn't we ask what sort of training curatorial programs *are* giving their students?

Should a creative curatorial process be wedded to expectations of a professional career? Ideally, we'd all find fulfillment being paid for doing what we love, but that may happen later and later in the careers of many curators and critics, and much earlier in the careers of a very few ... sometimes when they've just finished an undergrad education that likely involved no curatorial training. Perhaps we should acknowledge that what we often call curatorial education isn't giving students the training they really need for the field.

EVA *motions to SAM from the podium.*

EVA. Sam, would you like the podium?

SAM. [to EVA] No, no, I'm fine here.

*Light out on EVA, who remains at the podium.*

SAM. [*to the audience*] Around the turn of the century, a shift in my practice began to take shape. Through a change of environment and economics, as well as of affections, my work began to dematerialize. The discursive elements that often stayed in the planning stages, in the background, began to take the foreground. It seemed—the majority of my work up until that point was centered on film and photography—that the set, the script, the actors were breaking time. The elements that were supposed to be captured and made finite in films and photographs were let loose and given the ability to expand. When there was no money to buy film stock, the extraneous nature of production became the medium itself. Content was overshadowed by context. As time passed, the rough edges and haphazardness of this early dematerialization shifted further from its associations with film to incorporate other kinds of media—records, publications of many sorts, the Internet, radio, the telephone, posters, and other forms of public address. Histories began to take on the role of narrative vehicle: they were a means of engagement. History became a medium in itself, [*takes a long drag on his cigarette; longer than usual*] rather than merely subject matter. In the end, all the material and experience that helped inspire me to write scripts and make films and photographs ... the books, the movies, the music, the friendships, all the cities I have lived in, my life in general—these began to be played out in public as the work. The process by which I refined my life experiences and my education into films and photographs became a practice in and of itself. All the extraneous material that makes up our lives and that inspires us to continue, to move on, to make things, and make things of ourselves, became the work. It wasn't until I began to meet so many friends and colleagues with BAs, MFAs, and Ph.D.s that I began to examine the means by which I had gained my own education, away from these institutions they inhabited. I would often be asked where

I went to school, where I studied, and I would respond that I was a college dropout, with barely a credit to my transcript. Increasingly I was asked, and I began to ask myself, how I became interested in the things I do now and, inevitably, how I became the person I am *without* an educational degree. Of course, these are questions we all ask ourselves. I'm thankful that, to some to degree, it's my job to do so.

By watching the work of others and examining histories like that of *Home*—this was a planned community in Washington State, the Pacific Northwest of the United States for those of you not familiar with it. So, *Home* and the Vietnam Day protests at Berkeley—yeah, arguably the first-ever teach-in. [*wistful now, another cigarette*] I began to look for a means to redefine the received narratives of my profession. An alternative work-set, a method, began to take shape. By doing work myself, creating my own education in public, failing, succeeding, and continuing on, I began to consider and more fully realize these methodologies. I also began to see them as a recurring and possibly unconscious methodology in contemporaries I admired.

At first I didn't see this practice as being in line with education, at least not overtly. As time went on and projects of a discursive, collaborative, and mediated nature began to take shape, the idea that what was occurring was an educational platform, possibly a pedagogical one, became evident.

*Light out on SAM. EVA crosses the stage and is seated at the conference table. LEE moves to the podium, flicks on the lamp and turns it upward, creating a spooky effect. LEE surveys the audience, allowing a slightly discomfiting silence to develop before speaking.*

## II

LEE. [*slightly menacing*] This is a racist country—this is how I want to begin my speech about feminism today. The racism in your country made me think hard and long about even coming here. My fellow speakers are the reason I am here. I would like to thank you and applaud your perseverance and engagement. I am humbled and I blush before you. Thanks to all of us for creating this space in which we can imagine a future different from the one introduced to us by the present. Thanks to the fighting feminist movement for securing my safety while I'm here. Thanks for all the temporary political truths in the name of the revolution. Thanks to the artists for continuing the communication, for changing the world and making it a more interesting place.

[*warm, inviting, charming the audience*] And thank you all for coming! It's so good to be in a room full of queers; you make me feel all normal.

LEE *turns the podium lamp down. Pause. LEE's demeanor becomes that of a seasoned academic.*

I am speaking to you this afternoon as one of the leftovers, one of the weirdos: the ones who shave their heads, who don't know how to dress, who worry that they stink. Those who have rotten teeth, the ugly ones; the old hags, the dykes, the frigid, the unfucked, the unfuckable, the neurotics, the psychos, the fat tarts, the skinny sluts. Those who have big bellies, who would rather be men, who behave as if they were men. The ones with big asses. Noisy women who destroy everything that comes their way, women whose shyness is due to their hang-ups, women who don't know how to say no, women who are locked up and controlled. Women with scars, pitiful ones, women who don't turn men on, those with flabby skin and wrinkled faces. Those who dream of plastic surgery, of

liposuction, of having their nose broken so it can be reset but can't afford it. Women who look like the back of a bus, who can only rely on themselves for protection, who don't know how to comfort others, who couldn't care less about their kids.

*Pause.*

[*casually, easily*] We often hear that the deconstruction of essentialized identities, which results from an acknowledgement of the contingency and ambiguity of identity itself, renders feminist political action impossible. Many feminists believe that without the existence of Woman as a coherent category, we would not be able to imagine the possibility of a feminist political movement in which women could unite as women in order to formulate and pursue specific feminist aims. To the contrary, the deconstruction of essential identities is a necessary starting point for those feminists who are committed to a radical democratic politics, because it highlights the variety of social relations to which the principles of liberty and equality should apply. Let's demand that we locate our political identities between what we have inherited and what is not yet born, between what we can only imagine and the histories that constrain and shape that imagination. This is a notion of political identity quite at odds with an identity shaped by fixed social coordinates. [*becoming intimate now, as if divulging a personal anecdote*] See, essentialism is like dynamite or a powerful drug. Judiciously applied, it can be effective in dismantling unwanted structures or alleviating suffering; uncritically employed, however, it is destructive and addictive. That's why we need to use essentialism with care, why we need to use it temporarily and, most importantly, why we need to use it strategically. Strategic essentialism is like role-playing—briefly inhabiting the criminal mind in order to understand what makes it tick. The strategic essentialist should act as a good lawyer would: When on defence, prod the prosecution's narrative until the cracks appear, and when

prosecuting, piece together a case by understanding the criminal's motivations.

We need to be alert, decide quickly and without fear or guilt when we need to essentialize ourselves and say yes to a group identity to reach a particular political goal in a particular situation in a particular place at a particular time. We also need to learn when to say no. We need to distinguish when naming works for emancipation and leads to increased agency, and we need to learn when it doesn't. And when we do apply a name, [*taking a long sip of water*] we shouldn't be content with naming just a few.

Lesbians, the lumpenproletariat, Southern Cameroonians, gay men, the trashy chic, Papuans, bisexuals, Assyrians, trans men, Celts, class travelers, Bakassi people, trans women, queers, fags, Ainu people, dykes, the underprivileged, the muff divers, Inuits, refugees, the shabby chic, bull daggers, the leisure class, queens, men, Aymaras, drama queens, Han Chinese, flaming queens, trannies, Afro-Arabs, fairies, gym boys, Lakota Sioux, boxing boys, Romanies, boxing girls, the middle class, pitchers, catchers, Sami people, butches, dead ones, Kabyles, cosmopolitans, bois, F-to-Ms, M-to-Fs, the middle class to working class, the working class to underclass, East Indians, old maids, Kurds, Miss Kittens, Dear Johns, subalterns, the upper middle class, Creoles, inverts, perverts, Pacific Islanders, the sans papiers, girlfriends, Rohingya people, drag kings, prom queens, women, Cherokees, happy people, nouveaux riches, alien sexualities, hipsters, Tamil people, petite bourgeoisie, freaks, Caucasians, the lower working class, the criminals, Faroe Islanders, suicidals, the arty trashy, Sahrawi Arabs, the lower middle class, Tutsi Rwandans, gender benders, slaves, the working class, losers, Hutu, upper middle upper class, Dimasa people, mestizos, white trash, Tibetans, the aristocracy, the filthy rich, Sikhs, wiggers, clandestinos, other genders, Palestinians, the undocumented, Afro-Latinos,

nouveaux pauvres, global workers, Uighurs, seasonal workers, the privileged, the no-class and the low-class.

[*flirting*] I mean, who wouldn't go to such a bar?

[*baring teeth, seriously, accusingly, but with the charm and humor of a shark*] Unfortunately, this is but a fantasy in your somewhat underdeveloped part of the world. You know, some people on the left in the U.S. have faith in you to provide a counter hegemony, but I have always said, No! Because turning to your country in a time like this would be a turn to the right, that is, the wrong way. Three worlds or four are always better than one, that's what I've always said. I'm serious. Everyone I have just called out—you need us all! Social, cultural and economic sectors—all parts of your union—need a more heterogeneous population. If you don't act and make allies transnationally, *glocally*, you're going down. I'm surprised you're even alive. Just look at this place! Damn you're a pale bunch! But hey, there are those of you who recognize this and who join us as we work collectively toward a more diverse and multiple world. And we will stick together. We'll find each other even in a place like this.

[*forcefully rallying*] 'Cause we *are* the people in the house and we refuse to be dignified and rational. Dreams, unhappiness, and rage are all over this building. This space is nothing more than a parenthesis in the excitement called our lives.

[*leaning out over the podium, relishing the feel of the words*] We are the people in the house and this is our house, so what do we do and what do we want? Let's scream too loud together and let our high-pitched voices crack the fancy windows of this place. Let these walls turn into overcooked spaghetti, soggy and soft and easy to tear. Let the ceiling peel away like dry skin exposed to too much sun. [*abandoning the podium, walking around it and the stage, indicating spaces*

*here and there while speaking*] Or, we can take command over this space, organize meetings here, order pizza and stay the night. *[to the audience]* This is OUR HOUSE! We can decide whether this is the beginning or the end. We can decide if we want to try to change the conditions for who is included and who is excluded. For us, social injustice is a collective problem that requires a collective solution. We have feminism and we have places where we don't have to participate in capitalism. We are communists, we fight capitalism, we want a revolution.

*Calmly now, LEE returns to the podium and adopts a stern pedantic voice.*

Using words such as communism, class struggle, and revolution will qualify you for a free consultation with a psychiatrist. Which is really not so bad. In fact, one of our demands is a president who has been to therapy, who has cross-dressed and misbehaved. Someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, has made mistakes and learned from them. Someone who is bent as much on destruction as survival. We want a black woman as president. We want three presidents or none at all. Whatever comes first.

*[casual]* Affirming nonbinary structures also entails living without conceits of foundations, origins, and progress, and especially without clear distinction between the real and the fictive, the ideal and the material, the past and the present.

*[flirtatious]* See, gray was the new black, then black was the new black, then brown was the new black, then, if I remember the sequence correctly, navy entered the picture, but well before that, dyke was the new feminist, making life fascinating ... such is my bias. Meanwhile, gay ditched lesbian, so queer had perforce to be the new gay and now old is the new queer.

[*slowly, eyes closed, palms to the audience.*] Politics is always about nomination. It is about naming the political subjectivity and organizing politically around that name. The political task then is one of inventing a name around which a political subject can aggregate from the various social struggles through which we are living. [*eyes open, examining the gesture*] This act of aggregation on the part of the political subject is a moment of counterhegemony. This act is precisely what I desire. What is exhibited in this fantasy is the possibility of performing and articulating the movement among static choices of identity. It's the movement and the action—not quite specifically all the time, one way or the other—that I hope to articulate here.

[*hands down and with gravity*] Making boundaries is politics, crossing them is drama.

[*in the tone of a grade-school teacher.*] We need to focus on ambivalence rather than on truth. Rather than fight for a right or true politics, we might purposefully embrace its impossibility, understanding that we cannot determine the meaning of our own acts. Let's give up intentionality and the scientific method, give in to politics motivated not by truth or morality but by love, desire, restlessness, humor, hope, inventiveness, and impulse.

*Walking to the conference table, LEE leans against it, professorial.*

We need art that can analyze the workings of capitalism and patriarchy in all of their manifestations—ideological, institutional, organizational, subjective. We need art that will let us think in terms of diversities rather than unities. We need art that will break the old concepts and traditions of Western art, which have systematically construed the world hierarchically in terms of masculine universals and feminine specificities. We need art that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of

thinking about and acting upon gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them. We need art that will be useful and relevant for political practice, because neither empowerment nor social justice is possible without some sense of what needs to change. We need also to place greater emphasis on the connections among art, knowledge, and power relations. Aesthetics beyond disciplines. Aesthetics as a fact of life. We need art; that goes without saying. We need art that goes without saying.

*Pause.*

We will reconnect discussions of aesthetics to the base.

*LEE paces in front of the table.*

We will step outside, highjack buses, abolish prisons, open our flats, lend our grandmother's scarf to a homeless person. Use the trailer as a mobile library, turn the football field into a ballroom for the queens, and in your uncle's shoes we will toast the future. We will do social research and exploration within a context shaped by the hard material facts, fluctuating passions, and affective instabilities that characterize our daily lives. We will take power using all available means: a mattress becomes a residency, the bedroom a cinema, the living room a meeting space, the police station a day-care center, the bus a classroom, the prison a ...

SAM. An artist residence.

LEE. Yes ... an artist residence. The square a ...

EVA. Dance floor?

LEE. A dance floor, great. The workroom an archive ... the institute a ...

SANDE. ... daytime pizza parlor.

LEE. ... and a nighttime art class. The military a coffee break.  
Life a musical. The home a university.

Because [*slowing down, explaining*] pedagogy is providing alternatives to the way things are suppose to be. Pedagogy is all about bodies; it all happens in bodies. Pedagogy is about sociality. Pedagogy is about the grime of history, and it happens in a panopticon. Pedagogy is praxis. Empowerment is gaining the critical consciousness to unpack hegemonic ideologies.

*Returns to the conference table. SANDE adjusts LEE's mic.*

Thanks, Sande. I've been thinking and talking with others about what it means to make public declarations, public declarations about social relations, about politics. Declarations through words or another language—actions, images, clothes, ways of behaving and of reflecting on behavior. By opening our private spaces, we turn them into public institutions. A collective, hovering phantom. Reclaiming public spaces makes them *public*.

[*motherly*] Let's make one thing clear.

[*fatherly, slapping the table for emphasis*] Art does not necessarily have to reflect the hegemonic structures of society. Art can be organized and based in and around the everyday knowledges and material struggles that structure people's lives. Art can in fact counter hegemonic structures.

[*savoring each syllable*] We are the world's darkest past. We are giving shape to the future. We will open a new front.

LEE *stands and ascends the table, walks its length. Looks down, rearranges the table's contents with little kicks, while speaking.*

Who allows herself, affords herself, the possibility of risk? Who puts herself at stake? Who overcomes fear, acts on thinking without thinking, sees thinking as acting? Who speaks loudly into the microphone at the conference, takes her shirt off in the nightclub, takes off her panties on stage? Who goes to another place, stays in one place, who asks you to look after her child for twenty minutes, who goes out to film when it's minus-fifteen degrees centigrade? Who survives a stomach virus? Who fought for contraceptive rights, homosexuals, and anarchism in the late nineteenth century? Who cooks for many people without really planning to, then fasts for six days? Who refuses to get out of bed, spend money, work, communicate, refuses to identify with any one group or ideology? Who gets fisted in the toilet at a nightclub, bases her look on Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings?

[*to SAM, stepping down from the table*] Can you give me a hand?

[*Crossing to the podium*] Who is ready and willing to share the problematic reading of an image? Who gets to read it, who refuses to look, refuses to leave, to pay, to leave without being paid?

Who is here, present and ready?

*Three beats. LEE switches off the reading lamp and returns to the conference table.*

### III

SANDE. [*positioning the microphone*] Is this okay? Can you guys hear me? Okay then, great. [*waving both hands and searching the audience*] Thanks, Camel Collective. Thanks, all. I know we don't have a lot of time, so I'll just jump right in.

Jorn and Wolman's 1956 speeches at Alba, Italy highlight, now, extreme disjunctions between today's art discourse and art realities. Discourse is incessantly inflated, idealized, while artworks are subject to intense conjunctions of institutional politics and, to put it bluntly, business, inclusive of symbolic and imaginary currencies. Art's collective social impact, Jorn and Wolman's object of concern, has only deteriorated. The scramble for impact value, especially in regard to art's capacity to support consciousness enhancement, has intensified. It has done so via the question of which artworks further a critique of society, often in the name of emancipation. Allegedly, *all* university-based art is emancipatory. Competitions for recognition derived from the master-slave model have also intensified. Today, every day, artists or intellectuals must *show legitimation and justification—they must answer to a tribunal*. (This is an idea from Odo Marquard's *Farewell to Matters of Principle*, by the way.<sup>1</sup>) Critique is precisely legitimized. Yeah, that's right. How? [*long pause*] By recourse to society's failures, lacks, absences. Art collections and tenure in the academic system give credibility to such functions as ranking things, the power to pass judgments on future works. Today, art is suffused with a progressive-reactionary interleaving, directly apparent in conflicts over recognition.

I like some of the things Asger Jorn says. First off, the affirmative—an artwork “speaks” a language that is *of*, and not *on*, an artwork; art can say something because it is invention and composition; any other discourse is secondary. Okay, fair enough, but contemporary art is defined by its

knowledge of society via the use of a historical text, a novel, a piece of philosophy, a name. It's used as image, model, theory, hypothesis, Platonic negation, et cetera, et cetera. What sticks out today in Jorn's affirmation is how frequently the *of* of art, is replaced by discourses "of" the *on*. I'll get back to this shortly.

*Spotlight on JAVIER, who stands near the edge of the stage.*

JAVIER. In many ways, the art market is coming to resemble the financial circuit, to the point of becoming an addendum to it—that is, were it not for the numerical aestheticism of the latter. Art has not only become the optimum merchandise for the capitalist society in its financial stage, it has even become its avant-garde marketing strategist. Art transforms intangible assets into capital goods. The artist is a performer of immateriality; he incites the creation of an aura and prestige that under different circumstances is better known as branding. In this sense, contemporary art is quite avant-gardist in its tactics, while conservative in its social achievements. Today, we are no further from the description that Sir Ernst Gombrich gave for the art world of the nineteenth century prior to the advent of the Industrial Revolution—the elites produce their own special kind of art, and art produces its own elites.

*JAVIER gathers his papers, tape, and scissors, and crisscrosses the stage reading from one of the sheets.*

One: Look up all worldwide art events on any given weekend.  
Two: List them under these heads, in this order—Artists, Descriptions or Statements, Venues, Schedules. Print this list, connecting all the extremes with tape.

SANDE. [*watching JAVIER with skepticism*] Can I continue? [*to the audience*] I welcome what Jorn says about most criticism—that it equals “confusionist practices.” He is surely right about

that! And Jorn's observation as to confusion and criticism in 1956 was first made much earlier, when Lucretius noted that art requires a lot of discursive kowtow.

A well-positioned academic says a work is important and—presto!—disagreement is suppressed. Jorn is a little unclear, though, when he links criticism to a “lack of logic.” He probably means critics refuse to allow the logic they use to be used against themselves. Isn't every critique subject to critique, in this time of legitimation? Jorn recognized that discourse *on* art very frequently contains the means of dominating it ... this is also known as interpretation. Jorn entered what some contemporary high theory calls the abyss of representation—representation as such can kill understanding, limit meaning, and normalize (mis)representation. How much stranger the idea seems today ... Vilém Flusser made the interesting argument that because images are constructed (he calls them surfaces), they do not have to incorporate the conceptual (metareflexive and linear ideas), so the effect of a concept reduced to an image often goes with the barbarism of consumer society and the totalitarianism of mass media. Those images that incorporate concepts threaten to install models of behavior, making some models almost sacred: a teaching of likenesses. The abyss of representation, the image *over* or *on* the concept, what Deleuze called “despotic symbolism,” is closely related to aesthetic formations, what Jorn calls the struggle against the organization of the academies.

*SANDE pauses and adds a note to his text.*

JAVIER. Today art is as regressive as in the days of Louis XV, only more fashionable and with a hint of added perversion: Public funds are invested profusely, arguing for a common good, which in European societies is, at most, the possibility of eradicating boredom on a Sunday afternoon.

SANDE. [*nodding to JAVIER*] Mmm hmm ... In 1956 Jorn maintained that academicism was worse than ever and associated it with speculation and formalism, but makes an exception for “anti-academic autodidacts,” or self-appointed amateurs. The connotative implications of Jorn’s discourse are thick to this day.

[*to the audience*] On the other hand, Gil Wolman’s address to the first Alba Congress perhaps doesn’t hold up so well. I found this peripatetic artist’s text a little shaky. Except in one important respect: his prediction of modern urbanism has definitely been realized. For artists and intellectuals today, what Wolman calls unitary urbanism, the synthesis of art and technology, is a fact on the ground. Academic institutions and curated shows are the models for art’s urban, public life. The fluid transfers of energy and recognition and legitimation to city spaces, institutions, and subjects make life very easy for the powers-that-be.

JAVIER. [*reading*] Three: Proclaim yourself to be the one who first “got the picture” of the whole—a sublime act of synthesis.

SANDE. Maybe if Jorn were alive he would by now be rendered an artist with only artificial organs—art is now considered to have slipped all territories, and any social aspect, any body part, can be combined with any other; the inorganic dominates, frequently as an [*gesturing scare quotes*] invitation to participate.

Jorn and Wolman rail against academics. Yet they were too easy on them, given today’s milieu. In Foucault’s terms, art has meshed with biopolitics—control and domination. I’ll give you an example. In his book *Art Power*, Boris Groys provides a rationalization for this meshing. He writes that so much artistic practice favors documentation because documentation can make the artificial come alive.<sup>2</sup> And this vastly enlarges the

territory called art. He has it (without paradox!) that “today’s art [desires] to become life itself, not merely to depict life or to offer it art products.”<sup>3</sup> It is the time of curators. With no irony, he declares that artworks are “sick and helpless when the spectator has to be led to the artwork,” a statement that flows directly into the affirmation of a cultural-political metaphysic, that “curating is curing,”<sup>4</sup> ... yep, page forty-six. Wolman’s “unitary urbanism” is *politically legitimated* by the very fact that conferences like MIT’s “Cultures of the Curatorial” aim at, quote, “positioning the curatorial within a transdisciplinary and transcultural context and exploring it as a genuine method of generating, mediating, and reflecting experience and knowledge.” Study the curators as an artwork, even as you give them a sanitized “history”; academics are self-centered, aren’t they? (I suggest reading Martin L. Davies’ *Imprisoned by History*.<sup>5</sup>) Groys offers religious phrases for such relations, for example, “You must first be sinful to become a saint—otherwise you remain a plain, decent person with no chance of a career in the archives of God’s memory.”<sup>6</sup> [*makes a creepy face*] Life and art are the means to a career, but the scariness of this doesn’t figure in Groys’ discourse. He is trying to say museums grant recognition to art that is in some way iconoclastic. It is paradoxical that the author doesn’t try to connect such rationalizations with today’s emphasis on art-as-knowledge; that is, what *kind* of knowledge? In any case, the artist is a slave of recognition unless the transfer is made to a sinner. In Groys’ discourse, notable for its tame naughtiness, “The curator is an agent of art’s profanation, its secularization, its abuse,” but he doesn’t probe the reasons why it’s a good thing that curators give us exhibitions made out of their, quote, “own contradictory stories.”<sup>7</sup> Are we really to believe that art must validate the stories of cocooned university-trained curators?

JAVIER. [*pacing*] I’ll not get into the players of the art world and their very special roles. The number of irrelevant artistic

events whose importance is pumped up through media and networking strategies is ever growing. The events network a community dispersed throughout the privileged world to islands of privileged enthusiasts in the remaining countries.

JAVIER *motions to SAM and EVA for help with the banner. He continues from the podium as they hang it.*

The members of this community are lured in the beginning by a certain belief in human creativity, but, to be able to advance up the social ladder this organization proposes, one must be able to exchange naïveté for cynicism, to act as if art is going to change the world, to make believe one is here to fulfill the hopes of mankind.

Statements are the mottoes that must be polished for communication flyers and press releases. They establish the exchange value of the artworks to be displayed. And let's not forget the critics. They are the most useful subjects of these capitalist-ridden transactions. Art criticism uses language to polish the coveted merchandise. Art critics behave just like the slogan writers of the advertising world.

SANDE. [*jumping in without pause*] What would Jorn and Wolman have said about the following story, from my own experience in Los Angeles and the university system there. I went to the Christopher Grimes gallery a few years ago, to see an exhibition of works by Allan Sekula, a teacher at CalArts. His work has excoriated corporate and neoliberal culture. This work was being sold for six hundred thousand dollars. There were twelve pieces, some of them multiples. The same works have been featured in university settings, offering a critique of society, with no prices attached. So, how does one "figure" the distance between monetary and aesthetic value in this mixture of the academic, aesthetic, commercial, critical, and institutional?

Functionally speaking, does art school serve as a safe zone in which to incubate and then sell teachable art? The teachable-saleable, projected as a difference from the commercial? One receives legitimation from a school or institution, and that legitimacy is then transferred to the commercial realm. Okay, so, the market for such art is not extensive. But here's a question for you: Would there be any market without the legitimations offered by schools?

JAVIER. [to LEE] Four: Write a gargantuan figure and add the word *dollars* at the end.

LEE *paints the sum* \$195,600,000 *across the banner.*

SANDE. Another Los Angeles-based teacher-artist, Mike Kelley, wrote his first musical, *Day is Done*, culled from yearbook photos gleaned from thrift stores and swap meets. The piece is 150 minutes of video depicting “dancing Goths, singing rednecks, religious zealots, wandering wizards and gloomy vampires.” The discourse on it calls the piece a vision of popular America using “computer programs and switchers [that] synchronize the videos to play as viewers navigate the space.” The technology is contemporary, but is this a “vision” at all? The promotion for the work tells us that *Day is Done* started as pure projection but became almost a game ... Kelley's reaction to the snotty New York art world that puts down its own Broadway productions, as well as an antidote to the film director Robert Altman's hatred for country music. Would the work have ever seen the proverbial light of day if it had not been attached to an artist with a brand name?

Steven Lavine, the president of CalArts, where Sekula teaches and Kelley studied, eliminated the institute's bookstore to cut overhead so that Lavine could have his image-making gallery constructed. [*as if reading ad copy*] RedCat, thirty-five miles from the school, where international art can be showcased

so as to attract even more donor contributions and link the school to the city. Heh, the depredations suffered by students are in direct proportion to the public self-promotion of school identity. Tuition is \$39,000 per year. Average debt on graduation is \$56,000 dollars. The year of Alba!

JAVIER. [*stepping back to admire the banner, then, to the audience*] This could be the total cost of those events. Any number you put down would probably be right. What is one to do with this situation? [*crossing the space again*] Demand the impossible, the never yet seen, the unintelligible. This is a euphemism for a more realistic answer: I don't know. But with everything out there, nothing is really sufficient, nothing really threatening, nothing really *open*. Of all the people working at, creating, forming our culture, artists are the most likely to repeat what has already been done.

SANDE. Lavine's compensation, \$548,000, was posted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* last year after he volunteered to take a cut of 10 percent and promptly added his wife to the institute as an "adviser." By 2006 or so, students were purchasing books from Borders, which later dropped the institute for lack of sales. The critical studies department, where I taught, couldn't ask students to read more than twenty pages per week, per class, both because of the students' poor skills and because they wanted to put critical thought in its place viz. the student's "real" education, which is job-oriented, not critical. A new masters' program in critical studies keeps the theses under lock and key in the dean's office—the policing of student accomplishment?

For Jorn and Wolman, the city and its larger social connections were not so colonized. Jorn's worry about academic critics seems fulfilled in Los Angeles, where the billionaire Eli Broad hired a progressive curator, Michael Govan from the Dia Foundation, who on arrival in L.A. adopted a populist

discourse. Govan called for the museum to serve as a “public agora” for a whole city, decorated with a Jeff Koons train hanging over the street. No progressive artists resisted. Nor did progressive artists on the board at MOCA make a peep when the Italian artist Blu was censored in late 2010; they only complained when the curator, Paul Schimmel, was abruptly fired by MOCA’s directors. Wolman’s unitary urbanism keeps getting more unitary—the *Los Angeles Times* recently reviewed a book on Bob Dylan by Sean Wilentz, who is notorious as the Clinton family historian and previously published a whitewash of Andrew Jackson’s genocidal war on American Indians. The reviewer, Tim Rutten, tells us that anyone alive in the sixties has Dylan’s “sounds” as a persistent echo in their heads. He then goes on to assert that the book is wonderful for giving us a synthesis of American history. The reviewer neglects to mention that Wilentz is a one-year *Los Angeles Times* “fellow” at the Huntington Library, a fact that can be “found” in another section of the same issue. In the abyss of representation, even a book review adds to the urban-institutional tie-in. Rutten’s piece incontestably destroys the difference between critique (rendered superfluous) and review.

Jorn and Wolman did not have to deal with this level of cynicism and piety (not to mention financial reward). Deleuze and Guattari have noted that well-financed cynicism has become the prevailing condition of cultural and political engagement.<sup>8</sup> It’s only worse now that soft censorship runs through the arts and humanities and privatization “informs” ... huh? right? ... every cultural artifact. Progressives bemoan this when addressing the public, but they also sign their contracts in private, their artifacts subject to the political influence of the book review, as well as of editing—institutional politics all the way through.

JAVIER. [to SANDE] The only other possibility is to behave inartistically from the point of view of this organization:

to stand up for experimentation, for the unknown, for the incomprehensible and probably the indecipherable, the not-yet-there.

*A long pause ensues as the two look each other over.*

SANDE. In any case, Deleuze and Guattari were acutely aware of the differences between sensation and its conjunctions with concepts and functions, the moment when sensation is used as an alibi for pseudoconcepts, to form opinions and ideas of the rationalizing kind. This is one of the places where the problems of the *of* and the *on* return. For what exactly does anyone actually experience when they encounter a contemporary artwork, especially as such experience (as in Los Angeles above) is prefigured by multiple *ons*—the institutional and authoritative writings *on*, that is, *about* what is experienced, what an artwork means and does. It is still an ideal that an artwork gives *of* itself the chance of an unmediated encounter. If this is an ideal, is it also a myth?

JAVIER. If someone's work wins a prize, doubt its quality: it surely follows a well-known route. If an art critic writes a review, use it as toilet paper and then read it with enthusiasm. You might find something new. Don't comply, collapse into tears, don't rebel either—it's too easy, the badge of the newcomers—thrust yourself into the unknown, into the void, into the possibility of not doing art at all, and only then come back, rely on your intuition, escape your ambience and make your egotistical little stargazing artist commit suicide before he or she wins recognition for complying with the mechanisms of the art world of today, that sinister factory of intangible value that so charmingly leads the capitalist doings of our time.

SANDE. Deleuze and Guattari fretted that much of what we call art is just a confirmation of preexisting doxa. In *What Is Philosophy?* they wrote that abstract art gives us, say, a

sensation of the concept of “sea.” Conceptual art neutralizes its plane of composition (“the catalogue that brings together works not displayed ...”), reproducible to infinity, so that with conceptual art, its *informative* dimension is neither fully composed sensation nor a new concept. Instead, they emphasized, art has nothing to do with “a doxa of the social body,” because it creates affects that are “too much” for anyone. They opted for sensory otherness “caught in a matter of sensation.” In other words, Deleuze and Guattari offer a powerful sense of criticism, not so much of the autonomy of art as of art’s ability to disturb scientific operations and philosophical concepts, and any notion of the social that does not engender “vibrations, clinches and openings.”<sup>9</sup>

Crudely summarized, it is not the perception of *x* that matters, but that a landscape is created that *sees*. Or a name that rattles, or a ... [*trailing off, SANDE gestures around the room as if weighing everything in his hands*]

In any case, progressive-reactionary art and culture have now become the latest barrier to art and culture.

So, from my privileged situation in Thailand, I send a *wai* of best wishes to you artists and intellectuals who must try to find a foothold in the walls of the abyss of representation.

*Lights go dark.*

SAM. This abyss is a total politics.

*All exit.*

Notes to Eva Díaz, “Whither Curatorial Studies?”

<sup>1</sup> In the U.S., K–12, kindergarten through 12th grade, is equivalent to elementary and secondary education. (Students there attend high school between the ages of 14 and 18.)

<sup>2</sup> The underfunding of the public system contributes to a stratified, two-tier system under which the promise of universal public education has receded. The Obama family’s decision to send their children to an elite private school in Washington, D.C., at a cost of more than \$28,000 annually per student, stoked complaints about unequal, class-based opportunity for educational attainment.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy 1870–2033: An Essay on Education and Equality*, New York: Penguin Books (1961), 15.

<sup>4</sup> This interdisciplinary, postgraduate educational institution in New York City is now in its 40th year. “Postgraduate” here generally indicates that the studio program attendees have completed their MFAs and that most of the critical and curatorial students are post-MA if they are currently working toward a Ph.D. Occasionally, students who have only recently been awarded a BA are accepted into the Whitney Program. The program itself is unaccredited and has achieved visibility and status largely by word of mouth.

<sup>5</sup> George Baker, “Pedagogy, Power, and the Public Sphere: The Whitney Program and (Its) History,” *Whitney Program Newsletter*, Spring/Summer 2000.

<sup>6</sup> The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, was founded in 1990 and launched a curatorial MA program in 1994; the MA in Curating Contemporary Art was initiated at the Royal College of Art in London in 1992. The De Appel Curatorial Training Program in Amsterdam was founded in 1994. In 1998, the Core Program at Houston’s Museum of Fine Arts added a critical studies component to its fine arts residencies, a shift influenced by the Whitney Program’s interdisciplinary organization. In 2002, Columbia University founded its MA-granting program, Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies. Other programs include the two-year Critical Studies at Malmö Art Academy in Sweden, the MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths in London, founded in 1987, and the tuition-free one-year curatorial program Le Magasin in Grenoble in France.

<sup>7</sup> This list includes New York University; School of the Art Institute, Chicago; California College of the Arts; and CalArts, Valencia, California.

<sup>8</sup> The art-magazine world and the grant-giving and foundation sectors could be folded in here, too, though they generally do not involve curating in the narrow definition of the term.

Notes to Sande Cohen, “Unteachable Likeness”

<sup>1</sup> Odo Maquard, *Farewell to Matters of Principle*, New York: Oxford University Press (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Boris Groys, *Art Power*, Cambridge: MIT Press (2008), 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Martin L. Davies, *Imprisoned by History: Aspects of Historicized Life*, New York: Routledge (2010).

<sup>6</sup> Groys, 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1983).

<sup>9</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, New York: Columbia University Press (1994), 172, 177, 198.

# Suspended Vocation by the Movement of 20 October, 2010

Anthony Davies, Nils Norman,  
and Howard Slater

NARRATOR	older female
RESPONDENT 1	young female
RESPONDENT 2	male
RESPONDENT 3	male
POET	male
HISTORIAN	older male

*The set is a classroom, or it could be a cultural center, or a pub. On the back wall is a long chalkboard on which is drawn a rather complex diagram. There is a long, rough oak table littered with a few candles, bottles of wine, glasses, wrappers, cigarettes, and papers at which the three RESPONDENTS sit with the POET and the HISTORIAN. Smoke hangs in the air, and it should appear that a conversation has been going on for some time. The NARRATOR sits in a comfortable chair off to the side, illuminated by a smart floor lamp. The NARRATOR reads steadily, yet tentatively, without much authority,*

*with nothing proclamatory in her intonation. As if to say, “It’s no big deal”—relaxed, she reads relaxedly, informally, as if she were saying, “This is just the beginning ... there’s more to come.” She read as if it’s difficult fun.*

*Lights up slowly on the seated group.*

NARRATOR. It’s the day that the governor of the Bank of England has announced a decade of sobriety, and here they are, having a drink in the Plough, in Central London. It’s the day of the big cutbacks announced by the ConLib coalition as part of the British government’s annual spending review. Maybe they should begin with the cuts to education? Does it have any bearing on what they’ve been doing together over the past few years, particularly with projects linked to the School of Walls and Space Department? It could be said that what they’ve been up to points more toward what might be called postcapitalist forms of educational engagement ... insofar as they’ve not set themselves in “opposition” to cuts, or to the educational system as it currently presents itself.

The only word they’ve got is *curriculum*. Is that why they’re here? to formalize something? But one of them finds herself in a strange situation: she has not been to university and is not really enamored of higher education. She suggests how un-historically minded people can be when they claim that any initiative not backed by the state is somehow free market or neoliberal and how this seems to neglect the historical example of a workers’ movement that was replete with non-state funded autodidact initiatives.

Is this what is being hijacked at the moment? The idea of the Big Society, of free schools, is another example of how

neoliberalism has been very adept at consuming these initiatives and regurgitating them as a distorted market variant. It's very close to what they've been working on. Aren't they themselves in danger of carrying out a program that the state now wants? How do they differentiate between what the state demands and what they themselves regard as politically necessary?

But one of them says that what is touted as a free school today is a more smoothly functioning formal education, a more or less professional aping of what already exists. He points to the diagram.

RESPONDENT 2. [*pointing to the diagram*] The state wants to focus solely on the "form-funnel" structure so as to improve the end result of product and knowledge. So, for this one the "Big Society" is just another form of concept-management, a way to inveigle surplus value out of people. Maybe they better think of the content of a free-school initiative? How the content can be deforming.

NARRATOR. They fall to wondering whether what's being talked up is another form of primitive accumulation. A situation in which the last vestiges of communal activity are taken away, to be repoliticized ideologically and given another value, another meaning. Maybe this is something that their proposed curriculum might have to spell out in a different language, a different form of reproduction that is not complicit with this idea of the Big Society.

Might the problem lie at the level of formal content? The work they've been doing over the past few years, the role of improvisation in challenging "specialized" knowledge enclosures, the formal transfer of knowledge—knowledge that can be placed in the market, knowledge that can be quantified, measured, assessed. They've tried to work on a different set of relations, to home in on the knowledge that's generated

between people, in social relations: the general intellect.  
This, it is offered ...

RESPONDENT 2. is the opposite of the neoliberal dead zone of the Big Society.

NARRATOR. But where does this leave experimental pedagogy?  
A respondent says,

RESPONDENT 1. It leaves it having to deal with an educational system that's forming human capital. The generalized state of produced subjectivity today is formed as human capital—an investment in the self that institutes conformity to the tropes of capitalism. So, is the experimental better located in the Small Society? Does it include an improvisatory element and a sense of each one's immeasurable experience: the micro situations that challenge pedagogy? Is the experimental allied *with* desire? What vector does desire want to lead itself along? Or is it informed of where to go? Is it dictated to? Is it seduced? Is it down here [*gesturing toward the diagram*], the form funnel? Or is it drawn toward value and Knowledge/Power? Or does it meander—as it says here on the diagram—or generate its own process? Is it moving toward an unformed type of zone?

NARRATOR. An interjection proposes that ...

RESPONDENT 2. The unformed zone is what we were trying to do with the “Going Fragile” week at the School of Walls and Space in Berlin. Improvisation was linked to an element that was almost group-therapeutic during the week: the encouragement of not just intellectual rational development, but also collective emotional development.

NARRATOR. One of them summarizes that they have an institution-funnel made up of what might be called measurable standards that coalesce around Knowledge/Power.

RESPONDENT 2. Then we have the immeasurable, improvisation, free-form desire. So the question we ask of the pending curriculum is how we create or set conditions that make it possible to move into the immeasurable. What is it that encourages or forces us all to move into the measurable? To go to university to gain degrees, to get jobs, to get homes, to get pensions, to gain a semblance of security?

RESPONDENT 1. But how is this process to be disrupted? In what place, in what time, in what relation is it challenged?

RESPONDENT 3. It's an almost unanswerable question. Is it in the points of transition in human social awareness that there are moments of trauma, for example, during adolescence?

RESPONDENT 2. Maybe this is being schematic, but is desire more raw at this time?

RESPONDENT 3. Is it at the moment we feel the seduction of knowledge and power, at the moment we sublimate our identity to a life purpose that the educational institution comes in to "save" us? It's a pressurized moment: a career ... a profession ... It's a moment that demands a decision. But what else is unveiled at this moment?

NARRATOR. This is what's interesting about the measurable/immeasurable dichotomy they noted earlier. How does this relate back to what they were doing with the School of Walls and Space? They certainly worked with a program that was immeasurable. In fact, the curriculum put out on that first day was rejected ... suspended indefinitely, replaced by a blank wall.

RESPONDENT 3. So, a part of this that's important is the idea of the curriculum as contract, because, in my view, it's about understanding what we're actually doing together. The contract can have a free-form component to it, but it's still about the

fact that we're doing something together with no discernible outcome and that we're in agreement about working together, and something might happen. With a curriculum, we're agreeing to a social relationship, and for the curriculum as a contract in the more free-form, spontaneous, improvisatory, and emotionally collective sense, it's about ...

NARRATOR. Trust. Then one of them mentions [*pointing to the diagram*] that the relationships inside the institution could be likened to the sadomasochistic contract, a negotiation of power.

RESPONDENT 2. In a way, it's what may have been missing during the "Going Fragile" week. We jumped to the conclusion that we could just go to here [*pointing to the free-form element of the diagram*] with trust, because of the text we'd compiled beforehand and because of what the students knew about us. ... But the people who were unknown to us didn't have proof of this sense of trust or practical evidence of our awareness of power relations. It wasn't at all our intention to be measuring anybody. Hence we had the issue of some students thinking, "Are we being manipulated?"

RESPONDENT 1. This again falls back into the projection and transference of the S&M contract and how the group therapy element takes on that character as well.

NARRATOR. From the mouth of a rebel poet comes a seemingly haphazard slogan:

POET. Perversion *is* the curriculum.

RESPONDENT 1. So ...

NARRATOR. She says in response to the inattentive poet,

RESPONDENT 1. Are we here to create a perverse curriculum that meets the criteria? Whose criteria?

NARRATOR. The historian adds,

HISTORIAN. The introduction of music into the curriculum at Portsmouth Polytechnic in the early 1970s was part of a perverse practice that may have been critically aligned to a more general and quiet process of structural change.

NARRATOR. He further adds,

HISTORIAN. Clearly for some working within educational institutions at the time—adjusting, tweaking the curriculum undercover, inside a fog of bureaucracy—the conditions were set in which a revolutionary subject or jolt to the system might be brought into play.

NARRATOR. At Portsmouth, where improvisation and free-form were part of the mix, the historian recalls,

HISTORIAN. This was precisely what happened: the longest occupation of a British art school in the 1970s. As with their “Going Fragile” reader, did they not also factor in a void, a deep hole, in which radically different social relations might emerge?

RESPONDENT 3. That’s okay, but this is clearly not where we’re coming from, as none of us have ever talked about the idea of adjusting, tweaking, working within existing institutional structures.

POET. So,

NARRATOR. Chimes in the poet,

POET. Outside these structures, the “perversion” can become more indulged, tolerated, less surreptitious. Liberating desire!

NARRATOR. But without this background, the curriculum as a contract of trust—which they don’t intend it to be—can be experienced differently. So, it was said, some just attacked them and claimed they were just a bunch of blokes doing something with young people. One of those assembled found that very much a problem. But his thought about the curriculum was that it could take them into another school, another place—into a free school, another Summerhill. That was his idea of the criteria. He understood it more as a test site or springboard for taking this experience and knowledge of a curriculum in formation to what might be called a shared practice. Maybe the contract that they were talking about was the means to sidestep that state-funded, free-market bind. But, one of them added,

RESPONDENT 1. It could be quite bourgeois to think that they had to set up a contract to build trust!

RESPONDENT 2. That’s as may be,

NARRATOR. One interjects,

RESPONDENT 2. But it’s the new form we were talking about—the contract becomes null and void. As with sadomasochism, can’t the examination of where the power relations are, how they can be played with, give rise to a growing sense of trust and emotional collectivity?

HISTORIAN. This has resonance with developments in the early British art school system of the 1960s and the formation of the first curriculum. In the case of St. Martins School of Art in London, for example, students were invited to respond to the educational “contract,” and this resulted in a challenge to

a perceived abuse of power; the privileging and stifling limits of middle-class, middle-aged, white culture. And it's important to acknowledge that this "right" to dissent and to contest was inscribed in the contract, so to speak; it was encouraged as part of the process. So, when we consider the "development" of art education over the last forty-odd years, it has clearly moved away from the "contract," down this form-funnel, and has been hauled into this zone [*gesturing to a series of spiraling vectors on the diagram*].

RESPONDENT 1. And that funnel has become so tight. That funnel is narrowing to a needle's point.

NARRATOR. The poet wants to run another fantasy.

POET. If the institution is a funnel-anus shitting out students, pedagogues, and academics as units of human capital, then we get back into the question of the actual benefit of the S&M discipline-punishment vibe, and now maybe is the time to run shock tactics on human capital, on the clean surfaces and conceptual aesthetics, on the aseptic of "intelligence" that bowel out from this factory!

*Laughter, then a gradual return to serious attentiveness.*

NARRATOR. One suggests that the shock maybe comes when students leave the institution, when they suddenly realize that they can't do very much with the measured and packaged learning they've received, that human capital isn't worth too much ... particularly now, in this climate of austerity and cutbacks, where there's no safety net offered by a welfare system. The poet continues,

POET. Maybe this curriculum should be constructed like a welfare system after people leave school, the art school? Only

after students have left is it possible to engage and set up a free school.

*Lights dim on the group.*

NARRATOR. So they now seem to be talking about a post-educational positioning and not about a curriculum as such. They would work off the shock and factor in this traumatic yet liberating moment and divert it toward a collaborative and communizing type of practice, because for them, this is clearly when human capital is shat out of the institutional funnel, has nowhere to go, and could feed into Marie Langer's notion of "building your own Centers of Psycho-Social Attention." By the end it is clear that none of those who have gathered as the "Movement of the 20th of October" are talking about intervening in primary, secondary, further, or higher education at the point where the "promise" of the system, the institution, is at its persuasive, coercive peak but more at the precise moment where the "promise," the contract, the guarantee, turns to dust—the day that students (and staff, other workers, et cetera) leave the building ... with nothing.

Are they saying that it's not really worth developing a curriculum now that they've identified the source of the problem—the machine that produces human capital? Are they saying instead that they'll move into the night? Was this, as one of them said, was this particular exchange in itself a divergence from a goal—the result of a process that overrides the need for a curriculum?

NARRATOR *stands and exits. Lights out on all.*

# An Imagined Bauhaus

Colin Lang

*A low, even light on the stage. A microphone is positioned center stage so that the speaker is in profile to the audience. The stage is otherwise empty except for a black scrim, not immediately apparent, at the rear. This serves as a screen for the projection of documentation from the succession of installations of Raum 19 by the German artist Imi Knoebel.*

*STAGEHANDS 1 and 2 enter stage right and stop short. COLIN enters stage left and takes position in front of the microphone. STAGEHANDS exit right. The audience sees COLIN in profile. He is young, with longish dark hair. He wears a cream corduroy blazer and jeans and carries in his arms a bundle of manila folders. He doesn't acknowledge the audience, appearing rather preoccupied with his material. He is obviously a professor in the humanities. He's being considered for a tenure-track position at the School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth, where he'll be one of the youngest professors in the department.*

COLIN. Art education had two faces in West Germany in the mid-1960s. There were the applied arts and crafts, the industrial, utilitarian, commercially driven programs meant to direct otherwise aimless youth into the gaping maw of West Germany's economic miracle. These were *Kunstgewerbe* programs, the *Werkkunstschule*, and programs by many other monikers, all making up for the instrumentalized curricula known formerly as the Bauhaus.

On the other hand, there were the traditional fine arts schools, where students were taught to draw from nude models, to sculpt from plaster and clay, and to carry on as if art would always be there, culture's abiding wet nurse in times both prostrate and prosperous. Many students made their way from one place to the other, creating a generation of Janus-faced pupils who now no longer looked both backward and forward, but inward, perpetually divided against themselves, split at their emergence as potential young artists between art and design, the aesthetic and the useful, craft and something like creativity.

*STAGEHANDS 1 and 2 again approach from stage right and place a low wooden platform stage center between COLIN and the audience, then exit.*

This was the story of four young students who found themselves at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, enrolled in Joseph Beuys' master class on monumental sculpture. What did these students know about sculpture? What experience, academic or existential, brought them to Room 20 where their teacher, their new mentor, would kneel on the floor in a fishing vest and fedora and draw inscrutable diagrams on blackboards and on the ground? For Imi Giese, Jörg Immendorff, Imi Knoebel, and Blinky Palermo, Beuys' style had no precedent, no pedagogical analogue in their collective experience. They had all made their way to Beuys

via the Bauhaus, from preliminary courses and repetitive exercises, using paper to produce tiny diagrams that would soon become things, sketches for future production. This was the only graphic work that Knoebel and Giese knew—what else was there? How could they find a voice of inner necessity, a form adequate to their energies as individuals, when they couldn't even draw?

*STAGEHANDS 1 and 2 approach from stage right to place a wooden stool on the platform. COLIN pauses, sits, still in profile. STAGEHAND 2 adjusts microphone, then exits. The art historian resumes.*

COLIN. The answer came in the form of a room, which their teacher was kind enough to make available to Giese and Knoebel without so much as having seen any of their work. It was an act of faith on Beuys' part, and the two Imis would repay him by undermining everything he taught them, by turning his expanded concept of art on its head. The space was called Room 19, and it was adjacent to the main classroom where Beuys disseminated his principles of creativity and sociality and energy and potential. The Imis had little use for these ideas, but the notion of potentiality resonated for them, spoke to what it meant to them to be art students without any artistic training.

Every project that they undertook in Room 19 was an exercise in potential, an opportunity to learn by unlearning, to reduce, to concretize, to give material form to a point of absolute zero. This reduction came naturally to the Imis, since there was very little there to begin with; no real skills to subvert, very few techniques to sabotage, in order to start at the beginning. There is no freedom without structure. If Beuys was the counterpoint, if the idea of the creative being was to be rejected, what could take its place?

STAGEHANDS 1 and 2 enter with a piece of rough plywood and four equal lengths of two-by-four. With these materials they construct a table and place it before COLIN.

COLIN. The Imis began with a ritual cleansing of sorts. Room 19 would not be another student studio, an amalgamation of imprudent endeavors, half-baked schemes, and general detritus piled in the corners and spilling out into the work spaces. No, this studio would make precision measurement and mathematical rigor its organizing principles, a place where Rejection and Experimentation could live side by side. This did not sit well with Beuys at first. In one of his earliest visits to Room 19, Beuys took one look at the reductive geometrical systems presented in the Imis' work and promptly swept everything off the surfaces that had become the laboratory tables of the studio.

Beuys said nothing, but the Imis immediately understood that their work had to be insulated—like Beuys himself following his famous crash—so they began locking the door to Room 19, barring entrance to the other students and, most importantly, to their teacher.

What the Imis needed was experimentation, not instruction, but they could not achieve this without recourse to their former training, without the memory of the stolid directives they had received as students at the *Werkkunstschule* in Darmstadt. Room 19 was a refuge from Beuys and his circle of acolytes, but it was also a site for a concentrated rehearsal of the basic exercises and fundamental strategies that the Imis had learned elsewhere. In rejecting the organicism and anthropological spirit of Beuys, they could better possess their earlier training, really comprehend the impact of reduction and distillation in a way that had been impossible in Darmstadt. Beuys, the Kunstakademie, and Room 19 made this possible for the first

time, and Knoebel's tribute to this space, his installation *Raum 19*, gave form to this process.

STAGEHAND 1 *brings COLIN a mug of coffee, and takes the manilla folders from COLIN's arms and lays them on the table.*

COLIN. Comprised of seventy-seven component parts made from untreated wood and hardboard, each element of *Raum 19* is part of a larger group of forms that includes painting stretchers, large rectangular slabs and boxes, wooden wedges, half-oval structures, and a series of painting-like flat hardboard wall pieces. There was no fixed way to treat the individual components once they were built, no clear conclusion on how they should appear as a finished work group. In fact, Knoebel stipulated when he built *Raum 19* that the presentation of the individual parts should be rearranged according the specific parameters of the given exhibition environment; the objects could be rotated, inverted, hung, or left to sit on the floor, stacked or spread out like a deck of cards across the ground of a studio, gallery, or museum. *Raum 19's* seventy-seven parts are like an inventory of possible points of departure, an array of critical elements, each with its own potential to be shaped for future use. *Raum 19* is concerned with the inorganic, which is about enduring in the face of history, about surviving at the cost of being difficult, and cold, and inexplicable. The inorganic is about a time that is not subject to the same laws of decomposition as our bodies or our lives. It promises no false or premature reconciliations between us and the world; in fact, it makes the separation between the two its defining feature.

STAGEHANDS 1 and 2 *enter and place a wood partition between the actor and the audience. COLIN's head is visible above the top edge of the screen. Exit STAGEHANDS.*

COLIN. The realization of *Raum 19*'s components was unthinkable outside of the context of the Kunstakademie, though, since in Darmstadt Knoebel had been permitted only paper and pencil for the execution of his exercises. Knoebel needed the space afforded by Room 19 in order to bring his rigorousness into the third dimension, to construct as well as to compose. He needed Beuys' openness in order to return to the basic vocabulary of forms, because without that freedom, there could be no turning away. Smuggling in the Bauhaus was a surreptitious act of rebellion, poisoning the well of spurious freedom exalted by Beuys with technical training and calculated indifference. This was the kind of insouciance that would have driven Beuys to become the system that he hated and opposed, that he had created an entire persona to fight against with impudence and performative gusto, when he rejected the Imis' work. Beuys' dirty secret was the generative force of the Imis' most important work and revealed any form of pedagogy to be in dire need of revision. Pedagogy is not the repetition of principles, *Raum 19* seems to suggest, but the staging of discrete oppositional forces, creating a screen against which identities are formed and differences imagined.

*Raum 19* is the dialectical outcome of the determinate negation of Beuys and Bauhaus, of freedom and restraint, substance and function, subject matter and material. Without such oppositions, *Room 19* is flat and meaningless.

*Installation images of Raum 19 in its various incarnations are projected onto the partition. STAGEHAND I enters with a can of white paint and a brush, which he uses to paint the partition.*

In the context of 1968, when the work was first assembled and displayed, there was already a feverish impulse to leave the studio, to abandon materiality to the roiling present in favor of action and restagings of the everyday. This was the backdrop for so many of the students at the Kunstakademie,

who took the performative self that Beuys had offered as a model for relevant engagement. Could any kind of response be imagined, or was the desire to enter the flow of historical time too strong? It was not the Imaginist Bauhaus that had to be summoned in *Raum 19*, but rather an *imagined* Bauhaus in the halls and private spaces of the eighteenth-century academies of fine art. Here the Bauhaus was not as Max Bill envisioned; instead, it was as it could never have been on its own, in a vacuum of conflicting ideologies and practices.

In the spirit of Max Weber, the *Wissenschaft*—that is, the science—of Knoebel's vocation as an art student was in making the most radical gesture appear innocuous, turning boundless energy into the antagonist and rationality into an escape. In doing so, Knoebel found a way to make pedagogy itself the object of his study, to introduce confrontation and contradiction where there had been only one voice. In Room 19, reduction meant a distillation and concentration of opposing forces, however effortless the outcome may have seemed. A context had to be created out of this antagonism, a physical site where conflict could be marshaled into production. It was, after all, what Beuys asked of the world: for everyone to be an artist.

*Exit COLIN. STAGEHAND 1 stops painting and, with the aid of STAGEHAND 2, removes all of the props in the reverse order in which they appeared. Lights dim as this happens until all is dark but the projection. Projection dims to black.*



# Slow People

Benj Gerdes and Jennifer Hayashida

*Midmorning: a laboratory classroom. Two lab coats hang on a rack near a long white counter. PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHERS A–E are seated in five folding chairs. A projection screen is visible at the rear of the lab. CHARLIE MEYERS stands to one side, observing. The INVESTORS are not seen, but are present; they are addressed by MIKHAIL and CHARLIE as if seated in the audience. DR. MIKHAIL PATEL stands, addressing the group.*

MIKHAIL. Now, let's try this again. What we're going to do is get really slow, as slow as we can today. So, are you ready to get slow with me?

CHARLIE. [*continuing the narration*] And in this workshop, Dr. Patel is trying to make scientifically credible what is popularly referred to as the Slow Person movement.

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER A. I feel a belch coming on, maybe some gas.

MIKHAIL. Let it dissipate, go even slower. Let it dissolve on a granular level. So slow it's not even moving, until the difference between stasis and motion is imperceptible.

CHARLIE. As I was saying earlier, societal implementation of advances in nanotechnology has been encumbered by the demands of the interests that have funded them, namely warfare and capital. The problem is that all of the investors have hedged their bets on criteria that we prove inadequate: speed, ease, accumulation, connection.

MIKHAIL. [*addressing INVESTORS*] What this laboratory is investigating is: What are the bodily techniques for getting slow? We've seen this with drugs, with meditation, and we're simply asking that we strengthen the mind-body connection. Let's not just slow minds down, let's slow whole communities of bodies, let's drop the town temperature a degree or two.

CHARLIE. Each participant-researcher in this lab has been chosen because he or she embraced some kind of radical alternative to modernity. Often, these acts were selfish and based on personal habits—consumption—but what interested us was that on paper these personal experiments were structurally similar, if not homologous, to larger social movements in the global south. Basically, these stunts look like

religious fundamentalism, but these people have agents and connections to the people at the top. This isn't just back to the land; it's a trend of self-imposed monastic exile, back to serfdom!

MIKHAIL. What's important to point out about what Charlie is telling you is that we didn't seek out the anonymous, average subject for this phase of our research, but rather the sort of striver who had tackled the big questions about the world we are all facing right now and basically come away with a really stupid, easy answer—that the best responses boil down to an emphasis on the politics of personal consumption.

CHARLIE. But at the same time, we basically build on this and say, What if we shift that body from the practice of consumer habits to one of bodily expenditures, affects, and needs?

MIKHAIL. So we'll get to that in a minute, but perhaps a few of you in the front row could identify yourselves?

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER B. I wrote a book based on a blog about forgoing toilet paper and electric lighting for a year. At no point did I manage to adequately anticipate that the print run of the book and the electric drain of the blog and my computer—and its readers' computers—would actually suck up a level of paper and electricity exponentially higher than whatever I saved by playing pilgrim for a year.

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER C. I'm a raw-foodist who doesn't believe in refrigeration.

CHARLIE. Hey, I've seen it; I can tell you, it exists!

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER D. I'm a Ph.D.-level freegan so, yeah, I dumpster dive. I don't make purchases. It's like this: People cast things off and objects choose me. I'd like to draw a

connection here to the English language in precapitalist times. This is how language used to work: This desk likes me, or this desk likes me not. My ass is fat; therefore, this desk does not prefer me. In the scope of human development, it's only recently that I, or any of us, have been understood to carry within ourselves the capacity to like an object. I like this desk, wrap it up! I'll take it—and you can see that the subject-and-object relationship has been reversed to meet the idea of a consumer will or desire. So, my lifestyle is a form of fidelity to an earlier precapitalist language.

CHARLIE. [to INVESTORS] More investment on the part of these participants means that sometimes we have to pretend to listen to them. They want to be heard.

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER A. I'm a locavore, but only recently realized that my investments and those of my social circle contradict our avowed priorities by several thousand percent—that is, if I were to attempt to quantify it.

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER E. I'm an at-risk late adolescent of color raised in a neighborhood of broken homes that sits atop a Superfund site. I'm the control in this experiment. I'm paid to be here. It's part of my alternative sentencing program.

MIKHAIL. Other than the final speaker—whom we welcome as someone who has actually done time in juvie and has been deprived in a less than self-imposed manner—you probably notice that there is a common theme of earnest self-righteousness here.

PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER E. It was either this or solitary. I'm not sure I made the right choice.

CHARLIE. But, given reasons that Dr. Patel will now lay out for you, this is really a laboratory about the self, or more precisely

about how the self—the *I*—interacts with the body and can be trained to ...

MIKHAIL. I'll take it from here, since this is my research group and I have the PowerPoint ready to go—I apologize for the overlap to those of you who may be members of APMDAAAQA and saw my presentation in Tampa last February.

*The lights dim. MIKHAIL pulls a tiny remote from his breast pocket and points it at the screen, bringing up the first digital slide. Over the course of his presentation to the INVESTORS, he continues to bring up new slides, images, and video clips. These go beyond a simple outline of the material to include the evocative: drawings, found images, and video footage of experiments and interviews with the PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHERS. The culmination of all this does not suggest artistry so much as scientific discipline at an early moment.*

MIKHAIL. So what is it that you've been footing the bill for us to do here? Basically, it became clear to a lot of people in this field that any responses to what my next-door colleague's infant is now calling—and don't quote me on this, it's not published yet—the big brown-all-over, a.k.a. the climate crisis, were trending toward the individual and the uncreative.

Slide—Chart comparing agents and instances of climate change for the differing targets addressed by cultural responses.

MIKHAIL. What you're witnessing in this lab, and we've seen over the past five years, is a retreat to a kind of thinking that I recognize as one of the reasons why, years ago, I left the life of a punk rocker to become a prominent research scientist. In short: that political life is reduced to individual action, and that action is defined along a horizon that is limited to a series of nonorganizational yes-or-no choices, between abstention

and subsumption—choices that do not seek to upend as much as to ethically abstain, while falling short of a coherent systemic indictment? This is what Charlie and I have been calling a politics of personal consumption, and it’s gotten a lot of contemporary air time in the United States.

CHARLIE. I’ll jump in and say that this lab is not focused on debunking. We do have a facility dedicated to that, and they’re doing a great job of using a global framework to show the real limits of some of these claims. It’s a smaller operation in the old building, if you remember it, underfunded—hit me up afterward if any of you might be interested.

Slide: Image of DIY Knitters for Peace.

MIKHAIL. So all data, even among supposedly committed parties, was trending away from any useful “big ideas,” any social or technological ability to, in layman’s terms, I’m sorry, miss in the back, layperson’s (and by *person* I mean an educated being, not a fetus!) but don’t get me in trouble by putting that last bit online. Federal funding is still tough to come by for those of us outside the financial sector.

CHARLIE. [*scanning the faces of INVESTORS, a little flustered*] In a layperson’s terms ...

MIKHAIL. So, in laypersons’ terms, a genuine lack of large-scale responses that might give us, as a species, I’m not just talking about the lab here, the ability to save the world.

CHARLIE. [*still trying to loosen up INVESTORS*] Just thinking out loud, I wonder if etymologically there’s any root connection between the docility of a population and the words “lay people.” I don’t know ... “caught flat-footed?” Let’s table that, but make a note.

MIKHAIL. It's stuck ... let me get my next slide here.

*He walks over and rattles something underneath the lab counter.*

Slide: Pie chart that depicts failure of contemporary individuals to collectivize even in the face of dire consequences.

MIKHAIL. Okay, so no big collective solutions, really kind of mass denial on a micro level. And at the same time we have a second set of data concerning the macro level—essentially showing that the planet will become uninhabitable for human life in the next ten to twenty years—there are conservative estimates saying thirty years, but if you look at who's funding that last group, and this should be obvious to you given your vested interest in this project, we've got to look at the funders and see that it's in their best interest to project out another ten years, to project a world that will last a bit longer.

Slide: Two vectors comparing micro and macro courses.

MIKHAIL. So if you look at this chart, we have two vectors: one is human paralysis or lack of response and the other is the diminishing of time.

CHARLIE. For the cynics out there, I guess the silver lining is that this paralysis is finite, so we will be put out of our misery soon!

Slide: Same vectors, but intensified.

MIKHAIL. Add to this that given a variety of factors, flows of financial capital, information networks, human migration, and so on, time and space are widely understood to be speeding up and collapsing; time and distance are reduced. We're in a

moment of time-space compression. So, once we understand this, we bracket out the human activity vector and say there are really two variables here: one is the rate of climate change, and the other is time expressed as a velocity.

Slide: A melting globe next to a stopwatch.

MIKHAIL. Okay, now at the same time, the cultural response overall has not been regulatory, has not been collective on any sort of actually useful level, has not sought to articulate a systemic indictment of various regimes of economy or governance. Instead, it has been reduced to individual ethics, and what comes with that? Individual bodies. And here I'd chart three areas where our participant-researchers have been helping us understand how individuals understand their own bodies now.

Slide: What goes into bodies.

MIKHAIL. The first area is literally what people choose to put into their bodies: food, for example—the craving for organic food and the accompanying psychological effects when this is received or denied. And then things like drinking coffee (or not) and smoking (or not), fasting, you get the idea. I'm sure many of you have spouses or partners and friends who engage in these practices regularly.

Slide: What comes out of bodies.

MIKHAIL. And the second area, it follows, is how whatever goes into a body relates to what comes out of bodies, so here we might be talking about individuals' relationships to their own excrement, gas, constipation, and all bodily fluids. And by "relationship" I don't mean the purely psychological, but the productive, too—can this output be modified for our purposes?

Slide: What goes on with bodies in between.

MIKHAIL. Finally, into this category we'd put everything that might come between eating and shitting that people are now actively doing with their bodies: exercise, yoga, meditation, and all forms of sexual activity. So this is both actively active and actively passive activity, if you follow.

Slide: Misdirected overinvestment, a series of overlapping circles and vectors relating to the above.

MIKHAIL. And here, it's exactly in the overinvestment in these final sets of active-active and active-passive interactions that I'm interested. My grandmother lived to be ninety-eight eating all sorts of things, and to think that we have control over our health or longevity simply by exercising or choosing our ingredients is like saying that the biggest problem of a person sinking in quicksand is the one-shot penalty they're going to take when they put their ball back on the golf course!

CHARLIE. He's a scientist, not a pundit or speechwriter, but I hope you can appreciate how hard he's trying to speak your language.

MIKHAIL. What I'm saying is, it's like focusing on what's on your plate when the whole neighborhood is sitting on top of a heaping pile of unadulterated toxic waste.

CHARLIE. [*points at PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER E*] Which is why we're so thankful to have you here as a reality check ...

Slide: Anality and avoidance.

MIKHAIL. So what we have here really is a cultural moment of anality and a concept of a perpetual present, absolutely preposterous, a desire misplaced as a belief, that says that

toning, exercise, personal training-type activities offer both superficial immediate gratification-cum-mating ritual and—this is my interest—the promise of control, safety, or longevity. And it’s actually clear from our data that the immediate gratification is desired, but that the real engine for most of this activity is directly motivated by a quest for longevity.

Slide: Control vs Actual Lifespan.

MIKHAIL. So, if you are following up to this point, you’ll understand that the thinking of the field has critiqued elements of exactly what I’ve just walked you through, that is, how can longevity be individual when the resources and environment needed for the social good are finite and rapidly diminishing.

Slide: Emerging questions in the field.

MIKHAIL. In a lot of ways, this makes sense, at least it did until I tried to chart longevity on a subjective or affective axis.

Slide: A failed attempt to chart axes of longevity and affect.

MIKHAIL. You see, the problem with longevity is that it can’t be experienced except cumulatively and, my research suggests, retroactively.

Slide: Longevity via community.

MIKHAIL. So longevity is ultimately not individual, but experienced contextually, through contact, through secondary and tertiary social actors. Longevity has no synchronic identity; empirically speaking, it doesn’t exist in any given moment. It’s only about the passing of time, an accumulation of moments with no single moment experienced as longevity.

Slide: Longevity not quantifiable.

MIKHAIL. And here's the point where I have to remind you that we're only a small research facility ...

CHARLIE. This is proprietary from here on out?

MIKHAIL. Absolutely not. My contract specifies that I have no moral claim to the outcomes. I refuse to be responsible.

CHARLIE. Well, I may have to check in with Legal about this.

MIKHAIL. Okay, so now let's be a little more blunt. Most of the efforts dealing with the impending planetary crisis treat time as constant within a projection of continued, if potentially reduced, consumption with constant or growing need. So interventions tend to assess need as growing and innovation as geared toward reduced impact for constant and growing need over a finite but stable time. Do you follow me?

Slide: Need vs. Growth vs. Time

MIKHAIL. Now, what we've done here in my lab is ask not only "What can we do to diminish consumption?" but also, "Is there another vector on which we can work?" And that vector, my friendly investors, is time!

Slide: Need + Growth × Unstable time = ?

MIKHAIL. Again, we're not proposing a solution. All we're doing is saying, like Einstein, time is relative, time is elastic, and we're the first team to challenge this logic. [*returns to previous slide*] Basically, if it's going to end for all of us, what's the best strategy? Not to run a marathon, not to train or eat for marathon fitness, but to figure out how to move toward the finish line as slowly as possible. To slow human time down.

## Slide: THE SLOW PERSON MOVEMENT

MIKHAIL. So this is the Slow Person Movement. Our hypothesis is that if someone can actively monitor what they ingest, if someone can slow their mind down through meditation, or, to cite a personal example, if someone's friends can camp their asses out on a lawn in order to hear the former Mr. Cindy Crawford introduce the Dalai Lama, then an individual can slow his or her body down.

Slide: Is self-modulation possible?

MIKHAIL. And if there will be no structural or societal change to answer this challenge, the challenge of how we can survive a climate crisis, we all must take it upon ourselves not only to modify our habits but also to modulate our bodily capacities, to slow them down.

Slide: What does the SLOW PERSON look like?

MIKHAIL. Whereas others anticipate a certain level of food intake and the necessity of processing and repurposing human excrement, we say slow people don't need to make waste. We think the right diet and behavioral modifications can lead to a state where we can say, "Let's ingest much less and see how little we can excrete! What if humans could manage to never need to defecate again?"

Slide: Reduced human emissions = Reduced auto and industrial emissions

MIKHAIL. To be clear, this starts with the body and, we want to show, can scale up. Where others anticipate rapid mobility, increased energy consumption, an expansion of the built environment, we see our only hope in slowness: less movement, less energy. This means less human emissions. This creates

more time, creates more space and leaves more capacity for living in the future.

Slide: A Slow Human = More Time for All Humans

MIKHAIL. Whereas others anticipate an increasing birth rate based on “traditional” trends of reproduction, we look at experimental factors such as late-onset menstruation due to low caloric intake, known informally as the Béla Károlyi effect, and reduced sexual activity due to a redirection of libidinal desire toward narcissistic bodily fulfillment and preservation. Our results indicate that new trends could emerge, such as a new pornography of the slowness of the self.

Slide: Slow is the New Black.

MIKHAIL. So, to conclude, “Slow is the New Black,” and as we begin our own very distinctive slow fade to black, as a people, a nation, or a species, there is really no hope in a “big picture” sense. Even if the long-term prognosis is bad, even if there really is no hope, we are in the process of changing the terms on which hope and survival rest, prolonging them.

Slide: [*alternating*] Hope for Time / Time for Hope

MIKHAIL. It is only through the exacerbation and intensification of the anal-narcissistic politics of personal consumption that we can manipulate this time axis and move that goalpost of doom farther down the field a bit. Whereas other efforts have tried to reorient consumer desires, engaging in large-scale watered-down retrainings, as in please use one plastic bag instead of six for your carbonated sugar water, we don’t see those steps as tenable. There’s no time and there’s not an adequate education or mass media infrastructure to accomplish this.

Slide: SLOW PERSONS can be HAPPY PERSONS.

MIKHAIL. The Slow Person Movement strategizes going through, rather than against, these currently counterproductive consumer desires, ideally offering gratification and personal gain through existing consumer networks, while at the same time facilitating a reduction in the complexity of human life, a reduction in the volume and scale of human activity, and consequently, a stretching of human time. Slow Person gives us more time: it's that simple. Thank you.

CHARLIE. At this point, Dr. Patel would be happy to field any questions you might have. We also have our participant-researchers on hand if you would like to hear from them about the Slow Person work currently going on here. We've got some really nice video footage too. Maybe we can start with a few questions from the floor?

*Pause. No questions. Lights go to black.*

# Ten reasons to cast an anchor into all this motion, ten reasons to swim to a utopia through it, and ten reasons to open a post- Fordist academy

Johannes Raether  
and Ari Godwin Kollontai Hartz

*The stage is set as if for an informal talk show: a low coffee table sits center stage surrounded by three comfortable chairs. On the table are glasses and a pitcher of orange juice along with a number of papers. The stage is very dim. Enter MELISSA, JOHANNES, and ARI. MELISSA is dressed in a gray T-shirt, black jacket, jeans, and Keds. She is carrying a few loose notes. JOHANNES is thin and youthful. He wears a tight-fitting gray suit and shiny cordovan boots. His hair is combed close to the scalp in the German fashion. He carries a briefcase filled with blank papers, which he reads from. ARI has deep vermilion skin, long black hair,*

*and shimmering metallic eyelashes. She is dressed in a glossy black Spandex bodysuit and matching cape and carries a silver folder containing her papers. On her wrist is an absurdly large watch flashing glowing digital numbers that have no relation to the current time. Although ARI is female, the character should be played by a man.*

MELISSA. [*graciously*] Hello, everyone, let's get under way. Ari and Johannes have asked me to say a few introductory words. They have traveled from different locations and time zones—mainly Berlin and the future Berlin—to the Second World Congress of Free Artists to give a speech on the conception of a future academy.

[*reading from her notes*] Ari is Johannes' child ... along with a few others ... a reproductive experiment—Ari is the Frankenstein creature of the twenty-first century. She is evoking through her very existence future possibilities in human reproduction. At this moment, as contemporary capitalism moves into our reproductive organs by means of technology—in a moment of thousands of surrogate pregnancies, mass in vitro fertilizations, and liberal eugenics—biological reproduction is being transformed from an act of nature into a means of production for an idle labor force. Having children is now work, and this work is subsumed under the rule of capital. Johannes took the opportunity to work collectively on a child with some others in an affinity group, a future-family model, developing job-child relationships. Alexandra Kollontai, the first feminist-communist minister of history, was the egg donor; William Godwin, as one of the first in a long line of socialist, communist, and anarchist attempts to imagine the destruction of capitalist reality, donated the sperm. The egg was fertilized

and implanted into a surrogate mother, Ari Up, singer for the Slits and a feminist punk; and Johannes and last but not least Peter Hartz, former chief executive of the Volkswagen corporation, became Ari's social parents, educating Ari Junior to be the futurist-communist she is today.

*Pause.*

When the lights go out, I would like you all to stand up, come to the stage, take out your cell phones, and provide some light for Johannes and his futurist child.

ARI. [*motioning*] Gather close. We'll need your cell phones to illuminate the text. Thank you.

JOHANNES. This speech is a product of moving and dreaming—a result of mobility and a result of imagination. *Mobility* might be the word I will dwell on for a while in order to address utopia, one of the futures we imagine—the political site of imagination.

ARI. Johannes wrote this speech years ago. Now it reappears, unchanged on paper or as a digital file, but it is entirely distinct from what he thinks. I come from one of the futures that it will have realized. I insert my commentary, injecting my future comments into a dated text.

JOHANNES. This text is the product of the glossy facade of mobility. While we profit from ever-improving technologies in transportation and communication—technologies that lead to ever-decreasing ticket prices and a global labor market for roaming producers—most of the mobility on this planet is not voluntary but compelled.

But how can and how do discourses on migration, on labor and poverty, on refugees and displaced persons relate to

discussions of a mobile academy? How do these two concepts, migration and mobility, overlap?

ARI. When the present imagines the future, a lot of what it sees is moving. The future will be all over the place, all over the globe, all over space. If it does not move, it is not the future; if it does not progress, it has no future. So he was frequently asked by people working in the present field of art to imagine a futurist academy. Their point of departure was often already a foreclosure of the imagination. Yes, this academy could not be limited to a house, a place, a city, a country, a culture, a medium. It would be wonderfully inter- or transdisciplinary, multicultural, international. But it would mostly be a mirror image of the flow of transnational capital, an update on the academy of the past, an academy of the present—never an academy of the future.

JOHANNES. As I discuss these questions, my responses will initially arise from an intuitive and necessarily personal subject position: namely, my position as a citizen of a country that perpetuates the cynical politics of colonialism while safely entrenched behind the walls of Fortress Europe. If I am to speak from this position about a new institution for this society, I don't want to avert my eyes from the fact that the borders of the academy in Europe end at the borders of the Schengen zone, no matter how open and accessible that academy may claim to be.

But as the privileged workers in the culture industry and the markets of knowledge realize, mobility doesn't mean only the promise of freedom and adventure, experience, and exoticism. Their projected economies have to follow the logic of absolute personal mobility. Flexibility is not an advantage or a unique selling proposition anymore. Mobility is not a choice, not a lifestyle, and not a promise. It is one of the imperatives of a post-Fordist labor organization.

Centuries of colonial trade have forged the paths on which people travel to find work or to escape conflict and war; paths that are traced and retraced by culture workers in manager's costumes who view the world with the detached perspective of those who look down on it from their private jets. The displacement of production to those countries with low social standards and the worldwide movement of capital to sites offering the best conditions for profit realization have covered the globe in a network of paths. This movement is reported, analyzed, and criticized so comprehensively within contemporary discourse that it is almost painfully banal to say it again: *Mobility is the most important norm for capital and work today.*

ARI. The statement sounded banal then, but in the present it is even more so. This present creates art projects called mobile academies, solipsistic institutions called transnational republics, and endless global circlings on the residency carousel. The banality of the present is mirrored in its normalized, standardized, commodified, and pacified cultural production. The present culture has lost its ability to imagine a future.

JOHANNES. Therefore mobility seems to be the logical essence of a future academy. How, though, is a future academy to be constructed around such a contradictory and multifaceted term as mobility? How do you build a mobile, temporal academy without copying and reproducing the current logic of capital and the organization of labor within the neoliberal economy?

ARI. The present sympathizes with the future but is not in solidarity with it. It imagines itself inevitably moving toward this future as much as it instrumentalizes it for its purposes. The present cannot imagine its own movement as staggering and stumbling, or even revolving around its own production of itself as an end in itself, without ever arriving at any future; instead, it moves in circles in an expanding present.

JOHANNES. To balance this somewhat schematic summary of a hypercomplex condition with a concrete example, and to demonstrate that mobility is problematic not only from a macropolitical perspective, I would like to invite you to have a look at a specific futuristic university that our research has concentrated upon over the past year. The corporate university of the Volkswagen AG ... the Volkswagen AutoUni.

The founding of the Volkswagen enterprise was, together with the autobahn, the most ambitious civil project of the National Socialist government in Germany. “Mass mobility” was envisioned as a means by which to place the country on the list of highly industrialized nations—a utopian concept, at a time when Germany was underdeveloped and poor in raw materials. At the same time, it was an economic policy realized through war and slave labor. Volkswagen was the starting point for German Fordism. To quote from their literature, “As a think tank, the AutoUni will develop strategic approaches to support the transition of Volkswagen AG into a mobility service provider.”

The AutoUni is Volkswagen’s Future Academy, a means by which to transform Fordist heavy industry into a post-Fordist provider of mobility services, knowledge, and information technologies. At the same time, it is designed to better convey awareness of classic mobility products to the market. It is different from other corporate universities, which are mostly ordinary on-the-job-training facilities with fancy names. The AutoUni aims to be an “entirely new institution.” It will be “more academic than a corporate university and more corporate than an academic university.” A hybrid. A sort of imaginative public-private partnership of concepts. For instance, like a dynamic synthesis of the Humboldtsche University and a corporate knowledge broker.

Mobility is not merely the point of origin and source of content of this university. Flexibility and the ability to move through the *Volkswagenwelt* are deeply inscribed in the structure of the university, as the AutoUni is not limited to one site. It is “not geared to be international: it is global,” and it aligns itself along the spine of production sites around the globe—South America, Africa, China—that is, along the lines of expansion into past and future emerging markets. There will be several “satellite campuses,” each with a specific theme geared to the host country. “Where do you learn faster about ‘emerging markets,’ than in vibrant China? And where can you experience ‘managing diversity’ better than in South Africa?”

The concept of “blended learning”—a fusion of presence in the global satellite campus, Web-based learning, and independent learning at home—allows for the fact that students and teachers constantly move around the globe.

“To be in the forefront with very few resources,” says the director of the AutoUni, “means we cannot pay for the whole of an excellent professor, but only specific services from that person.” The professor and researcher become hypermobile content providers who sell services on the global knowledge market. Thus the main campus of the AutoUni in Wolfsburg is called the Mobile Life Campus. Accordingly, its architecture resembles intersecting DNA strings, a visualization of one of the mottoes of the corporation: Competition runs in our genes. At the AutoUni, the neoliberal subject of labor finds its suitable habitat requirements: mobility, competition, biopolitics, and corporate culture.

ARI. He wrote this years ago. At the present time the AutoUni is dead. Dead even before the crisis. The corporate vision of a futurist academy was altogether a dream, a desire to overwhelm the present with the future. It was a capitalization based on the fetish of mobility, incentivizing hopeful shareholders

using their own experience of delocalized bodies, fragmented experience of other cultures, and fractured perception of identity and time.

JOHANNES. At the beginning of the twentieth century, thirty years before the founding of VW, at the height of modern industrialization, *mobility* was the term that crystallized utopian visions of the city. *The Cosmopolis of the Future*, by King and Pettit, and *Ville Contemporaine* and *Ville Radiouse*, by Le Corbusier, anticipated the age of the automobile. The speed with which commodities and people circulated between metropolises increased. In the utopian visions of the time, mobility signified freedom from the narrow social and societal circumstances and was embodied in the car and the plane. People dreamed of exaggerated bridge systems, multistory highways and mass flying.

In the wildest dreams of the seventies, people no longer moved between institutions; the institutions themselves moved, as in the *Walking City* of Archigram. In another utopia, the “plug-in city” can be read as an expression of crisis in the Fordist model: mass mobility and its multistory highways have been realized and have revealed themselves to be nightmares. So, mobility is now a political demand on institutions themselves: a demand for more variable working relationships, more flexible working hours.

ARI. The notion that mass demands for mobility have been met is more evident than ever. Freedom of movement is a reality. But only for some. Mass mobility is a fact. But only for some. The free society promised by the fact of total mobility has not been realized. It was not realized through technology. The prospects of a free society for all have in actuality diminished, and the dream of internationality has turned against all inhabitants of this planet, threatening to transform everything into relationships based on goods and services.

[to JOHANNES] In your original speech you talked about the Nakagin Capsule Tower and how this architectural vision of the future never worked in reality. You wanted to provide a symbol for an unrealized technological utopia. My monstrous view of the present is that we can look at communism this way: technically realized, socially unfinished. The present closes the door of history upon the struggles for freedom, it demobilizes the experiments of the past, yet the past becomes liberated and moving again when we think of it as unrealized.

JOHANNES. Shall we put our hopes for a radically different society into the realization of technical progress? How do we imagine the Internet? As a network for all inhabitants of the planet? As a tool for equal distribution of knowledge? How do we think of poverty? As a technical problem to be solved with genetic engineering? It is characteristic of modern Western thinking to formulate fantasies of liberation through technical utopias.

ARI. You were right on this, but a little didactic with all these rhetorical questions. But if your complaint ends by denouncing utopia clothed in its technical drag, how do you imagine the future academy and how do you imagine a future society without it being a technological one? From a futurist perspective, I don't see a future academy without the employment of a technological utopia. If you follow my modest proposal for what we should see in a technical utopia, given contemporary capitalism—we must apply capitalism's technological means against capitalism's own ends.

JOHANNES. To my mind, the future academy cannot avoid the constrictions of the nineteenth-century state academy by means of a technical conception like mobility, nor can it escape the economization of knowledge and the corporatization of education through imagining a siteless freedom attained by roaming the globe.

A future academy could call itself mobile from my perspective if it would at least try to estimate the whole imaginative space of knowledge, education, and artistic language, and not be shut out by the gates of actually existing capitalist society. Because this imaginative space is obstructed with ideology machines that continuously explode in all colors that congeal into the facades of the capitalist show. Performance, quality control, efficiency, function, discipline, product, technology, progress, work, genre, value, market, selection, competition ... This production never sleeps.

ARI. But this actually existing capitalist totality is all we have. The place you imagine outside of it is a romantic one. Your futurist child understands your desire to think beyond, look behind, expand, and explore, but I must also object. We have to try to take this world seriously as it is, even though it seems ridiculous sometimes. Romanticism about another world becomes as cynical as nihilism, except with a positivist spin, when it does not love this world to death at the same time.

JOHANNES. A future academy as I imagine it is not mobile because it changes states or cultural contexts. It's mobile because it evades the production of ideology, because it thinks right through it and because it makes, with its left hand, the very construction of ideas assailable and open.

ARI. His older speech ended much like this—a very beautifully angry rhetoric against the current ideological totality, a painterly vision involving not only ideology-critique's archetypal smoke screen, but also an aging ruin. A romantic image of a political fiction; he's too deeply rooted in the twentieth century. As his child of the twenty-first century, I find this cute, but must reformulate what he will call "the positive nonsite, in which a different society is constructed using knowledge about the present society" ... [*glancing at her watch*] in approximately fifty seconds.

JOHANNES. A future academy will accept the mobility that characterizes contemporary society, along with the complex interwoven cycles of products, ideas, people, and culture, as a reality, and build upon it as such. A future academy as I imagine it will try to exceed the completely boring, lunatic, and inhuman structures of capitalism and start to envisage another model of society.

Now, I admit that this is very ambitious, as only a good utopia can be. However, the institution that I hope to conceive must subvert the relation almost any institution has toward the state: it cannot be a mirror of the state's condition, it cannot be one of its instruments to penetrate and discipline. It must cease to be, to quote Jeremy Bentham, "any sort of establishment, in which persons of any description are kept under inspection." In fact, it must be the positive nonsite in which a different society is constructed using the knowledge of our present society, and in which there is an attempt to live in this existing society and at the same time in another, imagined one.

ARI. Exceed and envisage, *be* the positive nonsite, live here and elsewhere at the same time: these are romantic visions that make me angry. In their simple abstraction, they show how far he is, how far we all are from discussing, participating, and ultimately owning a political agency that could universalize the desire to build a futurist art academy, an institution that would produce culture along the lines of societal need and not products or services according to the law of capitalist production and exchange.

And so if we agree with Marx that the institution is "an objectification of political attitudes," then the future academy has to be in solidarity with the past and negate the totality of the present. The future academy is a communist academy.

*Lights up. All exit.*

JOHANNES RAETHER AND ARI GODWIN KOLLONTAI HARTZ \ TEN REASONS TO CAST  
AN ANCHOR INTO ALL THIS MOTION, TEN REASONS TO SWIM TO A UTOPIA ...

# Parties to the Convention: When Capitalism and the Academy Follow the Same Impetus, Only a Disruptive Silence Can Stop the Machine from Running Amok

Andrea Creutz, Sebastien Berthier,  
and Shirin Sabahi

*There are three music stands, stage center. A green spot from the left and an orange light from the right create a kind of Venn diagram centered on the stands. Lighting is otherwise very low.*

PERFORMERS 1, 2, and 3 enter and solemnly place their scripts on the stands. From left to right, PERFORMERS 1, 2, and 3. Each alters his or her tempo throughout, gradually producing a dissonant, sonorous polyphony constructed from keywords of the Lisbon Recognition Declaration of the Bologna Process, 1997.

*In unison.*

Conscious fact  
Right education  
Human right higher education  
Instrumental pursuit advancement knowledge  
Exceptionally rich  
Cultural scientific asset society  
Higher education vital promoting peace  
Mutual understanding tolerance mutual  
confidence peoples nations  
Great diversity  
European cultural social political philosophical  
religious economic diversity  
Exceptional asset fully respected  
Desiring enable all people benefit fully

*Accelerating together.*

Rich asset diversity facilitating access educational institutions  
Educational resources facilitating efforts  
Recognition certificates diplomas degrees important  
measure promoting academic mobility  
Great importance principle autonomy  
Conscious uphold protect principle  
Fair recognition  
Qualifications key right responsibility

*Pause. Together.*

Article 12

*Rapidly.*

Recognition European Convention  
Equivalence Diplomas leading Protocol

European Convention Equivalence Conventions  
Academic Recognition Qualifications Conventions  
Recognition Diplomas Degrees Higher Education  
General Equivalence regard International Convention  
Recognition Diplomas Degrees Higher  
Arab European adopted framework  
Mindful UNESCO conventions  
International recommendation world  
improved exchange information  
Conscious wide changes  
Higher European conventions adaptation  
considerably increased diversification  
Higher systems  
Legal instruments  
Practice developments  
Common solutions

*Slowing together.*

Practical recognition  
Conscious need improve recognition  
Transparent better adapted higher  
Confident positive  
Significant convention  
Elaborate adopted joint UNESCO framework  
Development recognition Conscious  
Importance permanent implementation  
mechanisms principles  
Provisions agreed

*In succession.*

Definitions  
Definitions  
Definitions

*Together.*

Article 5

*Now each adopts a different speed:  
PERFORMER 1 quick and soft, 2 slow and  
loud, 3 at medium tempo and volume.*

Purposes  
Meaning  
Access higher  
Right qualified  
Admission higher  
Admission higher institutions  
Programs act  
System qualified pursue higher  
Given institution given program  
Assessment institutions  
Programs process quality higher  
Education institution program  
Assessment individual  
Qualifications appraisal  
Evaluation qualifications competent  
Competent recognition  
Authority officially charged  
Recognition qualifications Higher education  
Training  
Training  
Research  
Postrelevant authorities  
Higher education system  
Higher education institution  
Establishment higher  
Competent authority  
System higher  
Program recognized competent

Authority system higher  
Education completion higher  
Education qualification component higher  
Evaluated documented complete program  
Significant acquisition knowledge skill Qualification  
Higher education qualification  
Degree diploma certificate competent  
Authority attesting successful completion  
Higher education program Qualification  
Access higher education diploma certificate  
Competent authority attesting successful  
completion education program  
Right admission higher education  
Formal acknowledgment competent value  
Qualification access activities  
Requirement  
Requirements  
Fulfilled access higher education level award higher  
Qualification level  
Requirements order  
Gain admission higher  
Award  
Authorities  
Competent decisions recognition implementation competence  
Decisions recognition  
Statement structure instrument  
Ratification acceptance approval accession  
Competent authorities measures ensure implementation  
Structure transmit  
Possible encourage favorable consideration application

*Together.*

Article 13

Ratification acceptance

Approval accession  
Holy competent  
Decisions

*Together.*

Article 53

Derogate more favorable  
Future treaty party  
Section 4—principles qualifications  
Qualifications access appropriate  
Assessment qualifications respect gender race color disability  
language religion political opinion national ethnic social  
origin national minority property birth status merits  
Qualification recognition  
Appropriate arrangements  
Assessment application  
Recognition qualifications knowledge skill achieved  
Assessment recognition  
Qualifications transparent coherent reliable  
Appropriate information qualifications  
First responsibility  
Adequate information  
Good faith  
Responsibility  
Question duty  
Request reasonable relevant information  
Qualification competent recognition  
Instruct encourage appropriate  
Education systems reasonable information  
Purpose qualifications earned responsibility  
Application fulfill relevant  
Facilitate recognition  
Qualifications adequate  
Clear information

*Together.*

## Article 15

Reasonable  
Time limit competent  
Recognition necessary information  
Recognition reasons  
Purposes meaning  
Access higher  
Right qualified admission higher  
Assessment institutions program  
Process quality  
Assessment individual qualifications  
Appraisal evaluation qualifications competent  
Competent recognition authority  
Officially charged recognition qualifications  
Higher education institution  
Establishment higher competent authority  
system higher education  
Fulfilled addition requirements order gain  
admission higher program award  
Specific higher education qualification  
Competence authorities  
Decisions  
Competence decisions recognition statement structure  
instrument ratification Acceptance approval accession  
competent authorities measures ensure implementation  
Favorable consideration application

*Together.*

## Article 9

Section 3—Principles qualifications  
Qualifications access appropriate assessment qualifications

Knowledge skill achieved  
 Assessment recognition  
 Transparent coherent reliable  
 Appropriate information qualifications recognition  
 Qualification competent authorities recognition  
 Instruct encourage appropriate education  
 systems reasonable information purpose  
 Qualifications earned  
 Responsibility application fulfill relevant  
 Facilitate recognition qualifications  
 adequate clear information  
 Recognition reasonable time limit competent  
 recognition necessary information  
 Possible measures  
 Section 6—Recognition qualifications access higher  
 Higher system difference qualification  
 obtained recognition qualification  
 Section 7—Recognition periods study  
 Framework  
 Particular facilitate recognition periods study  
 Previous agreement  
 Upon request  
 Provisions  
 Academic title subject laws regulation  
 Party jurisdiction  
 Labor market  
 Employment purposes  
 Advice educational institution purpose admission  
 Foreign educational institutions territory contingent  
 specific requirements national legislation  
 Section 9—Recognition qualifications held refugees  
 Reasonable steps constitutional legal regulatory  
 provisions fairly expeditiously  
 Displaced persons  
 Activities  
 Documentary evidence

Section 10—assessment higher education  
Provide adequate information  
Belonging  
Methods standard  
Established system  
Type characteristic  
Recognized public private  
Located outside territory  
Section 11—recognition matters  
Establish transparent complete description  
Relevant accurate up-to-date information depositories change  
Authoritative accurate country locate  
Advice national laws regulations  
Disposal necessary fulfill functions  
Promote national information center  
Section 12—Implementation mechanisms  
European Region  
Academic mobility recognition  
Regional Committee Europe  
Observers Representatives governmental non-  
governmental Organizations active observer  
President UNESCO Regional Committee  
Europe Region participate  
Promote declarations  
Relevant bodies  
Quorum  
Procedure every three years  
National information dispose vote  
Practical implementation plenary session  
Final clauses  
European Cultural Convention Council Europe  
Diplomatic conference  
Ratification acceptance approval  
Accession  
Expiration period  
Equivalence Diplomas Admission Universities

General Equivalence Periods university study  
Higher Education Arab European Mediterranean  
Territory  
Notification depository  
Witness undersigned representatives  
Lisbon 1997  
English French Russian Spanish equally  
United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization

*Each exits as he or she concludes. Lights.*



# Act II

t  
t r a n s a c t i o n a l  
s p a c e  
o e x c h a n g e  
a stage  
o w h i c h  
to build  
the big  
s t o r e

# Dictatorship of an Audience

Ashley Hunt

NARRATOR  
YOUNG MAN  
OLDER MAN/OFFSTAGE VOICE  
YOUNG GIRL  
YOUNG WOMAN  
CHILD

*Staging should be similar to a game of musical chairs, with fewer than performers. The staging is not meant to bear a direct, realistic relationship to the actions described in the text, but should, instead, represent a separate universe—that of the actors themselves as real people on stage, in the process of playing one or more roles as scripted, in that very theater and at that very time, in that moment in history, and in front of a very real audience.*

*With this in mind, the company should use the rehearsals to establish a set of rules or system of movements that will govern how they will be together on stage: Sitting in and switching between the chairs, rotating or working between them; responding to the shortage of chairs,*

*to a context of scarcity, inside and out; honoring the circle or revolting against it, all of this developed according to the company members' own interpretations of the meanings and rhythms of the text. The result should be a loose improvisational score that structures a set of physical tasks and relationships—a separate “story,” perhaps, that runs parallel to the story described in the script. The goal being that parallel stories, times, places, and characters will develop out of the performers' actions and script indirectly, with each player's actions supporting the rhythms and pacing and tone of the performance as a whole.*

*To support this, all or at least some of the actors might read directly from the script during the performance. The opening and closing of the play have a more directed set up and break down, but this, too, can be resisted if the ensemble finds it necessary.*

*All characters enter as their lines appear in the script, allowing the choreography to respond to the entry of each new player.*

*The lights come up on an empty stage. The NARRATOR enters and begins arranging the chairs in a circle.*

NARRATOR. A play is under way. As in so many modern stories, a young man is the protagonist. The son of workers, he is struggling to overcome the course that his life has taken—a course that appears decided for him, determined

by the limitations of the class that he belongs to. New to his world however, are certain institutions, institutions designed to bring people together around some function of society that is believed to be of common value. The play would have us believe that by gathering people around a common purpose, a greater value can be achieved for the whole—the common welfare increased through collective organization around collective purpose.

One of these institutions is the school, which may allow our character to overcome the kinds of barriers that lock him in place. This discovery fills him with a sense of possibility, and he wonders if that sense of possibility is what freedom is supposed to feel like. Our opening scene ends with this realization and a burst of optimism, as his family pour their excitement over him, even though we know, as their dialogue has told us, that losing his labor power will cause the family significant hardship.

OFFSTAGE VOICE. But he is our son.

NARRATOR. We hear them say.

OFFSTAGE VOICE. We have always sacrificed so that he wouldn't face the hardships we've had to endure. Why should this be any different?

NARRATOR. When our character arrives at school he sees that not everyone understands its purpose in the same way, as we watch him meet a series of characters. Each character seems crafted to stand in for a different point of view. Perhaps we are meant to recognize their perspectives from our own lives, from history or philosophy books, from our parents and friends, or from pundits. Perhaps we are meant to locate our own perspective somewhere within their conversation, finding agreement and disagreement with them, as does our character. And as we

find ourselves investing in the success of our character, each conversation poses a new difficulty to that success.

Across these conversations we see the outline of an argument begin. The first person he befriends is also the child of workers. This boy declares that an education is a right for every person, a way for the skeleton of society's rigid structure to be broken.

OFFSTAGE VOICE. And our generation will be the one to do it.

NARRATOR. He exclaims.

NARRATOR. Next our protagonist comes into conflict with a character who argues that education is wasted on the children of workers.

OFFSTAGE. It's not in the nature of the manual laborer to value things of the mind.

NARRATOR. Then we meet two teachers, one framed as a liberator, the other as an oppressor. The liberator gives the students hope, insisting upon their ability to become anything they want and instilling the courage to struggle for it. And in a different meeting, the oppressor makes it clear that they don't belong in school, that they're only there because of the hysterical politics of radicals and bureaucratic policies.

OFFSTAGE. You're wasting your time. You should be taking care of your family, who certainly need you drawing a wage alongside them. You shouldn't just sit here reading books that are not in your nature to understand or make proper use of.

NARRATOR. Here, in a debate that seems to reach far into the language of the past, the author seems to hope that viewers will recognize how social barriers of the old world remain mirrored within the institutions of the new, translated from

arguments that called upon gods and kings and providence as well as hierarchies of genetic traits, behavior and family values. What emerges, the author hopes, is a drama shaped around our protagonist—a modern individual with the same right to be a subject of history as anyone else, struggling under the weight of history.

*Lengthy pause.*

NARRATOR. Throughout the performance, however, the audience was more restless than usual. Their attention drifted from the stage to one another, first in whispers, then murmurs, and finally, a volume that competed with the performance itself. An increasingly charged conversation clamored out of the darkened aisles and echoed onto the stage [*pause, long silence*] much more so than one would expect during a children's matinee. But it wasn't until the two young women and the older man climbed onto the stage that the play was finally stopped altogether.

Rather than speak to the audience, these three addressed the performers and the crew, including the stage manager and stagehands, the director, the writer, producer, and the house manager.

YOUNG WOMAN. We have been selected by the other audience members to represent all of our collective aesthetic interests.

YOUNG GIRL. As such, we demand a pause in this crappy performance so the audience members can reflect on what they've been watching and decide whether they are happy with it continuing in the same manner.

NARRATOR. There wasn't much that the cast or crew could do, as the audience had already begun filtering onto the stage behind them. The playwright, a progressively minded man

known nationally for his good heart and politics, wasn't so pleased, but in the spirit of openness that he wanted his play to inspire, he relented. He convinced the house manager not to call the police, suggesting that this unusual interruption could actually bring the theater and the play the heightened publicity they'd been seeking. After two hours of deliberation and debate, discussing in small breakout groups and together as a whole, everyone sweating from the stage lights, the delegates rose and informed the cast and crew that they had arrived at a set of recommendations.

At this point however, the writer's spirit of openness had soured. Exhausted, sticky, and a bit stoned from the joint that a cast member had passed around backstage, he asked if people wouldn't just return to their seats, for the thought that he should have to take direction from an audience was an insult to his position and to the integrity of his vision. And this is where the first real confrontation between audience and playwrights occurred: around whether the integrity of his vision was in fact the point.

YOUNG GIRL. That's exactly your mistake. We're not here to serve your interests. We paid out of our own fucking pockets to come here and have our interests served. And no, we won't return to our seats—that's our first complaint! Why should we be forced to sit in the dark, mute and stupid, like little children?

NARRATOR. A small child rises from among the group.

CHILD. Children are not stupid! We're just treated that way!

YOUNG WOMAN. She's sorry, we're sorry. She just meant that we're all being treated like children, as if we *have* to be taught, as if we didn't have our own minds or things to share or ... or to teach to you!

YOUNG GIRL. Yeah, we sit here in the dark, pretending not to be surrounded by our own friends and families, imprisoned in these uncomfortable chairs, while you get to stand up there in the light, moving around freely, and you're the only ones allowed to speak. It isn't fair!

OLD MAN. It's just like the character in your play who's limited by these structures of inequality all around him. You make this inequality a subject matter or a theme, but then you perform that very same inequality here in the way you put on your play.

NARRATOR. At this, the playwright begins to weep. "You're wrong," he shouts at them. "This is a good play, a just play, it is about equality!"

YOUNG WOMAN. You're right, it's *about* equality, but it doesn't *enact* equality. You segregate us out, you talk *to* us rather than *with* us.

YOUNG GIRL. Like one of the awful teachers at my fucked-up school.

NARRATOR. The cast members are also tired and feeling increasingly protective of their director. One of them rises and shouts, [*to the YOUNG GIRL*] "Well, what do you want from us?"

YOUNG GIRL. First of all, we wanna stay here on stage. We don't wanna go back to those shitty seats.

OLD MAN. And we would also like costumes. If we're going to be on stage then we should have some costumes.

*Sounds of applause from the fictional audience.*

NARRATOR. Listen, this is a theater. This is how things are done here. This is what theater is. The audience sits in the audience, not on the stage. The audience doesn't get costumes. It would be impossible to direct like that. I know I would never direct such a farce. Who would direct such a play?

YOUNG WOMAN. I would. I'd direct you. And so would my sister. She's very intelligent.

YOUNG GIRL. Yeah, I'd direct you to share the theater with us. And to share all of your secrets. Then we'd each take turns directing. First we'd see if it's really worthwhile, then we'd vote about whether we even want a director in the first place. I bet none of you ever asks that question.

NARRATOR. You'd destroy the theater.

YOUNG GIRL. Don't you mean we'd destroy *your job*? Isn't it directors who spread rumors about the need for directors? So that we agree to be organized into directors and the directed? Is that how we want to live? I have my own desires, I have my own perspectives and my own rights, and I know how they should feel. I know what's real.

NARRATOR. Look, we have a special training, training that we've worked very hard to develop. That should count for something. You should respect that.

YOUNG WOMAN. We respect it.

OLD MAN. But we don't want to bow down to it, or to sit in the dark for it.

NARRATOR. And these actors, they have real talent that not everyone has. They're quite special.

YOUNG WOMAN. Listen, I've been to college, too. Rule by the specialists? Rule by "the talented"? We have to get rid of these notions. If we want democracy, then we need democracy in the arts too, democracy everywhere, because what you're talking about is governance. You want to govern our art, but you don't want our input—you won't take *our* recommendations.

OLD MAN. You obviously don't know what it means to be told that you can't, that you don't have value, as the architecture of these theaters and concert halls and museums tell us. But we don't want to watch other people sing and dance while we sit on our hands and just buy tickets. We want to dance and we want to sing and we want to find pleasure in acting and pretending and staging our visions, our sounds and our movements!

YOUNG GIRL. I believe that we all deserve to be the subjects of art, just like your school character wants to be a subject of history, a subject of politics.

NARRATOR. The people who had until now been the audience roared with pleasure. They leapt to their feet and bounced about the stage, belting the verses of popular songs and operas that they knew. Some swiped hats and scarves and canes from the actors and struck poses they'd seen in other plays and in photographs.

NARRATOR. This insubordination infuriated the actors greatly: They felt scorned, unappreciated, and belittled, loyal to their theatrical leaders, and still a little paranoid from that joint they'd passed around. Realizing themselves to be the last line of defense to keep the play separate from the audience, they met the crowd with tugs-of-war, wrestling over their props and costumes—or *property*, as we call it backstage. Chaos spread across the stage and filled the theater with the pitch of a spectacular performance. Just as suddenly, a group of the

audience members ran to the exit, threw open the doors to the street and called out to the masses.

YOUNG MAN. Come and join us, everyone, free theater tonight, everyone's an artist, everyone's a performer, everyone's on stage and everyone matters!

YOUNG WOMAN. No admission! Everyone sing and dance and pretend with us so we all can practice living differently. Art is the space where we can see what our revolutions look like and show each other how they're possible!

YOUNG GIRL. Fuck commerce, fuck hierarchy, fuck the owners of culture and the institutions that make their ownership seem reasonable!

OLDER MAN. Fuck the schools that make art the playground for the few!

YOUNG MAN. Art belongs to all of us or it is just one more way to sugarcoat injustice!

YOUNG GIRL. Real art is what makes the unjust appear as what it is—unjust!

YOUNG MAN. Art is where we can begin to redistribute authority, where the way you see the world counts!

YOUNG WOMAN. The visible and the invisible, the silent and the loud, the inside and out, borders and belonging versus strangers and enemies, the ruler and the ruled, the specialist and the amateur, producer and consumer! What does art do but either maintain all these oppositions or lead us into revolt against them?

*Silence. All the actors leave their places and walk casually to the foot of the stage.*

NARRATOR. No one on the street responded as if these audience members were serious. No one acted as if they were being sincerely addressed. And why would they have? Where within their culture would these pedestrians have learned to be anything but spectators or consumers of one artifice or another; anything but buyers of the culture that someone else had made and marketed as “in fashion”? What would let them think they had a right to their own aesthetic interests, to equal artistic rights, to any of the things that the audience members had called out?

*The cast members form a constellation with each other that suggests an ambivalent victory or an instructive defeat, staring out at the audience.*

YOUNG GIRL. [*with confidence, her fist in the air*] We have a lot of work to do!

*Curtain. All exit.*



# Patient Listener

Ditte Lyngkær Pedersen

*A podium stage left with a bottle of water and reading lamp. The STUDENT, dressed in jeans and button-down shirt, has a speech impediment that causes him to stutter at the beginnings of words, for example he might say, "Duh-Duh-Duh-Democracy" or "Deh-Deh-Deh-Denmark." It should be obvious that the STUDENT has over-prepared for his speech. At the beginning it should feel stilted; toward the end of his speech he becomes, if not less nervous, then at least more emphatic.*

STUDENT *enters and acknowledges friends in the audience. He is smiling and affable, but clearly stiff as he approaches the podium.*

STUDENT. [*stuttering*] Dear Patient Listeners at the Second World Congress of Free Artists. Dear Gods of Teaching. Dear Free Artists. Dear Free Students.

Despite my stutter I have decided to speak today. Thank you for the invitation. I'll speak slowly, because usually it gets worse when I get excited. Situations that do not arise spontaneously make me nervous.

I will try to deliver sounds that convey my thoughts on art and pedagogy. [*pausing to catch his breath*] During the introduction of new students in my video class at the art academy, I said, "I come to this class because I want to learn how to speak."

STUDENT *grips the podium.*

I am speaking today because I was recently reminded of the fact that we all have a voice and should use it. Patti Smith taught me this. Some people talk too much and some not enough. I do not let the words I can't find discourage me. Pieces of words come out of my mouth and splinter. My stammering somehow reminds me of the rhythms that institutions develop.

I am Danish. I was born in Denmark. In my currently democratic country, it is not true that everybody has a voice. We all have the right to express our opinions, but in the end we only listen to those who formulate coherent ideas and present them in an intellectual, loud, rhetorical, or sexy way. This problem applies in the classroom and in public. Through an education, we can learn socially empowering methods of public expression. Otherwise, in the practice of our democracy, we have to learn to be patient with insecure, nervous, stammering, incoherent

forms of expression. I pray to the gods of teaching that we can unlearn our standards for public decorum and make allowances for silenced voices and hidden faces. Make people who have been silenced by others or themselves speak up.

*STUDENT begins to seem more at ease.*

We students are not a pedagogical project. The truth is, if we do not explain to the outside world what it is like to be in the classroom, we will change nothing. We students are encouraged to read theory with a focus on how to practice. When I say read, it is important that we be aware of the difficulties students experience with this. It is not natural to be a good, fast, or fluent reader. Why do we read to begin with? To learn how to think?

Speaking and reading can be disrupted by many psychological and neurologically based phenomena, such as stammering, synesthesia, dyslexia and many other as yet undiagnosed disabilities. It is very hard to study if you are a bad reader or a bad speaker.

Teachers, be sensitive and do not design art programs dominated by written or spoken forms of expression. A lack of control over one's speech acts and written statements should not determine good or bad performance. The classroom should allow for a full expression of students' personalities and abilities. Education should lead to a public voice.

There is a level of acting in teaching. It is a style. Critical pedagogy means teachers and students are allowed to ask, "Why the hell am I learning this?" We are all learners. It is the responsibility of all of us to constantly challenge authority. Education should lead to emancipation. We are all different, but we all have the same needs. The classroom should provoke

students and teachers to challenge what we perceive as given and to stimulate innovation, responsiveness, and new questions.

But let me conclude with a quote from an anonymous voice: “To be sensitive is to be critical.”

STUDENT *takes a deep breath.*

Thank you for your patience!

*Exit.*

# REFUSE—RE-FUSE— RE>FUSE

Temporary Institute for Witchpower  
Academy of Refusal

*The set is dark. Discernible stage right is a simple table on which are a pitcher of water, a glass, and an open laptop computer. Smoke wafts from a black trash can that sits beside the desk; the scent of smoke fills the air. The laptop screen illuminates the wisps and a motionless seated figure. This is WITCH 2. She wears a green mask and is cloaked in black. WITCH 2 speaks through a hidden microphone and can control the pitch of her voice. Stage left is a wooden podium.*

*Enter stage left a masked female WITCH 1 who takes the podium.*

WITCH 1. [*to the audience*] I'm trying to write a speech for a project. Why is starting so hard? Why is it so hard to write down words? Is it always so reductive? Will I always be trapped in categories that aren't my own, in the meaning assigned by the cultural and political background of the spectators? And what of the spectacle itself? What am I doing here? Which background is my own? Why don't I know anything? What happened to all those thoughts I once had, and why can I not recall them? It's like pulling deleted documents out of a trash can, a kind of deletion I'm now experiencing. [*pause, then wistfully*] Hmm ... the loss of all those previous formulations. How can this become more than simply something to read? How do we enter the fact of social production without attributing blame? Did you make this jumbled garbage or did I? Or did we somehow make it together?

WITCH 2. [*a deep, modulated voice*] The Old Master is never content. He lifts up a mask, rejoices, but his joy doesn't last long; he soon perceives that the mask he has taken off covers another one, and so on until the end of all truth-seekers. [*long pause*] I take off my mask now.

WITCH 1 *removes her mask and approaches an illuminated spot center stage.*

WITCH 1. I don't want to be the Old Master or even the new one. So, you look at my face, and you see me, but these words are not mine; they might be those of someone else, or they might come from a few people—the *I* who now sits and types isn't at all sure. I'm a collective without feedback, bouncing around. Will I now, with my mask that is this body, and this voice, transfer to you some knowledge about the things I've learned up to this point? I don't think so. I don't think knowledge is

like a radio wave sent from knowledgeable minds to ignorant ones, simply because knowledge, like liberty, cannot be given. It needs to be appropriated.

So I would like to begin with my ignorance and try to share that with you. How does one begin by embracing ignorance as a positive political force, and then make a speech that attempts to explain its importance and its necessity?

WITCH 2. Is it possible to speak and not know?

WITCH 1. Maybe the task at hand is to engage with knowledge not as an endpoint but as a process of verifying one's own ignorance.

WITCH 2. Is it possible to not know and still say something?

WITCH 1 *is silent on the matter.*

WITCH 2. Refuse understanding—rise up instead.

WITCH 1. Or differently said, begin at a refusal that is the knowledge of not knowing, at a positive perspective on ignorance—not as truth but as something to be verified in practice. To teach is an intense learning experience; to be a student is a stultifying process whereby the student is made reliant on the explication of the teacher. Why not explode this hierarchy in a community of teacher-learners? The roles of teacher and student don't fit the learning environment. The problem isn't that teachers get paid a wage, it is that students do not. The work done by students produces surplus value, whether that work is done directly for a professor—and so for large companies via third-party university funding—or in shit McJobs that can't pay the rent and tuition fees, or simply in playing the student's preordained role in perpetuating capitalism. To pay in order to have one's labor power sucked out

in the edufactory is deserving of the term hyperexploitation; students are the agents of their own suffering, consumer and consumed, manager and managed. The time has come for students to demand a wage, to connect with all other forms of paid and unpaid labor in the process, and ultimately to refuse their role in the reproduction of capital. Capital lives on labor, but labor does not need capital.

Furthermore, trade unions and student unions are being made obsolete today by a knowledge capitalism intent on subjecting everyone to *lifelong learning*: the requirement of eternally re-skilling in educourses in order to keep our positions as wage laborers.

WITCH 2. [*ominous and deep*] There are no students and workers anymore, just people at different levels of precariousness and exploitation in need of new forms of organization.

WITCH 1. Learning takes place outside of the categories “teacher” and “student,” but more fundamentally the constructed gap between the teacher’s knowledge and the student’s ignorance is a myth. It provides the basis for building the capital-labor relationship within the classroom in which the student plays obedient worker—receiving credits as wages—to the teacher’s ownership of the means of knowledge production. As long as the rigid terms apply, there is no possibility for emancipation, only the chance of fighting against co-students or coworkers in order to become the next manager.

Let’s mess up the terms, then. There’s a necessity for recognizing oneself as a learner, with the ability to listen, and as a teacher, with the ability to know—to begin discussions as people and not as functions and to place that process within a practice of equality. Not an all-knowing avant-garde leadership, but a movement based on opening up questions and discussions.

But then how does one say all these things, and yet leave behind the avant-garde position of being “the one who really knows”?

Might it be one of our political tasks today to demand that we be allowed to not know? To embrace ignorance collectively and use it as a basis for asking questions concerning our surroundings? To say, “Fuck off!” to our would-be leaders, and to the possibility of becoming them?

WITCH 2. To dissolve the student union in the general assembly. To move beyond the disempowering system of representative democracy. To demolish the hierarchy and exploitation that education creates and maintains.

WITCH 1. Almost exactly one year ago we occupied the main hall of a university and renamed it the Academy of Refusal, and I saw it as a counterattack from a group of witches fed up with the conditions they found themselves in. There was an absence of predetermined meaning as to what the occupation should be, but simultaneously a shared knowledge of the fact that we did not know, a common lack of knowledge. It was exactly in this space, left open by collective ignorance and shared knowledge, that a level playing field of meaning, a potential for something else, a different way of organizing things, a structure without hierarchy and based on equality became possible.

We would like to connect this collective knowledge of the fact that one does not know to the creation of a knowledge commons, not a commons-as-natural-resource, but something constructed in social relations. It is a process sometimes referred to as commoning, or communization, but in the spirit of the thing itself. And to quote Rosa Kerosene, “We have called it commonification.”

WITCH 2. Our commonification would begin with linguistic commonification, which is the making common of the meaning of words. Commonification is the outraged response to the steady privatization of everything, a fighting back against the frozen, crumbling neoliberal nightmare, an uprising against the drive to enclose what is common, to limit access and place it in “free” markets, destructive competitive relations, so that people can be made to pay for public services and institutions such as hospitals, schools, and universities. Commonification is the counterattack—the war on the commodification of our bodies and brains. It is the construction of new commons by reclaiming what belongs to all.

WITCH 1. A community formed ...

WITCH 2. Maybe it was a community.

WITCH 1. Let's call it a community.

WITCH 2. Maybe it will form again. A community of witches.

WITCH 1. A group of people standing in solidarity.

*Lights dim. Subtle light on the smoke emanating from the trash can. Lights out.*

# Völkerball

Mónica Castillo

*The stage is dark. A slide projector and folding screen stage center. Next to a folding chair, stage left, a reading lamp. MÓNICA enters in a long black shawl, cape and beret, military pants and boots. She carries a black hardbound sketchbook. In her paramilitary attire she looks matronly but has a slightly forensic manner. As she speaks she makes references to her slides, advancing them with the remote she keeps in her lap.*

Image: Desk

MÓNICA. Artist X and art student A asked a group of students and young artists in Berlin to perform public actions in different spaces around the city. The idea was to encourage interaction with the site, passersby, and the other participants. Artist X told them to treat the entire experiment as a game and added that they were not permitted to document anything.

Image: Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* 1

The aim was to destabilize public space without being kicked out of it and to develop parallel structures alongside the existing ones.

For example, X bought cheap perfume and sprayed it into the air at a painting exhibition in an art museum. Is this reason enough to be cast out of a museum?

Image: Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* 2

Another meeting took place at an IKEA where the group was instructed to spend five hours without buying anything. Instead, they were to perform certain actions in and around the store displays.

Student A said, "Through this decision, we wanted to achieve a utopian perspective."

After a month of meetings and performances, a brotherhood developed.

X said, "We created something more than confidence or trust among ourselves. It was like a new way of being together."

Image: IKEA showroom

X proposed to continue this research, meeting with students from the Warsaw Arts Academy.

Image: Dead bodies in a war zone

X convinced the German group to arrive in Warsaw wearing military uniforms, including caps, and to carry German shields.

X said, “This will be the beginning of the game with the Polish group, a circumstance that will create a community that takes into account the different historical and ideological experiences of the two nations, or it will cause the final disintegration of the groups.”

X thought that if the Berlin group wore German military uniforms, it would raise the possibility of embodying and interpreting historic roles and that this could link the personal with the historical.

Image: Exhibition catalog for “Germans and Poles”

Catalog of the exhibition “Germans and Poles,” Deutsches Museum, 2009. The chapters of the catalog are: “Repression and Self-affirmation,” “War and Occupation,” “Conflicts and Approaches.”

Image: Nazi soldier

Image: Warsaw Uprising

Image: Fire

X described the game as a scenario in which the historical relationship between Poland and Germany was on the table, ready to be put to use. The roles of victim and victimizer, the accomplice, the rebel, the witness, the observer, the soldier, the winner, the loser ...

X said, “In the Poland exercise we offered our bodies to those ghosts in order to represent our spectacle. We were really used, and even though at one point we did not want to play any longer, the ghosts stayed within our bodies.”

Image: Erika Steinbach

Image: Newspaper

At first, the Polish students thought that our gesture of wearing the German uniforms was only a stupid provocation. Despite the degree of play the students intended by this, the situation became more aggressive, with physical and verbal confrontations, and the participants decided to abandon the game after four days.

I heard about this story because the German group began discussing the possibility of suing artist X. The group’s opinions were divided; the members wanted a neutral person to help them make a decision. This was the last time the German group actually met. Months later, I remembered this incident when considering the experiences of participants in various art projects. Is there a shared anger among participants who feel used for the personal gains of an artist? How much of the artist’s intentions do the participants grasp? or are participants there as mere instruments for the artist’s creation? I decided to investigate this a little further.

Image: “The war of ideas against oneself is the only desirable peace.”—Joseph Beuys

My first approach was to interview all of the participants: the German group in Berlin (none of whom are actually German), the five Polish students, and Artist X himself. I needed to consider each person’s version and allow each an opportunity to state his or her position. I decided to work in two different ways after analyzing the narratives of the people I interviewed.

First I organized a meeting at which each participant in the Poland event was portrayed by an actor. Some of the actors were:

Image: Shirwan

Shirwan: Iraqi artist-refugee living in Germany. He represents E, a young Mexican artist.

Image: Urs

Urs: Swiss artist and intellectual. He represents B, a twenty-three-year-old Mexican-German student, who was having an affair with artist X at the time.

Image: Cécile

Cécile: A writer from New York who represents I, a twenty-two-year-old Polish student and the first participant who was assaulted by B. Not long before this event, Cécile had suffered physical aggression during another performance.

Image: *Vertreterversammlung*  
(Assembly of Representatives)

Each of the actors received an interview and a description of the event. I brought them together last June to discuss their unresolved issues, and shot the encounter as a talk show. Actors spoke in the first person on behalf of the participants. Artist X was not represented, but a chair was left vacant for him. Anyone at any time could represent him.

Image: Empty chair

Image: German caps and shields

Second, I used the original props from the event (caps and shields) to see if it would be possible to create kinds of images different from those produced in Poland.

*MÓNICA clicks through a series of captioned images that appear to depict a performance. She reads them to the audience.*

Image: G taking all the shields.

Image: Someone covering the camera with a cap and shield.

Image: G taking notes, keeping a distance so as not to be included in the actions.

Image: B throwing things into a bag.

Image: E removing objects that could be used to identify a specific group (the German group had used red props).

Image: B covering his mouth with an upside-down shield.

Image: B directing the cameraman.

Image: The Palace of Culture

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 1*

X comments, “I wanted to see how a situation develops. Have we the ability to be possessed by these powerful ghosts and at the same time control or change the situation? Are we able to find new ways of dealing with the past?”

X thinks about this as a kind of therapy aimed at healing an individual’s relationship to history.

Researching alternative therapeutic methods, I stumbled on Bert Hellinger’s *Family Constellations*. I discovered a video called “The War.”

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 2*

In the video, a patient approaches the stage and tells Hellinger about her conflicted relationship with her father, who died in

a military confrontation between Russian and German troops during the Second World War.

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 3*

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 4*

Hellinger organizes a reenactment of the father's death.

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 5*

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 6*

During the course of the reenactment, a love affair develops between the two soldiers.

Image: Hellinger *Family Constellation 7*

Hellinger questions the woman about what she has witnessed. Still a bit dazed, she replies that she still can't understand why she has such a conflicted relationship with her father. Hellinger responds, "What a petty reaction! You get what you deserve!"

Hellinger interpreted the woman's inability to participate as a lack of generosity or possibly even as stupidity.

In the case of Artist X and the students, we have an analogous situation: No attempt was made to relate a traumatic historical event to the students' personal experiences, nor to overlap them.

Image: Jean Rouch 1

Image: Jean Rouch 2

In the 1950s, the filmmaker Jean Rouch documented the Haouka tribe in Ghana during a trance ritual in which they reenacted English colonization. Different elements of colonization are personified: the train, the general, the doctor,

et cetera. The representations resulted in healing catharses for those who were carrying the unsymbolized trauma with them in their daily lives.

Image: Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* (Karen in a trance)

What rituals could we adopt in our Western societies that have the power to relate the personal to the political? Using an iconographic approach, I raise questions that instigate relations between agencies.

Image: I and B

I and B are sitting on the floor surrounded by upside-down chairs. One can see I from behind, wearing blue long sleeves. She is also wearing two caps, one forward, the other backward. Over her clothing, she wears a red plastic bag. B leans on one of his hands, he is wearing blue jeans, a cap, and two red badges. One is labeled B and the other A. He has two white plastic knives in his mouth. The red and blue seem to mark them both as part of both groups, German and Polish. They converse as if they were children. Their conversation is a series of fragmented questions and statements.

I says, "Do you see this blade?" B replies, "The video ... has someone asked if?" I says, "Can I walk on the edge or jump to the other side? That is the question." B, "Do you think they gave him the lot?" I, "Sure, he took everything!"

First interpretation: Urs and Cécile are both my friends. I introduced them to each other at an opening. Each was seduced by the other's intellectual charm, and they spoke at length about art and politics. When meeting for this event, they chose to act their mutual attraction and play like kids, break character and have fun. By acting that way, did they think the whole thing was just a childish game?

Second interpretation: In Poland I and B fought. Cécile and Urs know that. Maybe they think that this childish and absurd encounter is the only way to deal with the original violence. Nevertheless, the violence in Poland is what gives meaning to the seduction in the reenactment. Perhaps this is an attempt to restore a moment of initial innocence? But their dialogue is disjointed. Might this suggest that the discourses of the victim and the victimizer never entirely coincide?

Third interpretation: This is a photograph of the actors' meeting. All representatives were friends of mine. We came together to see what could be still discussed and performed in relationship to X's proposal. X refers himself to the troubled relation between Germans and Poles. In the end, I and B (Urs and Cécile) were able to resist X's and my impositions by acting in such a silly way. But does this mean that the only way to approach the still vivid German-Polish conflict is by denying it?

Image: Desktop

[*quoting from her sketchbook*] I have proposed that we give greater consideration and more weight to situational and systemic processes than we typically do when we are trying to account for aberrant behaviors and seeming personality changes. Human behavior is always subject to situational forces. This context is embedded within a larger, macrocosmic one, often a particular power system that is designed to maintain and sustain itself. Traditional analyses by most people, including those in legal, religious, and medical institutions, focus on the actor as the sole causal agent. Consequently, they minimize or disregard the impact of the situational variables and systemic determinants that shape behavioral outcomes and transform actors.

*Lights out. Exit.*



# Panel Discussion: The most independent are also the most vulnerable

in order of speaking

Miklós Erhardt, Sidsel Nelund/UKK, Flo Maak,  
Maarten Breum

*A long table, draped in white and slightly raised, set with bottles of water, two microphones, and the name tags of our speakers: Flo Maak, Miklós Erhardt, and Sidsel Nelund who represents the Young Art Workers Association (UKK). To the right is a podium with an adjustable lamp. Lighting should be able to single out the podium and individual participants at the table.*

MIKLÓS *can be played with a thick Hungarian accent, and as affable or irritable, depending on how his day has gone. Either way, he is soft-spoken and undemonstrative, perhaps even shy. He wears a gray dress shirt untucked and open at the collar, a pair of brown trousers, and leather boots with buckles. No accessories. He appears to be in his mid-forties, though it is difficult to tell. He should give the impression of a person who travels light—his notes are in his shirt pocket. Perhaps he is slightly preoccupied with a project and wonders about the efficacy of panel discussions in general.*

FLO *is an artist in his late twenties, bright, energetic, and lanky, with long dark hair. He carries a canvas bag over his shoulder. The bag might bear the name of another conference, for example, SITAC/2012—THE FUTURE OR 13TH ANNUAL CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY CONFERENCE, or SITUATION DRIVE: COMPLEXITIES OF PUBLIC SPHERE ENGAGEMENT. He wears checked pants, a black dress shirt, scarf, and one fluorescent yellow sneaker on his left foot. His right foot is in a cast. He speaks a slightly Germanic, too correct English, but has no accent.*

SIDSEL, *the representative of the Young Art Workers Association, is in her late twenties. Her blond hair is pulled back in a short ponytail; there is a pencil behind*

*her ear and another jammed into her hair that she has forgotten about. She is dressed in jodhpur-like pants, floral shirt, and boots. Over her shoulder a large blue carryall overflows with research papers, flyers, and announcements. She should be restless and positive, active, searching through her bag, taking notes, nodding, and attentive; she should be played as an academic though not at all stuffy.*

I

MELISSA *enters and takes the podium, followed by FLO MAAK, MIKLÓS ERHARDT, and SIDSEL NELUND, who sit at the table.*

MELISSA. Hello again. I hope you've all had an opportunity to look over the texts by Asger Jorn that we distributed during the break. If you were here for this morning's workshops, I know you've had a chance to work through some of the ideas in them.

We'd like to come together now to present the artists Miklós Erhardt and Flo Maak, and curator Sidsel Nelund from the Young Art Workers Association, or UKK.

So we can start with Miklós. Does that sound okay?

*Light up on MIKLÓS.*

MIKLÓS. Okay? Yes, of course. Thank you all.

MELISSA. Are you sure you don't want the podium?

MIKLÓS. No, thank you. I'll just begin, if the audience can hear me.

MELISSA *sits*.

MIKLÓS. The First World Congress of Free Artists, which has been pointed to as the direct precursor of the present one, was probably the last to merit this name. The choice doesn't seem to be random—it's as if we wanted to exclude from the history that concerns us the later meetings of the Situationist Internationale. Regrettably, there's a lot to exclude.

My first feeling while reading Asger Jorn's address to the First Congress of Free Artists was that of acute jealousy. This feeling has been growing ever since. I'm jealous of this enormous positive responsibility he accorded to art as a tool for the emancipation of human society. Jealous of his strength in remaining truly critical of the conditions in which art was perceived and consumed, despite the critical and commercial acclaim his own work enjoyed ... well, I might be jealous of his money, too; I would have thought twice before giving mine to Guy Debord. I'm jealous of his self-assurance as an artist and as someone who knows what art is and who can express that in simple words. Jealous of his language, strict and playful at the same time, uncontaminated by pedantry and the compulsion to justify every statement (apparently a useless thing to do when your speech is consensual, which is often the case in today's art discourse). And in the end I'm jealous of his articulately expressed wish to establish an Institute of Artistic Experiment and Theory—how does that sound today, when art's brain and all of its limbs are asleep, overloaded by the art theory of overgraduate curators, artists, even gallerists and other random sophists?

I'm afraid artistic experimentation and theory have been sadly discredited over the last decade. Not unexpectedly, the most

important development has been that critical art itself has become the consensus; we shall therefore be wary of clapping each other's shoulders as one free being would another. Guy Debord seems to be wrong: learning the language of the spectacle is not a necessary condition for criticizing it; that results in our becoming spectacle ourselves. Consensual critical art and theory today are a halfhearted mixture of political and media criticism—halfhearted, since art uses politics as its medium. There have been “superior possibilities for action,” to quote Gil Wolman, but these possibilities have been fully appropriated by and opened wide to the force of oppression that is liberal capitalism.

In my experience, most students subjected to academic curricula recognize art theory at first as an obstacle in their way to becoming “free” artists, and they resist it as they can. Second, they recognize it as a necessary protocol fulfill in order to become a successful artist and therefore a “free” citizen ... as opposed to free artist. At this stage, they uncritically adopt its vocabulary. Make no mistake, I'm not here to judge them.

First of all, their attitude is logical. Art theory, the kind desired by Asger Jorn, at its inception already bore within it the fate of becoming an obstacle to creativity. It was devised that way, so to speak. It might be instructive to remind you of another seminal meeting: the Fifth Conference of the Situationist International, in Gothenburg in 1961 (by the way, the first one without Asger Jorn). At this conference the question of the artistic activity of the members was raised in connection with the facts that other artists and groups were approaching the SI and that the term *situationist* began to resonate within the world of art. Both facts threatened to contaminate the increasing purism of the SI. Thus extending the paradoxical agreement that, due to premature conditions, nothing of the Situationists' production was or could be more than presituationist. At the conference, Attila Kotányi

resolved as follows, and here I'm going to quote him:

[reading] “Since the beginning of the movement there has been a problem as to what to call artistic works by members of the SI. It was understood that none of the works was a situationist production, but what to call them? I propose a very simple rule: *call them antisituationist*. We are against the dominant condition of artistic inauthenticity. I don't mean that anyone should stop painting, writing, etc. I don't mean that those things have no value. I don't mean that we could continue to exist without doing them. But at the same time, we know that the resulting works will be coopted by society and used against us. Our impact lies in the elaboration of certain truths, which have an explosive power whenever people are ready to struggle for them. The movement is at present only in its infancy regarding the elaboration of these essential points. The degree of purity characteristic of modern explosives has yet to be attained by the movement as a whole.”

Everyone at the congress agreed, which shows that theory, a tool for the emancipation of human society, had become the trademark of this movement before becoming a factory of explosive truths. Now, this is a dangerous thing. The avant-garde comes from an iconoclastic background in the way Marxism does. Marx himself didn't pay much attention to art on the basis that there are structurally more important things to deal with. Sharing this view has been a serious handicap for critical leftist art, which has been trying to articulate emancipation artistically. At the roots of this art theory we find, among others, Walter Benjamin, who called artistic beauty fascist, and Georg Lukács, who sentenced art to the forced labor camp of socialist realism. Clearly the Situationists and Debord were their faithful followers, pointing at and extending the notion of representation as evil.

There has been endless debate about where, when, and if the

Situationists got it wrong. I'm trying hard not to perpetuate this. Here are some symptoms for the record: their "Hacienda" became a military bunker, their baroque a sterile nonornament, their passionate games passionate terrors. Involuntarily and consistently, they completed the avant-garde's iconoclastic, antirepresentational project and ended up not understanding their own humor. Unlike most present-day critical artists, they truly used politics as their medium, and they were consistent in drawing the conclusion that artistic representation must be left behind for good.

On the level of theory, that is. In practice, representation persisted in spite of the shattering blows of the Situationists. It persisted even in Guy Debord's last films, which brim over with painfully arty mannerisms. The theoretical annihilation contributed to the fact that representation has become even stronger and more immune to criticism—that might be why it has been able to spread so quickly over the whole surface of social and individual life as "creativity."

All of this adds up to the question of the alleged "freedom" of the artist that Asger Jorn already spelled out with his tongue in his cheek ... just to make it more painful for us to realize how serious he was about it. The Situationist experience with all its failures has been inscribed in the psyche of critical practices; it stands behind them as a hungry black hole. The viable solution is to learn to live with failure. To break free from the entanglement I've illustrated would presuppose some radicalism, otherwise one's life would not be long enough to disentangle it all. This radicalism is likely to lead us to turn our backs on experimenting with the epistemological status of art and theory as a whole. In this case we are again as free as the lily of the fields—free to be devoured by whatever discourse has an appetite for us.

*Light out on MIKLÓS.*

## II

*SIDSEL approaches the podium. Spotlight there.*

SIDSEL. Through our work in UKK, or the Young Art Workers Association, it has become clear to us that in fighting for better working conditions for art workers in Denmark, we also have to strive to secure freedom in education. Education is first and foremost about obtaining, sharing, and challenging knowledge, and it is imperative for UKK to advocate that art and art education are critical spheres that play important roles in the construction of a common society. Therefore, we work not only for quality within our educational system, but also to secure the right of students to pursue an education as free as possible from the influence of utilitarian political or economic agendas.

The UKK has engaged in the problems of art and education since its founding in 2002, when the Bologna Process began seeping into the Danish educational system. We have participated in international symposiums, a biennale, e-mail correspondences, and debates, all reflecting critically on the development of art education. But we also work at a local level to engage in debates about art education for kids in our public schools. In 2009–2010 we intervened in the decision-making of the annual state budget, and with demonstrations and petitions we successfully ensured that public schools around the country could continue to obtain state funding to work with artists. This was a key case for us, as this made it possible for schools around Denmark to introduce students to art uninfluenced by geographical limitations or socioeconomic backgrounds.

The UKK believes that art education is a crucial factor in shaping artists, and it is therefore vital for us to maintain a critical awareness of how institutional knowledge is transmitted,

in what environment, for whom, from whom, to whom, by what means, and for what purpose. The institutional power structures of knowledge transmission are in play nationally and internationally, but as a local organization the UKK focuses its work in and on Denmark.

One of the largest structural changes we've witnessed in the art world over the past decade has been an increasing academicism—we've seen this at the Danish art academies aided by the Bologna Process. The University of Copenhagen and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts are now accepting artists as Ph.D. candidates. At this moment in 2010, the first studio practice-based Ph.D. has been completed in Denmark. This has been going on in other Scandinavian countries for decades; however, the UKK insists that it is important to question these international trends. Whether or not this new layer in art education will place greater demands on artists will be a critical question—in the future, will a Ph.D. be necessary to teach at art academies? Critical artistic practice is for many an ongoing phase of research and should remain so, regardless of whether they obtain the proper institutional credentials.

Many international art academies have absorbed neoliberal tendencies and now shape artists for professional careers in the commercial gallery system instead of interesting them in sites of conflict and exploration. The current government in Denmark blatantly endorses the commercial art market by discursively promoting and financially supporting market-friendly art over other forms as a kind of national brand.

MELISSA. This is surprising to me, considering the funding we see coming out of Denmark. Sorry, I'm speaking out of turn here, but ... you get nothing like that in some other countries, the U.S. for example.

SIDSEL. Yes, compared to other countries Denmark is okay with public arts council funding, even though the amount of money spent on plastic arts is ridiculously small when you compare it to what they spend on cinema, for example. What we see on a larger scale is that public funding for culture is cut and one has to find private means, which again results in this commercial-blockbuster mentality. The discourse of the last decade was focused on how businesses could learn from art and the creative classes, and then use art to brand whole cities and countries. It's not about art itself. It's part of a tendency toward less and less state support. The neoliberal tendency. However, Denmark is still a welfare state that takes relatively good care of its artists. But from where I'm standing, this aspect of *decrease* in public funding, although it enhances a discourse that emphasizes the economic, utilitarian aspects of art, is something to be debated. Also, it accompanies a decrease in other social services—benefits for instance—that have an impact on the living conditions of artists.

In effect, Danish art funding instrumentalizes art for nationalistic purposes. Focusing on the utilitarian in art is dangerous if we want to maintain criticality and freedom in art education in addition to artistic production, exhibition, discourse, and so on.

In the year before we drafted this letter, we saw demonstrations in reaction to layoffs and tuition hikes at universities and academies in Hamburg, Vienna, and Venice. We support these student manifestations and repeat that art education must create a space for visions and practices to form that are not ruled by market forces, whether those forces are galleries, national branding, the private market of collectors and collections, or the marketization of art education itself.

We of the UKK recognize the importance, potential, and challenges of education, and will continue to work for freedom in

education, a higher sense of self-criticality in art history and theory, experiments with art education in academies and universities, and an acceptance of artistic and critical practice as ongoing research without the requirement of institutional approval. And we will work against the exploitation of art education and any economically utilitarian approach to art education.

Thanks for your time.

SIDSEL *returns to her seat.*

### III

FLO *walks to the podium. The artist adjusts the mic to his height, then quickly retrieves his forgotten papers on the table.*

FLO. Hello. Thank you, Sidsel. [*reading*] Most people queueing up for a blockbuster exhibition probably imagine artists to be free. I think first-year art students do as well. Artists are free because they can decide *what* they do and *how* they do it. They can engage in many different activities and don't have to be too rational in their actions. Actually, a certain lack of reason and responsibility might be helpful to them. The creative process involves a promise to produce difference—this equally concerns the product, the production, and the producer. This romantic conception of art is maybe more popular than ever, despite the increasing number of art students and self-proclaimed artists. This romanticism expresses a (very reasonable) desire for life not defined by institutions such as school, office, or factory. However, if you ask an art academy graduate (or ask yourself, for that matter) about the experience of artists today as, to quote Asger Jorn, “the most independent people in society,” you'll probably receive a rather bitter reply. There are many freedoms that might be mentioned, but most of them are

negative in their implications, such as the free choice to do something else for a living.

Artists in earlier generations lived under precarious conditions. Actually, they might have been worse off than they are today. Only, in Asger Jorn's day they had good reason to believe that they were freer than workers trapped in Fordist and Taylorist labor conditions. Today the "freedom" associated with the lives of artists has turned into a slogan for (self-) exploitation in general. Being creative and flexible, using your life and biography as capital, inventing yourself anew with each tap of the refresh button, these are demands made by most contemporary fields of labor ... in first-world countries at least. There are still many who work under Fordist or neofeudalist labor conditions and who have good reason to envy the life of artists. Nevertheless, affective or immaterial labor, as Hardt, Negri, Lazzarato, and others have termed it, has spread globally and is now commonly executed under temporary and irregular conditions. This situation coincides with globally growing investment in the arts.

The Italian philosopher Paulo Virno has adopted the term *virtuosity* from the performing arts to describe an important aspect of the current situation—work without products. He identifies virtuosity in areas beyond what immediately looks like immaterial labor and sees in the virtuosic a model connecting art, labor, and politics. Virno's premise is that under these new conditions, everyone becomes the entrepreneur for his or her *self*. Since Foucault first analyzed what he called governmentality in the '70s, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between spheres of production and reproduction, and therefore between degrees of freedom, as in free time versus labor time. Virno can be located in this tradition:

*FLO reads from a page marked in his book.*

“I believe that in today’s forms of life one has a direct perception of the fact that the coupling of the terms *public* and *private*, and the coupling of *collective* and *individual* can no longer stand on their own, that they are gasping for air, burning themselves out.”

In the past, artists like Jorn, as well as leftists outside the arts, tried to tear down the boundaries between public and private, collective and individual. Now, many are not only free to be artists but are also expected to be creative 24/7. Work and recreation have become virtually indistinguishable as a result. How could our predecessors have imagined that the act of liberation, of expression for example, would be used to justify poorly paid or unpaid labor for highly motivated young creatives? These dissolving boundaries create an ambivalent situation when it comes to demands for freedom because they are now intermingled with neoliberal ideologies. Here I’ll draw on the artist Hito Steyerl’s juxtaposition of two pop songs released around 1990 that are symptomatic of our times. (You can find these online. Just Google Steyerl and Hasselhoff.)

So, on New Year’s Eve, 1989, David Hasselhoff sang, “I’ve been looking for freedom ...” in front of thousands at the former Berlin Wall. This song was the number one hit for several weeks on the German singles charts and was received as a hymn to newly achieved freedoms after the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Whether or not everybody “got it,” given the foreign language, certainly they understood David’s repeated calls for liberation. Here was capitalism’s self-proclaimed victory over communism set to Hasselhoff’s barely plausible song about a young man from a wealthy family who leaves home to “make it on [his] own.” He’s laboring hard to achieve his independence, and he refuses to simply buy it with his father’s money. At the end of the song he still has not found “it,” but is sure that, “given some time,

some day [he's] gonna find the freedom [he's] been searchin' for." This narrative is a version of the American dream too unlikely for North American audiences to take seriously, and incidentally the song flopped in the U.S., but it was just the thing for those about to join the free-trade club. Hasselhoff's tune was symptomatic, an inadvertent demonstration of how the carrots of independence and happiness always hang just out of reach for those laboring under late capitalism.

A year later, George Michael released his hit "Freedom! '90." Freedom, he sang, "looks like the road to heaven / But it feels like the road to hell." His isn't so much a demand for freedom as a statement on being free of certainty. It's clear from the lyrics that Michael was concerned with how his earlier '80s public image as part of Wham! had become a kind of gilded cage. (Years later, his song was considered an anticipation of his coming out.) In the music video Michael is impersonated by people of both genders and different ethnicities who sing while his signature leather jacket burns and his acoustic guitar explodes: "Take back your picture in a frame / Don't think that I'll be back again." Michael wants independence from his media image and the heteronormative order, and to do this he must "take these lies and make them true somehow."

The truth is not just out there, Michael says, it needs to be produced. This also means that there is no actual outside to escape *to*: one must produce the freedom to make a difference from within an order or system. The chorus lines tell us how: "You gotta give for what you take." There's nothing certain in the video, not even the singer, but he promises not to let us down.

So, instead of making our dependencies invisible and holding forth the phantasm of an autonomous subject, we should stop compulsively demanding independence and declare our *dependence*.

Thank you all for your time and attention.

FLO returns to his seat and exchanges a few words with SIDSEL and MIKLÓS. An intern enters and hands MELISSA a note.

#### IV

MELISSA approaches the podium. She has the note and an announcement to make. Just offstage is BREUM, who is checking over the hastily jotted notes for his speech. BREUM is a middle-aged, portly man dressed in colorful fitness attire. He carries a sports bottle filled with water. He has been jogging. The panel members remain seated at the table, looking pleased and unsurprised.

MELISSA. Hi everybody, thank you all for staying with us. I hope you're enjoying the speakers. Do remember that there will be time for a Q and A afterward, so stick around. The next speaker I'd like to introduce is Maarten Breum. He's the first person from the audience who has requested to say something, which I think is really nice. Mr. Breum describes himself as an artist, painter, writer, and question maker. He's going to speak for about four minutes regarding the role of the free artist as a [reading from her notes] "defender and a teacher of the people in the struggle between darkness and light in this, our world."

Okay, please extend a warm welcome to Maarten Breum.

BREUM enters, carefully sets his water bottle on the edge of the stage, and takes position at the podium. He is too preoccupied with his new surroundings to acknowledge MELISSA, who exits.

BREUM. [slightly out of breath, but full of vigor] Hello. I am so very proud to speak at this event, which I hear is a remake

of the First World Congress of Free Artists. Coming from Denmark, I am familiar with this. And so, I will dedicate this speech to the memory of Asger Jorn, who organized the First Congress, and to the fountains in this city that cry every day at four o'clock because of the stupid ignorance of the world. Forgive me, English is not my first language.

From outside I heard you young folks, and I am very happy that a lot of you creative people are thinking and asking questions. But, at this stage, I have to say [*interrupting himself*] ... I sat before a painting by Asger Jorn a couple of years ago called *Stalingrad*. The painting is in Silkeborg. In Denmark. You really must go see it. Seated in front of this painting, I realized how much darkness this world is able to create ... [*eyes wide*] We need to stop this! We need to ask difficult questions, and be proud and courageous in our demand for the right to think, talk, and create.

BREUM *pauses and grips the podium with both hands. Worried, MELISSA brings him his water bottle.*

[*catching his breath*] In Europe, as well as in the Americas, a darkness is gathering in public places. Yes. Yes, it is. For ... for instance, in the streets of Hungary today, people die by violence. Racist violence! In the streets of my hometown, organized racists are marching everywhere. In Europe, parties have been created that support racism, hate, and nationalism. [*astonished*] That is my reality.

[*taking a big gulp of water*] And I like your questions about power and identity. But your questions cannot be asked unless the right to ask them is vigorously defended. The right to ask those questions is at this moment under extreme pressure. Just look around you! I'm only here on vacation.

So, I want to challenge you ... hmm, ... most of you are artists, right? ... use your creativity to help the people in order for all of us to see some light, to be able to think ... to see the world as a huge collection of differences. The role of artists in our society is so very important. It is not limited to some ... some special status. You know, political art as such is totally uninteresting. And apolitical art doesn't exist. It is impossible. We are living in the dark ages.

So, I would like you young people to use your skills ... learn some and use them, you know? ... to help people see some light.

Thank you. Thank you.

*BREUM leaves the podium and bows formally before the audience.*

MELISSA. [*clapping from the edge of the stage*] Thank you, Maarten. It's really wonderful to have you here. And we're certainly delighted if anyone from the audience would like to make statements during this afternoon's scheduled talks—just be sure to tell me or one of our interns in advance.

*Lights out. All exit.*



# Art, Pedagogy: A Small Compact

Zachary Cahill

*The stage is dark. A stool is at center stage. There are six backdrops painted with quotations and the words VALET, TRUST, and PEDAGOGUE.*

*Enter the VALET. He is out of breath as if he had just arrived. The VALET is dressed in a clean white shirt and dark blue suit, dress shoes, glasses, and a silver wristwatch—an overall crisp and clean look. In his arms he carries a stack of books and loose papers.*

*A spotlight illuminates three quotes in succession, giving the audience enough time to read each. As he waits for the audience to read each quote, his mannerisms betray that he is nervous, but not painfully so; he sits, checks his watch, clears his throat, glances at his books, and carefully places a glass of water on the floor next to his feet.*

VALET. [*clearing his throat*] *Ars longa ... vita brevis.* [*Pausing to savor the Latin.*] Hippocrates.

*Pause as a spotlight moves to illuminate the Mann quote as the VALET reads.*

“Waiting, we may say, is long. We might just as well—or more accurately—say it is short, since it consumes whole spaces of time without our living them or making any use of them as such. We may compare him who lives on expectation to a greedy man, whose digestive apparatus works through quantities of food without converting it into anything of value or nourishment to his system. We might almost go so far as to say that as undigested food makes man no stronger, so time spent in waiting makes him no older. But in practice, of course, there is hardly such a thing as pure unadulterated waiting.” Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg*.

*VALET pauses again, letting this soak in and allowing time for the spotlight to move and illuminate another quotation.*

Heterochronic. 1. a. ‘Occurring at different times; irregular; intermittent: applied to the pulse’ (Mayne *Expos. Lex.* 1854). b. Occurring or developed at an abnormal time. Thus heterochronia (-krn), heterochronism (-krnz())m, heterochrony, the occurrence of a process or the development of a tissue, organ, or organic form at an abnormal time; also heterochronistic. The Oxford English Dictionary.

*The spotlight shifts to the VALET, who suffers in the glare.*

Waiting, Thomas Mann instructs us in his bildungsroman *The Magic Mountain*, is short, and he adds the proviso that there is no such thing as unadulterated waiting. Education, like art, is long. Or, following Mann’s formulation of waiting, education and art are both short, inasmuch as they have the

capacity to dilate lived experience. Waiting, then, might be thought of as the ultimate practice that art and pedagogy exist in, which might be likened to a kind of perpetual high-noon standoff. It is an uneasy type of waiting that sustains the tenuous compact between art and pedagogy. Art, whatever that may be, is suspicious of the rule-bound academy and its encroachment on the creative mind. The academy for its part seems, at best, troubled by the artist's trickster nature, flights of fancy, and flouting of convention—the artist's not having done his homework, as it were.

Suspended between the two poles of trust and suspicion, the compact between the pedagogical and the artistic lies in wait like the proverbial trip wire for anyone embarking on the endeavor of teaching art in the academy. There are of course other usages for the term *compact* that are equally important for our understanding of this relationship. The first to which I refer is *compact* as a noun, denoting an agreement, but there is also the *compact* that finds expression as a verb, and another that may be used as an adjective. There is also another sense of the word: a tiny makeup case containing a mirror, which is also not without significance, but which I will leave aside for now.

It is hardly news to anyone that artists of nearly every stripe have for the better part of a half century flocked to the university ... I use *university* interchangeably with *academy*.

*He clears his throat, and checks the time.*

It is, after all, perhaps the greatest supporter of today's artists, at least in the United States. The academy provides health care, research funding, sometimes tuition remission for artist-educators' children, and a steady income free from market pressures ... though the academy exerts its own pressures. Since the postwar period and the establishment of MFA degrees, the

academy has turned into something of a museum. A museum in its original sense, as a home of the muses: the haunt of time-based arts like poetry, music, dance, and rhetoric, among others, as opposed to the static, spatial arts of sculpture and painting we more commonly associate with museums. Though interestingly enough, as media theorist W. J. T. Mitchell has pointed out, there is no muse for painting or sculpture. Today this distinction has obviously undergone some serious revision, at least since the advent of relational art, if not the artistic currents of the 60s, when artists, through performance, installation, and film sought to dust off the marble sculptures and breathe new life into the ecclesiastical banks of culture.

When the storehouses of knowledge decided to sanction artistic practice as a discipline, they unwittingly set free the muses to roam in their midst. Which is to say, by allowing for a creative focus to come into play, a focus distinct from a tradition of interpretation and analysis, they set up a situation in which forms of learning might be creatively deployed by artists who found themselves, as their day job, performing the role of teacher. Rather than being tied to a specific text or canon, artist-teachers have the whole of human culture as their pedagogical resource, thereby turning art school into something not wholly dissimilar from what Herman Hesse described as a glass bead game, in his novel of that name.

If I might offer an anecdote to illustrate my point ... [*girding himself for the anecdote*] When I first began teaching at the university where I am currently employed, during a seminar on pedagogy given to new teachers I was struck by the way my instructor would say, “If you get lost just return to the primary text” and “The text is your friend.” Now, granted this seminar was not primarily designed for arts pedagogy and it is only recently that people at my school have begun to think on a formal level about pedagogical instruction for those teaching in the arts. Still, it got me thinking: What exactly is

the “text” of art? What is it that we as educators can return to when we lose our way? Is it Janson’s *History of Art*? Would *Art Since 1900*, produced by the editorial collective of the journal *October*, be the master text? Or would it be the entire spectrum of human culture from the caves at Lascaux to a yet-to-be-conceived art project on the Internet? Who can say what the text should be for teaching young artists? Or whether or not art can even be taught at all—John Baldessari states that it can’t, in an interview in the important book *Art School*, and if that is the case, it precludes using any text whatsoever.

It was these questions that led me to consider Hesse’s *The Glass Bead Game* as a kind of analogy for thinking about art education.

*The VALET gestures to the rear of the stage and the spotlight moves to illuminate the following, which he reads to us from his copy.*

Hesse writes, “These rules, the sign language and the grammar of the game, constitute a kind of highly developed secret language drawing upon several sciences and arts, but especially mathematics and music or musicology, and they are capable of expressing nearly all scholarly disciplines. The Glass Bead Game is a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture; it plays with them as, say, in the great age of the arts a painter played with color on his palette.”

*Spotlight returns to the VALET.*

It is this type of play, readily on display at nearly any graduate school critique, with its veritably infinite range of associations, that I would argue has rendered the academy our true contemporary museum in the original sense that I referred to earlier.

In contradistinction to the artful play of education is education put on exhibition in *actual* museums, which to my mind casts the audience—in keeping with our Greek mythological overtones—in the role of Medusa. Putting the intimacy of the classroom on display renders it moribund. This is admittedly an overstatement and needs to be backtracked slightly, especially given this context. There are obviously examples of the “educational turn” engendering rich exchanges that have refigured the ways in which the conventions of the educational apparatus can be employed toward productive ends. Still, the compact that exists between participants involved in the project that is the educational experience is a trust, a very special kind of intimacy.

What type of intimacy is it? I would suggest that it is what feminist cultural theorist Lauren Berlant might call an intimate public sphere. I won’t go into depth trying to render her account for you now, but I highly recommend to you her book *The Female Complaint*.

*He shifts the books, letting some slip to the floor, while searching for the correct copy, which he displays to the audience.*

Instead, I will offer you my own crude understanding of an intimate public sphere ... [*gathering the spilled books, setting some aside*] ... which I would describe as a group of people who share an understanding of a particular experience that moves beyond the discursive and into the realm of the affective. We know not because we can describe an experience but because the knowing of the experience is so embedded in us, because it has shaped a common bond that may be conveyed simply through a look or a nod. It is such a look that signifies the compact. It is precisely this degree of intimacy prevalent in the pedagogical moment that I would like to speak up for in spite of the pedagogical turn in contemporary art.

It surely runs counter to our sense of intimacy to put our exchanges on display, but perhaps it isn't counter to our nature. We are, by and large, something of a voyeuristic species. We seem innately curious about the fellow creatures with whom we share this globe. But it is the *presentation* of this type of voyeurism that triggers my concern regarding the intimate transfer of thoughts and feelings. The privileging of presentation begets anxiety: we fear the potential loss if an actual exchange is sacrificed for the veneer of the modish educational aesthetic that enjoys adulation today.

At this point, no doubt, I seem to be sounding something of a rearguard alarm. I hope this is not the case, and I would like to suggest, as an alternative, another usage of the word *compact*.

*He gestures quotes with his fingers, causing a few books to slip to the floor. He picks them up while resuming his discourse.*

Although undoubtedly not avant-garde, this usage may possibly be useful here. It derives from my experiences at my day job. I serve as a coordinator for a visiting artist program, and in that function I often act as something of a valet to visitors from the contemporary art world. Here, then, I offer the word *compact* as an adjective, as in, a *compact* car. The compact car might be likened to a campus of sorts. It is, in all seriousness, what I would like to propose as a model for what the relationship between art and pedagogy could be. I should stress that this is meant as a suggestion for *a* model and not *the* model and assumes that there is room for a number of models that might be drawn on. It is a model based on an apperception of the global art world that is admittedly sliver-thin, and thinner still compared with the larger educational system, but is nevertheless grounded in actual experience and not pure abstraction.

*The VALET clears his throat and takes a long sip of his water.*

Now, if you will indulge me, I would briefly like to recount for you a rather pedestrian aspect of my day job that has come to have a profound impact on my views about teaching and art.

To begin, let's return to the subject about which Thomas Mann so eloquently theorized. Waiting. The project that is the model for the pedagogical and artistic compact that I am recommending for consideration begins with waiting ... waiting at an airport. Generally I bring a book in case a visitor's plane is delayed and the wait is long. In the hurly-burly of the academic season at the University of Chicago, this is blessed downtime. There really is nothing to do but wait. In fact, that is my prescribed mission—to wait until the guest arrives. Then eventually somebody with whose work I am very familiar but who has no idea who I am, apart from the few e-mail correspondences between us, spots me holding a small sign with his or her name on it. We meet and exchange greetings, whereupon, with baggage in tow, I lead this total stranger through the catacombs of Chicago's O'Hare airport until we find my compact car waiting to ferry us to more pleasant waters. It is then that the compact that I hope to put forth as a model begins in earnest.

Trust. [*the word is illuminated*] What other word could be used to describe the attitude total strangers must adopt when placing their fate in unknown hands? Trust that they will be taken where they need to go in a strange city after a long and often tiring journey. If a guest feels up to it—and usually our guests do, sustained in part, I imagine, by the excitement of being in a foreign city—there ensues a conversation which runs the gamut from his or her own work, politics, news of the day, art generally, people the visitor knows in the city, et cetera. It is without a doubt the high point of the job. It is, simply put, an education. I could run down the list of amazing artists, art historians, critics, and philosophers I have been given the rare chance to help host. However, the point is not

so much to name-drop and praise any one individual, though certainly the individuals I have had the pleasure to work with inform my attitude to a great extent. It is rather the situation itself that I believe is germane to the topic at hand.

The brief situation of trust and privacy encountered by individuals in a given space (such as a small car) and a given time (such as an in-between time, or a kind of Foucauldian heterochronia) instructs ways of thinking through the arts and education in a pairing that might resist formality and engender a kind of *informe* in arts education or vice versa. This *informe* is derived from a type of sociological anonymity. For all intents and purposes, the guest and the person acting as valet are nobody and occupy a space that is nowhere. Nameless transit allows for the traffic of ideas. The conversation does not rest on a proper name or anyone's particular station. This works both for the valet and the guest. Often the conversation flows more freely because the anonymity provided relieves whatever pressure is attached to wearing a mantle of art-world-academic celebrity. Names and places, times and appointments all hurl by and blend into the background of an exchange of learning that is not hierarchical, but personal and private.

*The VALET is distracted by something offstage. He pauses impatiently, and takes a sip of water while he thinks about the artist Robert Morris. Returning to the present, he shuffles through his books until he encounters a dictionary. He begins to read from it.*

Pedagogue, [*the spotlight illuminates the word*] our etymological resources tell us, is derived from ancient Greek: "child guide" ... the servant who led children to and from school each day ... who might be thought of as a kind of unofficial teacher ... the teacher who stood outside of the lyceum, who traveled along the footpaths of ancient Greece

entrusted with the enormous responsibility of the well-being of the master's child and that child's education. Standing outside ... travel ... private conversation ... responsibility ... [*looking out over the audience*] aspects of what characterized the initial job description for the pedagogue might give a shot in the arm, so to speak, to the collective body shared by art and education. [*opening another book*] A body moreover that Boris Groys has postulated is prone to an endless series of *infections*.

*Long pause.*

Waiting, then, whether outside the museum or the lyceum, may be the defining feature of the compact of this relationship. Perhaps waiting is the cure for an infection that was never meant to be cured, but rather held in heady remission. A heady remission—a heterochronic space where something new and unexpected might grow.

Thank you.

*Exit.*

# Odor is Speech

Mary Walling Blackburn

*Although the performance space may include a proscenium stage, the audience will be seated in four to five rows of chairs facing in one direction in the center of the stage floor. The stage is flooded with warm yellow light, approximating the light at high noon. Two large oscillating industrial fans flank the audience. Each fan sits in the aisle at the midpoint of the second or third row, turned so that it blows directly on those seated. Consequentially, audience members receive gusts of air from both sides. The two performers, PERSONS 1 and 2, are embedded within the audience, seated in the center of the center row. The class, gender, race, and age of the performers is purposely ambiguous. Each has a large bottle of spray perfume tucked under his/her chair. One bottle contains the condensed scent of black-eyed peas, the other the scent of iron.*

*Once all are seated, the lights flash twice.*

*Offstage, the recorded speech begins. It is very loud. The sound quality mimics the PA systems used at political rallies. It is easily heard over the fans.*

RECORDING. Good day, everyone.

I'm glad you are here at this ... this *institution*. This *gathering* within *institution*. You came with an agenda and you are watching and listening. You can smell each other and you can smell that each of you is having a *good time*. Good times smell weird.

During the Bush stump campaigns in the United States of America, large fans were installed within the convention halls. The scent of apple pie wafted through the American crowds, eliciting on a subconscious level the scent of *well-being*.

Imagine another scent in empire's convention hall ... What if the smell of apple pie was swapped for another? The smell of milk. Smell of trouble. Smell of your sex. Smell of whiskey. Could this transposition change our kingdom?

What is the smell of your party? Its agenda has an odor, correct? Which odor?

First, there is your political party's mission statement and the scent of raw materials.

*Both fans activate.*

Then, there is the smell of your body actualizing your desires ... some are political.

In the future ... *something* happens. [*sardonically*] The machine's perfumer goes honest. The scent blown through political gatherings is no longer apple pie.

PERSONS 1 and 2 begin spraying both perfumes alternately left and right into the air where they are seated.

Smell of rain. Smell of smoke. Smell of ink. Smell of coffee. Smell of blood. Smell of bread. Smell of hair. Smell of water. Smell of plastic. Smell of breath. Smell of something breaking down.

You're smelling your fingers, smelling your photocopier. Odor as speech. It communicates.

PERSONS 1 and 2 stop spraying.

A biologist is on the payroll of a perfumier. He claims that smell is not relative. It's a stable molecular structure, and it can be duplicated. It is a molecular vibration, and you are feeling it even now. Something wafts. [PERSON 1 *sprays*] Is it reassuring? Original? Unhinging? Do you smell the institution? Because you are, well, in one.

You are a twelve-year-old boy. You thrust your nose into the underarm of your adoptive (white) mother as you walk out of the Museum of Fine Arts. She yells, "Stop smelling my armpit." You are beaming. You have been castigated. But you are closer to something than you were a minute before. You are figuring something out. Her underarm is the closest you are going to get to her womb. It's Boston, 1992.

Odor emerges like a heavyweight champion—it is all muscle. Only muscle, and it cannot lie. It is always exactly what it is, says the biologist. It's a tool, says the politician.

Here's an apocryphal story from around the turn of the twentieth century. It takes place in Europe. A young man cannot stop drawing. He cannot stop drawing female heads. It is the nose that fascinates him. He draws the nostrils large enough to accommodate his penis. On the street he is startled when he comes face to face with the woman of his dreams—Her nostrils are large enough to accommodate his member.

He follows her home and begs for her hand in marriage. The family decline, sensing that something is awry. He must be restrained and removed. Suddenly, he has been included in Krafft-Ebing's psychoanalytic records as Case Number 88, Section A: The fetish is a part of the female body. The young man is attempting to self-fashion a woman's nose into a vagina.

Let us reverse the pathological current. Let's make the closest vagina, the one between your legs, or next to you, into a nose. We will reorganize the labor of the genitals. No longer for sex work or reproduction. A vagina that smells? No, a vagina that detects the molecular vibrations of its environment.

What good comes of this? We will start to trust the underground and what it senses.

We will begin to really trust women that become bloodhounds or sommelières. They will track down murderers and missing girls. They will direct us toward the wine that completes everything. These women, packing the proboscis, will begin to embody the way that a subtle attention to an invisible detail could rescue us or another, through detection or the relief of drink.

In the end, the pathological current is not reversed. I know women do not have their own nose between their legs. There's always someone else's nose there. But let's pay closer attention to what we smell. Right now.

On the Internet, some community boards on the olfactory sites report that between their legs women smell like black-eyed peas and iron.

*Lights dim. Fans cease. PERSONS 1 and 2 remain seated.*



# Act III

w o r k e r s '  
t h e a t t e r :  
a u s t e r e n  
s e t t i n g  
r i g g e d  
for use

# Dios es Pobre

Carlos Motta

*Stage left, a simple wood lectern and a straight-backed chair. FATHER JUAN GUERRERO reads from a prepared letter, obviously memorized; he rarely refers to it. He is elderly but youthful, melancholy, dressed in a priest's robe and collar. He carries the hat of a Jesuit but never puts it on his head. It should be obvious to the audience that he is a gifted orator, at home behind a lectern.*

FATHER GUERRERO *solemnly approaches the lectern, places his hat on it, and withdraws a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles and a letter from his robe.*

FATHER GUERRERO. [*putting on his spectacles*] Dear audience of this the Second World Congress of Free Artists. My priest's robe may come as a surprise to you in the context of a conference of artists. I am not an artist, but I am speaking here today because for five hundred years I have been an active participant in and witness to pedagogical projects initiated by Catholic theologians and priests that have been thwarted by imperial, economic, and ideological interests.

*Pause, measuring the audience.*

My name is Juan Guerrero. I am a Jesuit priest born in 1700 in Spain, where I was ordained in the Society of Jesus. In 1730, I joined a mission in the highlands of Paraguay, in South America. I was involved in the evangelization of indigenous communities; we brought the word and ways of God to the natives of the jungle, for the world as they knew it had started to change because of the presence of the European settlers who had discovered them there. From the outset, I have been a fervent believer in the Christian faith. [*fervently*] God is spirituality and His command is that we construct a better world for all, but in particular for those who have been less favored as a result of social inequality.

*Three beats.*

*Mira, Dios es pobre!* God is poor! Our vocation as workers of God has been to confront the deceptive earthly powers, to stand in the way of Satanic influences that have oppressed minority groups for the benefit of the few.

[*with sorrow*] Our project in Paraguay was both a success and a tragedy that resulted in the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from those regions, and later on from all Spanish territories. For decades we strove to understand the difficulties the natives had learning our ways. We developed strategies and methods to connect these seemingly humble beings with their souls, always using God's instructions and manifestations of His spiritual presence. Our missions taught them to live in a new present, to respectfully accept the oppressors, and helped them to construct a self-sustained society and culture that could coexist with the newcomers. This was a reciprocal process; we learned from them as much as they did from us.

Early on, we understood that we didn't belong in what was a *raped* land and that our teachings had to address this inherent violence. We saw ourselves as a path to a new present and a potentially healthy future.

We failed! The powers of evil were stronger than our faith; Satan's envoys were unstoppable and indestructible because they easily recognized that the new land was richer than Europe and that it would become a source of wealth. Indigenous people were nothing but an obstacle to this; they were a despised race that had to be eliminated, exterminated, or oppressed and dominated. They had to become the European's slaves!

*Gazing out over the audience, taking his time with them.  
Then, less priestly.*

In retrospect, I would claim that our work, while problematic, was essential. Without our commitment, these threatened communities of natives would have been exterminated faster than they eventually were. Our method consisted in teaching community organizing, a new conception of self-empowerment, agricultural techniques, crafts, and leadership. We also taught them our language, Spanish, and connected them with the

aesthetic manifestations of spirituality: the riches of music and art, which always reflect the divine sensibility of God.

[*recollecting*] In 1750, some Portuguese men, with the consent of the Catholic Church, burned down the mission. We were betrayed by our own fathers! All of my fellow Jesuits, who courageously objected to the invasion, were assassinated, along with most of the native community, including all of the women and children. The chapel we had built collapsed to the ground, a ground that later became valuable for its mines of gold and other precious metals. The Church that had nurtured our work had become complicit with the oppressors! I can't remember how I survived. [*to God, or to the air*] Perhaps it was His wish for me to become a transhistorical ghost, a living witness of what was to become a common destiny for the oppressed.

For the next two hundred years I could not bear the weight of my existence, my sense of responsibility and complicity in that tragedy. Believe me, the image of death, the rivers of blood, and the smell of burnt skin are not easy crosses to carry. I walked throughout the Americas in sin because I wanted to abandon God: I couldn't understand why a divine being would allow these atrocities to occur. But He never let me go: the strength of His teachings, the freedom of His spirit, the overwhelming sense of knowing what is right that His voice has whispered to me at night, and the conviction that there is potential for change in the future made me want to seek those who continue to oppose oppression, just like my fellow missionaries who confronted power in the service of the poor.

*He cleans his glasses in silence.*

Pedagogy is a dangerous affair, you know. Its far-reaching consequences should be empowering, but they are often lethal. To teach is to assume a position, to follow your heart and

to act politically. In order to teach, you have to understand the social sphere around you, and you must be responsive, never arbitrary. You have to listen, to hear, to perceive, and to respond carefully based on what you've heard. Teaching is loving. Loving is giving. Giving is learning. Pedagogy is a spiritual affair.

*He abandons the podium to move about the stage.*

Dear audience, isn't art also a spiritual and dangerous affair? Perhaps theology and art are more connected than we like to think. Art to me is a transformative and critical act. In art, there is a potential for social and aesthetic responsibility. Like theological work, art, I believe, is rooted in conviction and in the liberation of propositions that are communicated through an aesthetic method. Art is faith. Not faith understood as an unmediated divine gift but rather as an active commitment to a cause, a just cause. Art is justice.

By the mid-twentieth century I found myself old and tired but not less inspired. I witnessed the emergence of a radical theological model propagated by theologians and priests throughout Latin America: Liberation Theology. I encountered fellow priests like armed revolutionaries who fought for the rectification of the social order. They were armed, too: with the *true* word of God, with intellect, with the belief that as a collective Catholic community we could transform society. We were new missionaries! Our struggle wasn't simple this time, either. The dehumanization of minority and oppressed groups had never ceased. Their lives had continued to be denigrated by the newly established colonial class (do they still call it *bourgeoisie*?) and a dignified life seemed more than ever an impossible dream for them.

*The chair. Behind the chair. Seated.*

As you well know, the Catholic Church as an institution lost its center hundreds of years ago, even before it was responsible for burning down our missions. It has been involved in what I would call, in the context of this conference, an *unpedagogical* quest, driven by ambition, thirst for power, and narrow interpretations of the Bible and God's teachings. It was hard for me to admit that my founding institution had deceived me, but they do not own the word of the Lord! His word is in constant flux and adapts to historical changes. As Liberation Theologists we reclaimed God's word. Let me say this loud and clear: We are not a political project. We offer a theological view of social justice, but if necessary we will place ourselves at the head of a political movement to serve the oppressed.

Dear audience, my contribution to this conference is this: Art, like theology, is a pedagogical endeavor. It is a spiritual calling and a strong instrument for social change. Let God aid you in finding a critical and humble voice and in using it to mobilize those around you to change the world. You are young and gifted. Let your energy, soul, intellect, faith, and compassion guide your work along God's path.

*Bueno.* [*he returns to the lectern*] I would like to dedicate these words to my friend Archbishop Oscar Romero from El Salvador, who was assassinated on March 24, 1980, by a death squad after vehemently and publicly demanding that the government cease its repressive actions and violations of basic human rights. These were among his last words: [*reading*] "God's reign is already present on our earth in mystery. When the Lord comes, it will be brought to perfection. That is the hope that inspires Christians. We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us." Thank you all.

*Three beats at the lectern. Exit.*

# Panel Discussion: A good panel begins with a proper introduction

in order of speaking

J. Morgan Puett, C. Krydz Ikwuemesi, Dario  
Azzellini and Oliver Ressler

*To the right, the stage is set for a panel discussion, with one large U-shaped conference table, opening toward the audience. Water pitcher, glasses, microphones. On the table, name tags:*

J. MORGAN PUETT/MILDRED'S LANE

C. KRYDZ IKWUEMESI

DARIO AZZELLINI

OLIVER RESSLER

*Separated off to the side is an exterior setting: sunset over a low grassy mound on which are seated JEAN and TYLER. They are dressed like students, their genders unclear: jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers. JEAN wears a black and white keffiyeh. It is sunset. TYLER flips through a Moleskine notebook and*

*chews on a pencil; JEAN reads from a red textbook. More notebooks are strewn around the mound. Seated at the conference table are our four panelists.*

*PUETT is wearing old-fashioned linen clothes. She is in her late forties, with short hair, fashionably messy, and is slightly tanned. Her appearance is anachronistic, bespoke, and can-do. Preferring not to fly (carbon footprint) she has made the trip from her farmhouse, Mildred's Lane in Pennsylvania, by train. She is rosy and bright and carries nothing with her except a flash drive that hangs from a ribbon around her neck. She is happy to see the water pitcher and glasses.*

*IKWUEMESI wears a black suit, army green turtleneck, and black-rimmed, tinted spectacles. He is tidy and good-humored; a leather briefcase is at his side. As a longtime writer, artist, and activist in Nigeria, he is no stranger to a panel discussion and appears relaxed, drinking a coffee he has brought with him.*

*AZZELLINI and RESSLER are seated together. AZZELLINI appears to be in his early forties and wears jeans, a black T-shirt with a red star, running shoes, and headphones which are slung around his neck. He cuts his short-cropped hair himself; he could be mistaken for a young man of the Paris banlieus. Until he speaks, one wouldn't guess that he holds a Ph.D.*

*in political science from a major German university or that he has published numerous books, in numerous languages, on labor, privatization, and the military-industrial complex. RESSLER is of a similar type, dressed in a black hooded sweatshirt, jeans, and leather blazer. He has long greying hair, pulled back behind his ears, and thick black-framed glasses. He carries a rucksack filled with papers. His apparent formality is an impression made by his Austrian accent—where AZZELLINI is informal and cordial, RESSLER seems clinical, but perhaps today he is just tired from the flight and an unfortunate taxi ride to the conference.*

I

*Lights up on JEAN and TYLER. They are talking about the panel discussion.*

JEAN. Did you see the talks this afternoon?

TYLER. No, I missed them. [*beat*] But I'm reading Paul's notes. [*two beats, then, noncommittally*] Looks like it was good ... J. Morgan Puett gave a presentation.

*Light up on PUETT.*

PUETT. Hello, I am J. Morgan Puett. Pronounced *pew-et*.

TYLER. She began by saying, [*reading from the notebook*] Being is my practice.

PUETT. This presents a socially and politically charged entanglement that embodies relationship with the environment, systems of labor, forms of dwelling, clothing apparatuses, and most importantly, inventive domestication—all of which compose an ethics of comportment—and thus have potentiality. Mildred's Lane is a crusty 93-acre site deep in the woods in rural northeastern Pennsylvania, in the upper Delaware River Valley, which borders New York State. It's an ongoing collaboration with myself, Mark Dion, our son, Grey Rabbit Puett, and all of our friends and colleagues who have been coevolving a rigorous pedagogical strategy whereby a working-living-researching environment is developed to foster engagement with every aspect of life. The entire site has become a new contemporary art complex-

TYLER. -ity.

JEAN. Entanglement.

PUETT *clicks a remote and an image of a farmhouse appears behind JEAN and TYLER completing the exterior scene as the light on them dims to dusk.*

PUETT. It's about people making a difference. The place is inspired by Mildred Steffens, a remarkable woman who grew up and lived her entire life there in the twentieth century. Much of it alone. We call her old homestead the Mildred's Lane Historical Society and Museum, and it's one of dozens of site-sensitive projects, experiments, landscape interventions, and public events smattered across a portion of this magical landscape.

At the core of the project, practice, and educational philosophy of Mildred's Lane is an attempt to collectively create new modes of being in the world—a kind of comportment as commons—and this is embodied in workstyles. Daily issues

are negotiated through rethinking one's involvements with one's habits: fooding, shopping, making, cleaning, gaming, sleeping, reading, thinking, and doing. Such workstylings have no beginning and no end—importantly, they are our lives. Our yearly pedagogical sessions are topical swarms, and we have participants coming from everywhere, all disciplines, working, living, presenting, sharing our workstyles.

One of our topics is “Retail Twenty-first Century,” or R21c. Participants in R21c have been convening as a think tank at Mildred's Lane every summer for several years now. And there is a growing collective concern about the future of exchange discursively centered on experimental forms of sociality and comportment. This is more involved than a simple critique of consumption. We're interested in critical alternatives to what we produce and how we make things—do things—systemically and interpersonally. It's a way to remain both theoretically rich and grounded in vernacular tactics of “getting by.” Mildred's Lane and R21c ...

TYLER. [*reading*] ... seek a collaborative, coevolving response to exchange, with learning “as you go” as an ongoing shared experience. We are interested in new possibilities of where to situate the space of praxis and action.

PUETT. Is it in a gallery, storefront, or factory?

TYLER. Or a domestic environment? Deep in the rural woods? Or all of these?

PUETT. Yes, dammit, all of these.

JEAN. [*reading from the red textbook*] “In nature, the normal way trees flourish is by their association in a forest. Each tree may lose something of its individual perfection of growth, but

they mutually assist each other in preserving the conditions for survival.”

TYLER. Thoreau.

JEAN. [*smugly*] Alfred North Whitehead.

PUETT *continues to click through the slides, which show images of the interior and exterior of Mildred's Lane and the activities there—figures posing in nineteenth-century dress, fine dining in a pasture, etc.*

PUETT. Let me add that our ongoing project in these woods includes efforts to ban all hydraulic gas fracturing of the Marcellus Shale Reef that geologically sweeps deep under much of Northeastern America. The gas and oil companies have quietly and insidiously moved into the region and have begun to drill for gas in a most invasive and toxic manner. It affects everything. Communities are being pulled apart over it. Our water, our air and our soil, our food are all endangered and we need your help to stop this. It threatens our very being. Please investigate this problem, and find a way to voice your objections to this with us.

JEAN. [*looking up from the red textbook*] Is that true?

TYLER. [*without looking up*] Mmm ... so I've heard.

PUETT. If I can humbly add anything to the exchanges of ideas here today, let it be that we activate these tempestuous multiplicities and coevolve with the understanding that this coevolution requires high maintenance and the feeding and nurturing of our interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, human and nonhuman.

JEAN. “Being is the great explainer.” That's Thoreau.

PUETT. Yes! Being is the practice, and that, my friends, is complexly social and political. Thank you.

*Slides go dark. Lights dim on all.*

## II

*An amber light up on JEAN and TYLER, still on the mound. TYLER's head rests in JEAN's lap. Books and backpacks lie strewn about.*

TYLER. Have you ever noticed how in movies whenever the scene shifts from the U.S. to another country, like Mexico or Afghanistan, they always use a sepia filter?

JEAN. [*barely paying attention*] Hmm ...

TYLER. That bullshit drives me fucking crazy.

JEAN. [*petting*] Shush.

*Lights dim. A warm light up on IKWUEMESI at the conference table. He is organizing his papers, making a note here and there.*

IKWUEMESI. [*very cool, taking his time*] Hello, hello. Thank you for attending this conference. I will be delivering a paper entitled "Art Training in Nigeria and the Ph.D. Syndrome." Please forgive me if I must provide you with some context for the situation in Nigeria. I think it bears heavily on the situation we find ourselves in. [*reading, though he clearly knows his text*] There is no doubt that education in Nigeria is a travesty. As one German visitor put it in 2002, "Nigerian schools remind one of ruined factories, and the teachers and pupils have thrown in the towel." This sounds exaggerated.

But to any critical mind, those words paint a vivid picture of Nigeria's educational system in the morning of the twenty-first century. The quality of teachers and students that populate our schools, coupled with our government's rather jaundiced attitude, have turned the Nigerian education industry into a playground of inanities. Not only is course content stale and questionable in some respects, but also some of the degrees awarded have become as cheap as Nigerian chieftaincy titles.

Recently, many universities have decreed that faculty must obtain the Ph.D. before they can be promoted to senior lectureships or professorships. This directive was issued and has been carried out without making exception for certain disciplines, which traditionally do not award a Ph.D. as the highest degree. In this regard, art and art faculties have suffered greatly.

Art training in most parts of the world is structured along theory and studio lines. For the theory aspect, which incorporates art history, art education, critical theory, visual culture and other subjects, the highest degree is usually the Ph.D. For the visual arts proper, otherwise known as studio arts—painting, sculpture, ceramics, design, textiles—the terminal degree is a Master of Fine Arts, although some universities in Europe and Japan have recently created a Doctor of Fine Arts degree. At present, there is no such degree in Nigeria. The MFA remains the highest possible qualification for the employment, evaluation, and retention of visual arts faculty. The studio teacher does not need a degree in art history or art education to be able to discharge his or her pedagogic responsibilities effectively. But in Nigeria, this fact has been ignored by uninformed and shortsighted school administrators. Rather than review the master's curriculum in the universities or create doctorate programs in the visual arts, university administrators have issued a blanket battle cry against non-Ph.D. holders. This is, in a word, absurd.

Consequently there has been a scramble for the doctorate among visual arts faculty. While some have pursued courses in art history, art education, and philosophy, others have picked up Ph.D.s of questionable relevance in mass communication, religion, theater arts, anthropology, and so on. If a teacher spends four years or more acquiring a Ph.D. that he or she does not really need, save for the temporary purpose of promotion, of what use is the knowledge they gain to the community?

It is very strange that art training in most Nigerian universities today is designed as if training in art history were the culmination of every kind of scholarship in art. Curiously, not only are graduate faculty now compelled in some cases to acquire degrees in art history or art education for advancement beyond certain levels in their career, but also fresh employment involving MFA holders has been handled in ways that call into question the validity of an MFA as a terminal professional qualification. The insistence of some people that an advanced degree in art history is necessary for the teaching of art is quite worrisome and ridiculous, given the current situation internationally and in Nigeria. As an example of international standards, those who care to can access the College Art Association guidelines used by most colleges and universities in the U.S.A.

The Nigerian example is both dangerous and corrosive as far as studies in the studio areas of the visual arts are concerned. What need is there of painters, sculptors, textile designers, graphic designers, and ceramists having to complete a master's or doctorate in art history or art education, subjects which they may never teach? Besides dangerously turning all visual arts faculty into art historians and art educators, it creates a situation in which studio practice is deserted by these artists for years as they immerse themselves in research in pursuit of a Ph.D. in some other field. This, just to attain a professorship in the new dispensation of Nigerian universities.

When the sole ambition of faculty is to attain a professorship without minding how twisted or questionable parts of the process are, then higher education suffers in the short term and long run. I am aware of Nigerian professors of art whose Ph.D.s are in other areas, including religious studies. They are sad testimony to the rot that attends art education in Nigeria. The situation is at once alarming and full of contradictions. It is of course to the ignorance of education administrators and university authorities in Nigeria that we owe the prevailing mess. The education industry of a country that thrives on bandwagon psychology is bound to be straitjacketed in several respects, but for how long can the pursuit of ignorance stand for excellence and the dogged glorification of underdevelopment represent the new meaning of development in Nigeria?

The dangerous and ugly reality is that in the next few years—unless something positive and logical is done—all visual arts faculty in our universities and polytechnics will become reluctant art historians teaching one aspect of studio or another. The result in terms of art scholarship will be unimaginable.

PUETT. Maybe it's too *imaginable*. A gloomy prospect.

IKWUEMESI. Indeed. In July 2004, the Pan-African Circle of Artists convened a conference at Delta State University, Abraka, to look at the crisis generated by this anomalous situation. With about forty participants from across Nigeria, the conference had enough voices to address the theme of centralization. It's worrisome that such a seminal issue as the problem of art training in Nigeria could not attract many more participants than that.

It betrays the visual arts faculty in Nigerian schools as a tribe unable to take its destiny into its own hands. But they are not an isolated case. In general, academics in Nigeria, with the exception of a few, have lost sight of the essence of their

vocation—the pursuit of knowledge and freedom. Crass politics and academic mercantilism have become cheap currency. Otherwise, visual arts faculty and artists would establish a common forum and use it to demonstrate to the university authorities the futility of acquiring irrelevant degrees. If the most important issue in the university system in Nigeria today is promotion at all costs, excellence is devalued and jeopardized. If it has become terribly important for Nigeria to become one of the first countries where the MFA is to be trampled on, is it not better to encourage universities to create the necessary higher degrees rather than condone a situation where MFA holders have resorted to obtaining degrees in art history, or even in religion and languages, in order to attain professorships in their original fields? Even in the two or three countries where such higher degrees have been created, the MFA has not been jettisoned, ironically because of the weighty credit load associated with it as a practical, professional course of study.

*Lights dim to black on JEAN and TYLER.*

IKWUEMESI. The options are two: retain the MFA as it is—a terminal degree for visual arts faculty—or create a lean studio-theoretical course above it as a sop to the ignorance of Nigeria's education policy makers and in the interest of visual arts faculty and artists who are as endangered as art and intellect in postmodern Nigeria, with its materialism, nihilism, and obsession with existence in extremis ... its collectively sustained desire to bring history to a forcible end.

But the bottom line of the Abraka conference is not what is terminal or not terminal in terms of qualification, but what course content and curriculum are to be. Art is primarily a doing thing, not a pastime for fools or a truancy from life. If Nigeria's artists, especially the institutionally based ones, obtain basketfuls of degrees and wear them like epaulettes but

cannot acquit themselves practically or otherwise at home and abroad, then the battle cry for the Ph.D. as it relates to visual arts faculty is a dangerous policy.

*Lights out. Long pause.*

### III

*High noon. JEAN and TYLER are facing each other on the mound, surrounded by books. They are now wearing green coveralls and caps. JEAN's cap is off. They converse in Spanish while eating sandwiches.*

*AZZELLINI and RESSLER at the conference table. Light on both. IKWUEMESI and PUETT listen in semidarkness.*

AZZELLINI. Thinking about positive forms of organization and education has led me and my colleague Oliver to consider recent developments in Venezuela in various social and political spheres since Hugo Chávez won the presidential elections in '98.

RESSLER. Venezuela is maybe the most inspiring example of the opportunities a state has nowadays in globalized capitalism to allow the people to participate in the decision-making processes and to support existing forms of self-organization throughout the society.

AZZELLINI. Self-organization in Venezuela began with what were called Bolivarian Circles, neighborhood organizations in which people met to take responsibility for different social and cultural matters. The Bolivarian Circles differed from traditional socially oriented organizations because their aims were political and ideological and promoted self-education, in order to defend and continue the Bolivarian process.

Bolivarian Circles were grassroots organizations consisting of at least seven individuals who agreed on certain agendas and working modes. One year after the Venezuelan people prevented the U.S.-backed 2002 coup d'état against the democratically elected President Chávez, around two and a half million individuals across Venezuela organized themselves in Bolivarian Circles.

RESSLER. Since then, forms of organization have changed according to the needs of the people and the process of social transformation. The Bolivarian Circles are no longer the main organizational form, but nowadays even more people are organized in grassroots organizations of different types.

AZZELLINI. In order to fight the existing deficits in the education system (for which the corrupt former governments were responsible) Venezuela introduced a new system of free public education, protected from private interest by the Bolivarian Constitution.

RESSLER. In 1999, after Chávez's election, the new system was introduced through a national referendum.

AZZELLINI. So, through the extension of the school system and the abolition of school fees, an additional 1.5 million children had the opportunity to attend school. Thousands of new schools were constructed, and abandoned ones were renovated; these are now called Bolivarian schools. In them, pupils spend the entire day, receive up to three meals and can participate in comprehensive sports and cultural programs. Teaching methods in Bolivarian schools are based on the precepts of liberation pedagogy.

RESSLER. In addition, in order to give older impoverished people—who had been systematically excluded by the ruling

elites—a chance for free education, missions were and still are being founded all over Venezuela.

AZZELLINI. Misión Robinson is a literacy campaign started in 2003 that teaches individuals older than 10 how to read and write.

RESSLER. Individuals enrolled in the courses are supported with grants of more than \$100 per month, so that they can afford to participate.

AZZELLINI. Misión Robinson's teaching method is based on that of the Cuban pedagogue Leonela Relys, decorated by UNESCO for her technique in teaching illiterates to read and write in under two months. The technique's success rate is 97 percent. Students who don't acquire the skills of reading and writing in these two months can repeat the class. The video-based teaching program "Yo si puedo" ("Yes I can") was adapted for Misión Robinson's Venezuelan context. It begins with what students know (numbers) and proceeds to what they don't (letters) and is based on three integrated steps: exercises, reading and writing, and consolidation of knowledge. In a snowballing process, seventy Cuban pedagogues educated more than 125,000 volunteer educators who then traveled throughout the country organizing literacy courses. In October, 2005, UNESCO announced that Venezuela had succeeded in extinguishing illiteracy. Nearly 1.5 million people (55 percent of them women) had learned to read and write. Afterward, each student was able to continue his or her education at Misión Ribas.

RESSLER. In 2006, about two million people participated in Misión Ribas, earning high school diplomas that gave them the opportunity to study at a university. Another mission, Misión Sucre, was established to provide grants to 10,000 impoverished students to study at the newly founded Bolivarian

universities. Students in Misión Sucre are required to carry out social projects in their communities as part of their studies, in order to develop an ethic of collective responsibility.

It's also an aim of these missions to train skilled personnel for necessary processes in the transformation of Venezuelan society. These programs lead to a democratization of education and redistribution of kinds of knowledge that in earlier decades were the privileged province of the ruling class.

AZZELLINI. In a participatory and protagonistic democracy, participation shouldn't be determined by economic status. Although the economic system in Venezuela as a whole can still be considered capitalist, there are a variety of models that now aim at involving workers in decision-making processes.

*Long pause. Lights dim to black on the panelists.*

JEAN. Escuchaste? Los trabajadores en Inveval están operando la empresa sin jefes. Lo están haciendo sin tecnócratas o burócratas.

TYLER. Mmm-hmm ... [*mouth full*] Desde la revolución los choferes de camión, los trabajadores en la línea de producción, los presidentes de la empresa, . . . todos los trabajadores ganan lo mismo. [*long pause*] ¿Cómo está tu sandwich?

*Lights out.*



# A Brief Account of Didactic Curiosities

Eduardo Abaroa

*School desks of the type used in nineteenth-century classrooms, a well-worn chalkboard, a teacher's desk, and a frame indicating a window. On the teacher's desk, an apple and a pile of books. Scattered around the room are a number of paper shredders, the kind one would find at a contemporary office-supply store. On the chalkboard are a number of complex diagrams from The Art of Memory, which the actors are welcome to use if they so choose.*

*The LITTLE GIRL, age ten, sits on a drawing horse sketching the apple. The MALE STUDENT, a young boy of sixteen sits at one of the pupils' desks. Leaning against the window frame, a FEMALE STUDENT of sixteen admires a pastoral landscape. The TEACHER, a man in his middle years, enters and seats himself at the large desk; he picks up the apple and examines it, to the consternation of the LITTLE GIRL, then, lifting one of the reference books, he begins to read to himself. He holds the book in front of the apple, blocking the girl's view.*

MALE STUDENT. [*withdrawing some loose papers from his desk*] Joseph Jacotot presents a book to his students. He speaks French, and they don't. Everything seems in order except that Jacotot does not speak the language of his pupils. In spite of this, he is determined to make them learn his language, and in order to accomplish this, with the help of a translator, he asks them to memorize the bilingual version of *Télémaque*, a novella by François Fénelon. But it could have been any other book. After memorizing it, the students have to summarize what they have read in writing, in French. They manage to do this surprisingly well on their own by comparing the memorized French words with those of their birth language. The teacher does not explain spelling, syntax, or vocabulary ... he does not have to explain anything.

*The MALE STUDENT feeds a sheet of paper into a shredder.*

[*to the LITTLE GIRL, who is now drawing the teacher*] I remember seeing a documentary in which a German family is cooking. The father cuts potatoes with a knife. Cutting potatoes is a way of giving form. In this way you can modify the form of anything and everything. The sculptor can transform the shape of a stone with a chisel; any person can modify his or her own form. Everybody can reshape society. Every man, woman, and child is an artist.

FEMALE STUDENT. Art students are tired of drawing. They draw the same nude and uncomfortable woman for two hours straight every day. Music by Bach is used to stimulate their minds. The drawing method does not seem to be very effective. Most of the drawings are quite bad. Pencils are consumed hour after hour with no good reason. That is why they feel some hope when the new art teacher, Mr. Santamarina, suggests that the pupils make an artwork with a machine anyone can learn to use immediately: an analog tape recorder.

TEACHER. [*reading to no one in particular*] For centuries *The Art of Memory* was attributed to Marcus Tullius Cicero. Now we know that the main treatise on this discipline, *Ad Herenium*, was written not by Cicero but rather by an unknown author. The system and its erratic interpretation had important consequences for Thomas of Aquinas, Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, William Shakespeare and many other philosophers and writers. The task of memorizing long speeches was a significant problem for the Roman senators and lawyers. Having a good memory was crucial, for the future of Rome was decided on the podium as much as on the battlefield. *The Art of Memory* was a mnemotechnic system which consisted of mentally visualizing a building with several rooms and niches. Each room or niche would be occupied by a figure that corresponded to each part of the content of the speech. It could be a statue, a character, or an object. The author of *Ad Herenium* recommends that practitioners imagine colorful and vivid scenes. Red paint or other media could be imaginatively applied for a grotesque, repulsive, or shocking effect and thus be memorized more effectively. It was also useful to add details standing for themes, phrases, and examples the speaker would later deliver. We call this power of visualization artificial memory. When the orator began his speech, he only had to walk through his imaginary building to remember all the parts of his argument. The treatise also recommended that the rooms be well illuminated.

*He tears and feeds one sheet to the shredder.*

MALE STUDENT. That someone actually could have practiced *The Art of Memory* seems unlikely to us. Not even Frances A. Yates (who wrote an excellent essay on the subject) is convinced of its effectiveness. Likewise, it seems odd that someone could memorize a book word for word in a foreign tongue, as Jacotot required.

TEACHER. Nevertheless, using his techniques, Jacotot managed to teach his pupils fluency in a new language in record time. In his opinion, three precepts must be adopted to accomplish this feat:

*As he enumerates them, the FEMALE STUDENT writes the following on the blackboard while the MALE STUDENT feeds more papers into a nearby shredder.*

TEACHER. 1. All people are equally intelligent. 2. All people have received from God the faculty of learning by themselves. 3. Everything is in everything.

*Replacing the chalk, FEMALE STUDENT lifts some papers from the teacher's desk as she passes and reads them, pacing the room.*

FEMALE STUDENT. Joseph Jacotot proved that using his method he could teach other languages, mathematics, and even something he was ignorant of himself—music, painting. The teacher could be ignorant and still instruct his pupils, since what mattered was to emancipate them from the authority of teachers. Traditional pedagogy implied that the tutor transmitted to the student things that she would never be able to understand by herself. Jacotot saw the very act of explaining as an exercise in power that drained the student of confidence and suppressed her talents. It was not necessary to explain once the student had learned through her own efforts, by trial and error, the necessary language to master a discipline. [*halting at the window*] After learning these principles anyone could grasp anything she put her mind to simply by remembering how she had learned to learn.

[*to the LITTLE GIRL*] Many artists today attempt something similar. When they talk about “process” in a work, they mean a personal and erratic learning process.

*The FEMALE STUDENT lets her papers fall into a waiting shredder.*

MALE STUDENT. [*withdrawing more loose papers from his desk*] The artist Rikrit Tiravanija was the main speaker at the Mexican version of Anton Vidokle's United Nations Plaza some years ago. This project was essentially a traveling forum where artists and writers from around the world interacted and discussed the most diverse topics. At the conference, Tiravanija described his project, "The Land," a sort of residency space for artists that involved gradually modifying a small stretch of land within a forest in Thailand. He invited other artists from around the world to design buildings, meditate, solve practical problems, etc. Some guests responded by looking for ecologically viable solutions to local problems. Philip Parreno and François Roche, for example, proposed to design a satellite communications system. To generate the required energy they came up with the idea of using elephant dung. They brought in an elephant that could also do certain chores needed at The Land. But nobody had anticipated the enormous amount of food the animal required, and the project was dropped. Somebody in the audience asked Rikrit if he considered himself an expert or an amateur. He replied that he didn't think along those lines at all.

The ignorant teacher is a recurring figure in contemporary Mexico, where the corrupt teachers' union and the omnipresent Televisa broadcasting network have been instrumental in defining national politics. In several recent studies, Mexico appeared as one of the worst-educated countries. The union mafia allows terribly prepared teachers to work in public schools and consumes most of the available budget for education, and the Televisa network is an ideological machine committed to holding the political system hostage, with the excuse that they are giving the people what they want. Both institutions are key factors in Mexico's educational

catastrophe, which in turn has fueled the much more visible surge in drug-related crimes across the country. Now Televisa and the teacher's union have joined forces in order to transmit a populist TV show. *Everybody Has an Answer* is the ironic title of this Jeopardy-style program, which is designed to make a spectacle of people's ignorance. And this is the way union leaders want to clean up their public image.

FEMALE STUDENT. [*removing a paper tacked to a cork board*] Jacotot evoked the figure of the ignorant teacher in a contrasting way. [*reading*] His ideas flourished in nineteenth-century France, which lacked teachers for its recently emancipated populace. With the help of his ideas, he said, parents without resources could teach vital skills for the development of their children if they first managed to emancipate themselves from the costly system of education. The citizenry should be willing to abandon their inherited notion of their own general ignorance. Their self-perceived inferiority made it appear necessary that teachers explain even the most obvious matters. Anyone can teach himself anything with hard work.

*Another sheaf into the shredder.*

MALE STUDENT. It may seem paradoxical but it's true that many forms of mass media like radio and television have proliferated by claiming to fulfill a pedagogical function. These media frequently asserted that they would bring progress to every corner of the earth. But their ideological function is most obvious in totalitarian regimes, where leaders transmit speeches nonstop, speeches that justify the actions of the State to its subjects. The French theorist Guy Debord notoriously unmasked the same coercive operations in our apparently democratic contexts.

FEMALE STUDENT. Perhaps *The Art of Memory* as described by Yates seems so fantastic to us because in our time images are

mainly used to make us forget. Television from our perspective is an immense procession of images that seem designed to completely neutralize almost any meaningful message, while stereotypical narratives, characters, and formats are repeated *ad nauseam*.

TEACHER. *The Art of Memory* was rescued from obscurity when people started to think about virtual reality. We'll soon be nostalgic for those cheesy scenes where pixelated surfers equipped with special gloves and helmets found unlimited information in a virtual library. Perhaps we have already realized how ridiculous those interfaces were, but virtual spaces prevailed in Duke Nuke'em and other games that supplanted the perception of real bodies and movement.

*As he continues, the FEMALE STUDENT plucks papers from the wall and drops them into the shredders one by one.*

TEACHER. The pleasure of exploring one labyrinth after another, memorizing routes and learning useless skills is what has motivated the thousands now interconnected via virtual communities. The success of video games is due to the fact that they promote an interminable process of pointless learning. Our bloodthirstiness is not, as some think, what makes these games so successful. It's the pleasure of high-speed, programmed learning that poses no risk—except the risk that we will waste most of our lives online.

MALE STUDENT. The Internet, in spite of the zillion ways it affords us to waste time, is still an invaluable and unprecedented media for self-education. Nevertheless, the Internet poses other problems as well and is still far from fulfilling its utopian promise.

FEMALE STUDENT. [*plucks and reads*] Jacotot's findings gained in fame and recognition. Some tried to include his ideas in

their own progressive agendas. But Jacotot disagreed with any program that retained an explicating teacher—any character who played the part of expert, placed over all the others. Surprisingly, his ideas did not endorse revolutionary state politics. He thought that as soon as people started talking about new institutions, inequalities would be reinstated. In his view, the emancipation of the individual was incompatible with the stultifying logic of society. But Jacotot did envision happy, coequal, ephemeral experiences humans could share *sans* hierarchies. Equality had to be a starting point, not a goal to be achieved in the future.

MALE STUDENT. Jacques Rancière's 1987 account of the life and work of Joseph Jacotot is akin to the dissidence in permanent retreat envisioned by his fellow philosophers Deleuze and Guattari. Many other authors of the time also tried to understand the lessons learned during the student upheavals in 1968; these lessons need to be relearned through the recent student demonstrations in Europe.

*The FEMALE STUDENT looks out the window onto the garden.*

FEMALE STUDENT. How quiet it is.

*Lights fade to the sound of paper shredding.*

# The Banyan Tree

Mirene Arsanios

*Lights up slowly on ELSA. She is sitting at a fold-out desk stacked with papers and lit by a modest lamp. She is young, wears glasses, and takes notes like a stenographer. Her black hair is pulled away from her face. Her speech moves from cool reportage to warmer commentary. Her tone and demeanor reveal her fondness for FARES.*

*MAASRI stands behind a wooden podium placed at the center of the stage. He is dressed in a loose grey suit without tie. He is formal but amiable.*

*FARES is dressed in a white shirt, faded blue jeans, and leather sandals. He speaks through a hand-held megaphone.*

*Withdrawing a piece of paper from the stack on her desk, ELSA begins to read.*

ELSA. The banyan tree's roots are also its trunk, branches, and occasionally its leaves. As branches, roots, or trunks germinate and grow, they generate other branches, roots, trunks, and leaves. From a plant a trunk, and from a trunk more trunks, and then a leaf generates a branch. The banyan inverts the gravity of the gaze and disturbs the theory that establishes a point of origin: it could never survive within such theoretical lines.

*Faint sounds of a crowd in the distance. Lights up slowly on MAASRI.*

MAASRI. I, Maher Maasri, will coordinate today's session and would like to start with one minute of silence in commemoration of President Nasser and the thousands of innocent victims in Jordan.

ELSA. [*reading to the audience*] Maasri was too good to be a revolutionary. He knew how to orchestrate empathy in his speeches using power and silence. His rhetorical skills helped him lead the student council and, every Wednesday, to preside over the Speakers' Corner. Applying the principles of the cause pragmatically, he negotiated the present and anticipated the future with a smile. Fares accused Maasri of being a politician. His positions, he thought, resulted in an aporia.

*Lights on FARES backstage.*

FARES. The cause can't be equivalent to what gave it birth since ultimately reason can't justify one's adherence to a cause.

ELSA. Fares dropped out of the movement for reasons that are still unclear. Some said that he had no respect for democratic

principles, which is the same as saying that he applied them too literally. Others were convinced that a deep rivalry opposed him to the pragmatic Maasri. I think he dropped out because of something else, like the unbearable summer heat. He dropped out but never missed a session.

The Speakers' Corner was held every Wednesday at the American University of Beirut from 1969 to 1975. Strikes, protests, and poetry contests caused changes in political coalitions and occasionally interrupted the gatherings. I am dutiful. I transcribe the speakers' commentaries, accusations, declarations of war, and betrayals. This year, 1975, marks the official beginning of the Lebanese civil war, and the end of our weekly quorums. In 1971, Maasri requested one minute of silence in commemoration of President Nasser and the innocent victims in Jordan.

MAASRI. I would also like to remind you that the only limitations at the Speakers' Corner are that the language to be used is English and that no obscenities are to be uttered.

ELSA. Fares' English was mined with misspelled words and grammatical curiosities. He didn't care. He lived in a world where ideas were independent of syntax, where language was only a tool. He also believed in watery acts of love, and he was convinced that our bed was a baptismal river where we fed off each other by pouring water over our heads. I took notes.

*Elsa writes the following in her notebook. As she writes, her sentences are projected live on a screen at the back of the stage.*

"Ideas exist within a syntax through which we struggle in order to fight our history of domination, where there is no other way to decolonize the language but by using language itself." [reading] Regardless, roots keep growing underground, and, in the case of Fares, also above it.

MAASRI. [*to FARES*] We can persist in our trends because the money the U.S. is giving AUB is the money derived from our petroleum. We have the right to fight the U.S. to get back what we own. Our only solution is revolution, or fighting back against the imperialists. And this is what we are doing in Palestine.

ELSA. [*reading*] Palestinian sunbirds, blackcaps, and common mynas occupied the banyan tree in their transit from Eurasia. When we were something, not someone, we reclaimed its shade. Here, sentences never began with “I feel.” I jot down some notes. “Preambles are shortened by those who can’t draw a distinction between the past and the present.”

FARES. Total freedom is no more easy to achieve than individual freedom.

*Sounds of the crowd increase.*

ELSA. Someone says something about public opinion in the West. A visiting student, American, female, keeps referring to a paper that she keeps in her pocket. A pile of books rests on the podium. Fares’ notebook opens on a page he just wrote.

[*ELSA reading*] *La logique de l’implicite prend son impulsion dans la remarque que tout constat se double du fait qu’il existe comme constat. La logique de l’implicite sera donc une tentative pour doubler le sens de son existence, et non de l’existence de ce dont il est le sens. C’est aussi, d’une certaine manière, une tentative pour mettre en place les débuts d’un double de la logique. Cette logique ne porte plus sur les règles de la prédication, ou des valeurs de vérité d’une proposition, mais sur le rapport de la proposition à l’énonciation. Le sens simple, explicite, se double du fait qu’il est énoncé, et cette doublure vient, en retour, modifier le sens de ce qui est ainsi énoncé. Le sens se détermine alors comme un double rapport:*

*rapport à l'acte qui le produit, implicite, et à l'acte qu'il décrit, explicite.*

ELSA. [*writing while she speaks*] The impulse driving the logic of the implicit lies in the observation that all affirmation exists as such. The logic of the implicit is an attempt to double the meaning of its existence and not of the existence of what it signifies. In a way, it—the logic of the implicit—attempts to think the beginning of a double logic. This logic doesn't rely on the rules of predication, or on what is considered true in a proposition. It relies on the relationship between the proposition and its enunciation. The proposition's simple and explicit meaning is doubled by the fact of its enunciation, which produces another meaning. This doubling—of meaning—will alter in turn the meaning of what is uttered. Meaning is consequently determined in a twofold relationship: the act that produces the utterance, which is implicit, and the act that the utterance describes, which is explicit.

*Sounds of the crowd slowly abate.*

[*ELSA reading*] The girl who seemed to have lost something has found it. It's a pen, a red-ink pen. Spoken words intrude, then overwhelm the background noise—the unarticulated thoughts still belonging to the multitude of other thoughts, flawed decisions, and real gossip. To speak, one needs to stand up. If one remains seated, ideas stay within the multitude they belong to. Fares is wearing a white shirt, a pair of light-blue jeans, and the leather sandals we bought together in India last summer.

FARES. Don't think we can't get arms and that we won't use them!

ELSA. Fares dropped out to join the armed section of the CPP but never missed a Wednesday session. He stood next to the banyan tree in obstinate silence and listened to rumors,

speculations, and declamations with unwavering attention. He absorbed words without returning them. I made sense of his words after the river had dried up, turning hope into a repetition of future hope. [*writing*] “A proposition could not be uniquely understood through the content of its meaning but had to be considered through the conditions of its enunciation, which produces a more implicit, contingent meaning to the initial proposition. ‘Don’t think we can’t get arms and that we won’t use them!’ could also mean ...”

FARES. What kind of a revolution from above has the new government got us? Our problem is the result of the country’s structure ...

ELSA. ... that he was just as pragmatic as Maasri, because he interpreted echoes as if they were words in their own right. Under the banyan tree, nothing distinguished words from their echoes or a branch from a root. (Which doesn’t mean that in the dark night cows are black.) Yet he had dropped out. He left with a gesture that interrupted all reverberations. He said he would take arms and he did. I suspected that he kept coming back to hear war declarations under the banyan tree out of nostalgia for that moment of possibility in which words could become something other than what they meant. That was most of the time, I thought. [*writing*] “If people do what they say, how is the meaning of what you say not contained in the meaning of the words?” [*reading*] You said the meanings of words are doubled by other, new, different meanings produced at the moment of their utterance. That this moment holds the conditions for a new meaning in the present. If there were a complete coincidence between a word and its meaning, there would be no doubles, no echoes, no lies, and no future.

*She pauses a long while.*

While Fares did what he said he would, the banyan tree kept

speculating and expanding its territory to the west. Budding roots softened the asphalt, and new branches, from the roots, united with the surrounding trees.

FARES. [*dropping the megaphone*] Don't think we can't get arms and that we won't use them!

*Lights dim on FARES.*

ELSA. It is 37 degrees centigrade and 5:45 in the afternoon. The debris of our past conversations is incandescent, scattered around the limestone platform of the Speakers' Corner, emanating heat. Having clearly served a purpose, it deserves to be left alone. Other remains persist as reminders of a fallacious argument. Students seek refuge at the milk bar or under the banyan tree. Pines, cedars, cats, migratory and local birds coexist without passion, while the city erodes under promises.

*Lights dim on ELSA.*

MAASRI. [*to the audience*] There will be food, dancing, fun. Join our trip to Byblos Beach. Do try to come.

*Lights dim, then black.*



# were it not for the price of desertion

Michael Ashkin

*A podium downstage right. The stage is dark but for a dim light on the podium, on top of which is a small reading lamp.*

*The POET enters from the audience, carrying a crisp stack of papers. He is tall and thin, head shaved and bare. He wears a black T-shirt, black jeans, and black work boots. He smiles affably in acknowledgement of a few people in the audience and seems in no rush to begin. He takes a bottle of Powers whiskey from beneath the podium, places it in view, and looks around, unclear of what to do next. The INTERN rushes forward from the front row with a small glass. The POET pours a whiskey, sips, and begins to read.*

*The POET should read the following at an even pace, not rushing, without emotion or inflection, occasionally taking a moment to sip from his glass, pouring more Powers as needed. The liquor has no apparent affect on his delivery.*

were it not for the distance between here and there  
were it not for the endless expanse  
were it not for the minefields  
were it not for the lack of a map  
were it not for the oncoming night  
were it not for the shortness of breath  
were it not for the unmarked border  
were it not for the lack of cover  
were it not for the vultures above  
were it not for the bandits  
were it not for the smugglers  
were it not for the stories told  
were it not for the friend who returned  
were it not for the friend who did not return  
were it not for the promise of no better  
were it not for the lack of water  
were it not for the uncalloused feet  
were it not for the unhealed wounds  
were it not for the price of trespassing  
were it not for the lack of a plan  
were it not for the lack of faith  
were it not for the lack of finance  
were it not for the lack of petrol  
were it not for the war  
were it not for the other war  
were it not for the escapist delusion  
were it not for the death of the dream  
were it not for the unserviceable weapon  
were it not for the uncertain distance  
were it not for the harboring of no illusions  
were it not for the end of history  
were it not for the weight of history  
were it not for the death of God  
were it not for the end of days  
were it not for the death of ideology  
were it not for the psychoanalysis

were it not for the next appointment  
were it not for the cynicism  
were it not for the self-scrutiny  
were it not for the addiction  
were it not for the propaganda  
were it not for the natural conservatism  
were it not for the pragmatic streak  
were it not for the failed revolution  
were it not for the reunification  
were it not for the reeducation  
were it not for the neighborhood watch  
were it not for the pessimistic outlook  
were it not for the eternal optimism  
were it not for the chronic depression  
were it not for the vertigo  
were it not for the agoraphobia  
were it not for the paranoia  
were it not for the sneaking suspicion  
were it not for the justifiable fears  
were it not for the arm of the law  
were it not for the life on the lam  
were it not for the life of poverty  
were it not for the marketing of dreams  
were it not for the marketplace of ideas  
were it not for the inertia of bodies  
were it not for the sheer laziness  
were it not for the lack of commitment  
were it not for the prior commitment  
were it not for the insufficient desire  
were it not for the incapacity  
were it not for the boredom  
were it not for the doubt  
were it not for the complete exhaustion  
were it not for the consecutive failures  
were it not for the good teachers  
were it not for the government

were it not for the range of a rifle  
were it not for the flies  
were it not for the rumors  
were it not for the conspiracy  
were it not for the paid informants  
were it not for the outstanding debts  
were it not for the eye of the law  
were it not for the lack of mercy  
were it not for the lack of energy  
were it not for the lack of focus  
were it not for the lack of perspective  
were it not for the long-term consequence  
were it not for the lack of the long term  
were it not for the censure  
were it not for the certain pursuit  
were it not for the eternal solitude  
were it not for the certain betrayal  
were it not for the lack of a witness  
were it not for the lack of trust  
were it not for the gauntlet  
were it not for the trial by fire  
were it not for the desert  
were it not for the desert beyond the desert  
were it not for the no turning back  
were it not for the pillars of salt  
were it not for the bridges burnt  
were it not for the common sense  
were it not for the medication  
were it not for the strict schedule  
were it not for the lifelong burden  
were it not for the way it is  
were it not for the way it will always be  
were it not for the sheer impossibility  
were it not for the utter stupidity  
were it not for the warmth of a bed  
were it not for the warmth of a lover

were it not for the all that would be squandered  
were it not for the statistical evidence  
were it not for the length of the sentence  
were it not for the extended parole  
were it not for the obvious  
were it not for the any number of reasons  
were it not for the any additional reasons  
were it not for the same reasons as before  
were it not for the selfish motives  
were it not for the all that one knows  
were it not for the trouble it would cause  
were it not for the night sweats  
were it not for the knock at the door  
were it not for the guards in the lobby  
were it not for the killers in the hall  
were it not for the how quickly it would end  
were it not for the margin of error  
were it not for the inadequate training  
were it not for the severity of the beating  
were it not for the how ungrateful it would appear  
were it not for the how ungrateful it would be  
were it not for the opportunity awaited  
were it not for the labor invested  
were it not for the effort taken  
were it not for the privileged position  
were it not for the promised promotion  
were it not for the accrued vacation  
were it not for those left behind  
were it not for those who would be all too happy  
were it not for those whom one would least suspect  
were it not for those who would seize the opportunity  
were it not for those who would handsomely profit  
were it not for those who would gladly join in  
were it not for those who would step forward to say  
were it not for those who would jump to take one's place  
were it not for the length to which they would go

were it not for those who would so quickly forget  
were it not for those who would answer without thinking  
were it not for those seemingly without conscience  
were it not for the chaos that would surely ensue  
were it not for the atrocities on all sides  
were it not for the inevitable reprisals  
were it not for the innocents involved  
were it not for the lives of others  
were it not for the days of our lives  
were it not for the wife and children  
were it not for the future generations  
were it not for the string of dependents  
were it not for the golden years  
were it not for the loss of face  
were it not for that which would appear in print  
were it not for the shame  
were it not for the tripwires  
were it not for the dogs  
were it not for the night vision  
were it not for the motion detection  
were it not for the bunker blasters  
were it not for the highway of death  
were it not for the degree to which this has been anticipated  
were it not for those just waiting for this to happen  
were it not for the swiftness of the response  
were it not for the joining of forces  
were it not for the hunt  
were it not for the inevitable end  
were it not for the indignity  
were it not for the denunciations  
were it not for the broken chair  
were it not for the cord  
were it not for the treacherous ascent  
were it not for the point of no return  
were it not for the poor instincts  
were it not for the hopelessness

were it not for the helicopters  
were it not for the searchlights  
were it not for the pinpoint accuracy  
were it not for the death from on high  
were it not for the limited resources  
were it not for the reliable sources  
were it not for the unreliable information  
were it not for the untrustworthy comrades  
were it not for the wavering determination  
were it not for the unwavering observation  
were it not for the unerring description  
were it not for the voices in one's head  
were it not for the slow reflexes  
were it not for the no recollection  
were it not for the poor memory  
were it not for the machines  
were it not for the indecision  
were it not for the yearning for home  
were it not for the suffering  
were it not for the hunger  
were it not for the life of crime  
were it not for the bodily violence  
were it not for the image of death  
were it not for the suspicion that all is for the best  
were it not for the suspicion that one need try even harder  
were it not for the popular press  
were it not for the daily mail  
were it not for the obituary column  
were it not for the posthumous tax  
were it not for the scent of death  
were it not for the smirks of delight  
were it not for the odds and the bets  
were it not for the official record  
were it not for the complicit failure  
were it not for the torture of friends  
were it not for the public disclosure

were it not for the laughter over drinks  
were it not for the lawlessness of the law  
were it not for the extraordinary rendition  
were it not for the deportation of colleagues  
were it not for the execution of comrades  
were it not for the sirens in the night  
were it not for the disappearance  
were it not for the confiscation  
were it not for the tapping of lines  
were it not for the taking of hostages  
were it not for the darkened headlights  
were it not for the bounty hunters  
were it not for the vigilantes  
were it not for the border patrol  
were it not for the raked sand  
were it not for the infrared  
were it not for the wrong-colored shirt  
were it not for the lack of papers  
were it not for the previous record  
were it not for the outstanding warrant  
were it not for the legal abyss  
were it not for the corporate reach  
were it not for the body cavities  
were it not for the colonial legacy  
were it not for the electric drill  
were it not for the sense deprivation  
were it not for the stress position  
were it not for the sharing of records  
were it not for the police reciprocity  
were it not for the insurance inspector  
were it not for the blacklist  
were it not for the lack of an alias  
were it not for the lack of an accomplice  
were it not for the lack of a foreign account  
were it not for the childhood memory  
were it not for the all that one loves

were it not for the face in the mirror  
were it not for the no one has ever  
were it not for the no one will ever  
were it not for the status quo  
were it not for the wall between thinking and doing  
were it not for the wall between thinking and saying  
were it not for the wall between saying and doing  
were it not for the unspoken obstacle  
were it not for the unacknowledged motive  
were it not for the unknown reason  
were it not for the all of the above  
were it not for the none of the above  
were it not for the enough of the above  
were it not for the time it would take  
were it not for the monday morning  
were it not for the surveillance balloon  
were it not for the fence  
were it not for the wall  
were it not for the fence beyond the wall  
were it not for the roadblock  
were it not for the concertina  
were it not for the jackals  
were it not for the snakes  
were it not for the as far as the eye can see  
were it not for the noonday sun  
were it not for the subzero night  
were it not for the underbrush  
were it not for poor footing  
were it not for the flash flooding  
were it not for the unpotable water  
were it not for the radio transmitter  
were it not for the observation tower  
were it not for the level of readiness  
were it not for the full deployment  
were it not for the last hundred meters  
were it not for the traces of failure

were it not for the military advisers  
were it not for the gun runners  
were it not for the unpaid informants  
were it not for the shoot on sight  
were it not for the extradition  
were it not for the berm  
were it not for the special forces  
were it not for the forensic evidence  
were it not for the medical records  
were it not for the distinctive features  
were it not for the lessons one has learned  
were it not for the lessons one has yet to learn  
were it not for the local trackers  
were it not for the price of a guide  
were it not for the statute of limitations  
were it not for the plastic ties  
were it not for the plastic hood  
were it not for the darkened windows  
were it not for the empty rooms  
were it not for the corridors  
were it not for the unnumbered doors  
were it not for the blank walls  
were it not for the empty courtyards  
were it not for the forced confessions  
were it not for the blind obedience  
were it not for the inbred loyalty  
were it not for the length of the leash  
were it not for the chain of command  
were it not for the hand of fate  
were it not for the pledge of allegiance  
were it not for the play by the rules  
were it not for the family tradition  
were it not for the sworn oath  
were it not for the holy vows  
were it not for the new year's resolution  
were it not for the string of excuses

were it not for the empty lies  
were it not for the rhetorical diversions  
were it not for the weekly confessions  
were it not for the smug knowledge  
were it not for the sly grins  
were it not for the self-hatred  
were it not for the self-ridicule  
were it not for the averted eyes  
were it not for the harsh stares  
were it not for the spit in the face  
were it not for the gossip  
were it not for the last words  
were it not for the last rites  
were it not for the dead man walking  
were it not for the price of treason  
were it not for the stiff upper lip  
were it not for the economic recovery  
were it not for the recent reforms  
were it not for the next year's bonus  
were it not for the holiday season  
were it not for the season premiere  
were it not for the weekly game  
were it not for the upcoming elections  
were it not for the recent improvements  
were it not for the public example  
were it not for the public spectacle  
were it not for the incentive program  
were it not for the five-year plan  
were it not for the televised display  
were it not for the media circus  
were it not for the nightly news  
were it not for the eternal night  
were it not for the night in fog  
were it not for the nightmare  
were it not for the morning after  
were it not for the time-tested method

were it not for the imaginable end  
were it not for the unimaginable end  
were it not for the end of the imaginable  
were it not for the cowardice  
were it not for the terror  
were it not for the terror of the terror  
were it not for the redundancy  
were it not for the redundancy of language  
were it not for the language of redundancy  
were it not for the desire to sleep  
were it not for the need to forget  
were it not for the wind in the trees  
were it not for the sand in the eyes  
were it not for the napalm at dawn  
were it not for the code of honor  
were it not for the standard operating procedure  
were it not for the banality of the problem  
were it not for the banality of the solution  
were it not for the exhaustion of philosophy  
were it not for the philosophy of exhaustion  
were it not for the horror  
were it not for the draft  
were it not for the war  
were it not for the war after the war  
were it not for the endless taking of leave  
were it not for the eternal return  
were it not for French Indochina  
were it not for Vietnam  
were it not for the inescapable cliché  
were it not for the cold earth  
were it not for the cold blue eyes  
were it not for the cold hard facts  
were it not for the ineffable  
were it not for the unspoken wisdom  
were it not for the hard-won experience  
were it not for the nine times out of ten

were it not for the roll of the dice  
were it not for the abolition of chance  
were it not for the no man's land  
were it not for the distant haze  
were it not for the smoke in the distance  
were it not for the roadside wreckage  
were it not for the deserted towns  
were it not for the dead cattle  
were it not for the fallow fields  
were it not for the stench  
were it not for the no signs of life  
were it not for the packs of dogs  
were it not for the child soldiers  
were it not for the no pity taken  
were it not for the crystal methamphetamine  
were it not for the demilitarized zone  
were it not for the mountain ridge  
were it not for the dire prediction  
were it not for the death foretold  
were it not for the words of the prophet  
were it not for the death of the subject  
were it not for the epic proportions  
were it not for the utter insignificance  
were it not for the obsolescence  
were it not for the tacit acceptance  
were it not for the slow acquiescence  
were it not for the sudden capitulation  
were it not for the one-way street  
were it not for the exit wound  
were it not for the arbitrary border  
were it not for the false community  
were it not for the private militia  
were it not for the communist threat  
were it not for the red scare  
were it not for the yellow peril  
were it not for the black water

were it not for the barbarians at the gate  
were it not for the endless war  
were it not for the war beyond the war  
were it not for the half-baked claims  
were it not for the ever-present danger  
were it not for the easy alibi  
were it not for the axis of evil  
were it not for the simple solution  
were it not for the cathartic release  
were it not for the time and again  
were it not for the signs of progress  
were it not for the sincere knowledge  
were it not for the personal belief  
were it not for the individual preference  
were it not for the acquired taste  
were it not for the informed decision  
were it not for the unbiased opinion  
were it not for the constant distraction  
were it not for the daily chores  
were it not for the high hopes  
were it not for the good prospects  
were it not for the unexplored options  
were it not for the promising futures  
were it not for the bright horizons  
were it not for the vanishing point  
were it not for the hashish  
were it not for the economic indicators  
were it not for the private property  
were it not for the end of the line  
were it not for the no end in sight  
were it not for the end of the film  
were it not for the love of art  
were it not for the love of beauty  
were it not for the love of the idea  
were it not for the idea of love  
were it not for the rekindled love

were it not for the renewed vows  
were it not for the deep regrets  
were it not for the redoubled efforts  
were it not for the stumble and fall  
were it not for the guilt  
were it not for the guilty pleasure  
were it not for the sheer pleasure  
were it not for the prostitution  
were it not for the fetish  
were it not for the coming attractions  
were it not for the second coming  
were it not for the last judgment  
were it not for the coming messiah  
were it not for the exegesis  
were it not for the heretical nature  
were it not for the talmudic detail  
were it not for the shrapnel  
were it not for the thin skin  
were it not for the twisted fate  
were it not for the twisted logic  
were it not for the established order  
were it not for the elemental design  
were it not for the chronic fatigue  
were it not for the sleepless nights  
were it not for the irrefutable evidence  
were it not for the forensic ability  
were it not for the natural disposition  
were it not for the genetic evidence  
were it not for the death of the author  
were it not for the plagiarism  
were it not for the confusion  
were it not for the too late already  
were it not for the enough already  
were it not for the already tired  
were it not for the already tried  
were it not for the already disproven

were it not for the pointless effort  
were it not for the lost ideals  
were it not for the come what may  
were it not for the every man for himself  
were it not for the God against all  
were it not for the lack of a better idea  
were it not for the no new ideas  
were it not for the cyclical history  
were it not for the all paths lead to  
were it not for the shared destiny  
were it not for the romantic illusion  
were it not for the closed borders  
were it not for the tragic sensibility  
were it not for the catastrophe  
were it not for the castration  
were it not for the no fresh start  
were it not for the personal demons  
were it not for the hell to pay  
were it not for the hands of time  
were it not for the winds of war  
were it not for the were it not for  
were it not for the no end in sight  
were it not for the unexploded ordnance  
were it not for the cluster bombs  
were it not for the endless repetition  
were it not for the contested border  
were it not for the amassing of troops  
were it not for the professional army  
were it not for the recent outbreak  
were it not for the barricades  
were it not for the cleanup operation  
were it not for the no prisoners taken  
were it not for the wall of the barracks  
were it not for the floor of the morgue  
were it not for the universal reluctance  
were it not for the disenchantment

were it not for the Fall of Man  
were it not for the Expulsion  
were it not for the army of one  
were it not for the be all you can be  
were it not for the ready and waiting  
were it not for the level of threat  
were it not for the level of alert  
were it not for the inkling  
were it not for the premonition  
were it not for the sneaky feeling  
were it not for the ominous prediction  
were it not for the ambush  
were it not for the caught unawares  
were it not for the fire at will  
were it not for the stupefaction  
were it not for the martyrdom  
were it not for the unmarked grave  
were it not for the more important issues  
were it not for the question of relevance  
were it not for the questionable priority  
were it not for the larger question  
were it not for the matter at hand  
were it not for the all things in due time  
were it not for the reasonable delay  
were it not for the unreasonable expectation  
were it not for the order of things  
were it not for the all things must pass  
were it not for the no need to dwell  
were it not for the no point in complaining  
were it not for the object lesson  
were it not for the humiliation  
were it not for the futility  
were it not for the idiocy  
were it not for the poverty of ideas  
were it not for the inopportune moment  
were it not for the awkward timing

were it not for the tyranny of time  
 were it not for the so far so good  
 were it not for the so beyond reach  
 were it not for the unpredictable forces  
 were it not for the invariable constants  
 were it not for the innumerable variables  
 were it not for the factors beyond control  
 were it not for the unchanging conditions  
 were it not for the sea change  
 were it not for the seismic event  
 were it not for the laws of nature  
 were it not for the course of events  
 were it not for the entropic nature  
 were it not for the natural selection  
 were it not for the class system  
 were it not for the selection criteria  
 were it not for the social Darwinism  
 were it not for the chronic fatigue  
 were it not for the oppressor  
 were it not for the man  
 were it not for the Red Sea  
 were it not for the red tide  
 were it not for the riptide  
 were it not for the troubled waters  
 were it not for the uncharted seas  
 were it not for the prevailing winds  
 were it not for the wreckage on the beach  
 were it not for the oceans of sand  
 were it not for the dunes  
 were it not for the dunes beyond the dunes

*Pause. He finishes what is in his glass.*

Thank you.

*Exit.*

# An Escape Act

Sean Dockray

*The lighting is even and cool. It is morning. A mirror hangs midstage, indicating a wall; a window is suggested to the left. In the center, a long oak dining table and bench littered with the remnants of last night's party.*

*Two men, A and B: A is barefoot and wears jeans and a white T-shirt. B is older, in a white terry-cloth robe and brown leather house slippers. The two could equally be played by women, in which case A is still barefoot, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, and B is older, in a white terry-cloth robe and black army boots. Around B's neck, in either case, is a clunky string of wooden beads.*

*There should be a clear sense of distinction between "what" is said and "how" the actors express it. Their manner should reference a romantic melodrama or telenovela, whereas the general delivery of the lines is sober; they should not sound like complaints.*

*It is up to the director or actor to distinguish the difference between a gesture and verbal delivery.*

*A is seated at the table sipping tea. B enters, sits, and lights a cigarette.*

A. [to B] For decades we have spoken about the death of the author, but no one really believes it. Every disavowal of authorship is seen as a stroke of genius, a clever new take on a timeless concern. The less we see the hand of the artist in the work of art, the more we want his or her signature or at least a voice. Even the formation of collectives is not so much a renunciation of authorship as an overinvestment in it. The less there is to say, the more important it is who's speaking.

*A stands, crosses the stage, and halts abruptly in front of the mirror.*

B. I am speaking to you today to make a proposal. Just first let me elaborate.

A. [to the mirror] The most sustained critiques of authorship have been made from the spheres of art and education; however, not coincidentally, these spheres have the greatest investment in the notion. Credit and accreditation are the mechanisms for attaching symbolic capital to individuals via degrees and other lines on CVs. That curriculum vitæ—[to the audience] the course of my life?—is the paperwork I keep because nobody else does! [turning dramatically to B] It's an inverted credit report, evidence of underpaid work, kept orderly with an expectation of some future return.

*A takes a few tentative steps toward the table.*

Today, authorship is the singular connection between my life and my CV, my self-presentation. More than that, it is my inability to break that connection, which hardens with time.

*A turns to look over the audience, worried. Clearly this is not the first time A has been jilted.*

B. [*icy mockery*] But I've invested so much.

A. [*wringing hands*] This is by no means restricted to the professionalized fields of art and education. One familiar example marches hand in hand with the increasing prominence of the CV: "social spaces" on the Internet, which historically would include bulletin boards, chat rooms, forums, and now social networks, have become progressively less anonymous.

*Moving behind B, caressing shoulders, soothing.*

Now Facebook compels us to attach our real identities to a single "profile," and we work on maintaining that profile for whoever is watching. All of this work, this self-documentation, this fidelity between our selves and our papers, is for what, for whom?

*A bends low to kiss B's cheek. B is unmoved.*

What is the consequence of a world where every person is armed with their *vitæ*, if not a "war of all against all"? It's that sensation that there are no teams, that everyone has got his or her own jersey, not to mention all those reports of feeling "stuck," "paranoid," "depressed," "floating," and "wanting to get out." My intention here is not moral judgment but unblinking description. What if authorship were not just another slain metanarrative, but rather the neoliberal foundation for the slogan Everyone is creative?

*A strides toward the audience, then stops, arms akimbo.*

B. [*rubbing the countertop in circles*] Outsourcing, crowd-sourcing, any way to get work done cheaply, maybe even pay

by giving them credit. Money doesn't matter as much when they've got credit cards.

A. [*moving to be seated*] Rather than taking authorship as a monolithic foundation of contemporary capitalism, to be affirmed or opposed—and the possibility, let alone the efficacy, of opposition is a question here—perhaps we can think of it as a mechanism, or a process, or a point of intervention? My proposal is for the formation of something in between a school, a collective, a secret society, and a union. Let's call it an escape act.

B. [*taking A's hand in something like goodwill*] Assuming everyone here is willing.

A. [*rapidly, to the audience*] First, we lose our real names. This isn't an absolute change of identity; instead, we'll count our numbers and invest in that many fictional individuals. Second, all of our cultural activity, whether individual or collective, will be done under one or more of these fictional names. It's not simply that each of us will have an alter ego, but that we'll have a multiplicity of alter egos available for use. Third, when one of these characters is offered an exhibition, residency, lecture, interview, performance, teaching position, or whatever, then any of us, and any number of us, might go. It will be a matter of joint discussion or convenience. Fourth, when any money is earned through sales, salary, commission, or stipend, it is shared equally.

B. [*luxuriating in the cigarette, eyes fixed on A*] Fifth, if one of us wants to exit this arrangement, then we'll "kill" one of the fictional individuals. The specifics are up to those who remain.

A. There's no doubt our system will come into irreconcilable conflict with the dominant one. To pick a mundane example, under present conditions none of us could realistically receive

an MFA. Perhaps one of us could contribute one? My point is that this act of ours is as much a learning process as it is an intervention. We will need to generate our own analysis of the art market and the art world; we will need to generate that knowledge that is otherwise known as collectivity; we will need to develop theories of contingency and sharing.

*A stares out at the audience. Long pause.*

B. [*to the audience*] I appreciate your patience and attention. Are there any questions? Shall we begin?

*A and B take questions from the audience, avoiding any speculation as to Sean Dockray's intentions. They may even make it clear that this is a rule set up by the author. This Q&A should be considered continuous with the performance. When questions subside, the lights dim, and A and B leave the stage.*



# A Dictionary of a Few Ordinary Thoughts

rum46

*A cardboard box stage right, lit from above. Stacked within the box are a series of neatly hand-painted signs arranged alphabetically.*

## A

Acting |'aktiŋg|  
 |'øktɪŋ| |'aktɪŋ|  
 noun, adjective [attrib.]:  
 action; staged thoughts;  
 being; puppet show; a  
 protest song (“*Your  
 land is my land ...*”)

## B

Blabbermouth |'blabəɹ,mouθ|  
 noun [informal]: distraction;  
 individual interruption  
 of collective thinking

Bullying |'boʊlēŋg|  
 noun, adjective [attrib.]:  
 power tactic; often used by  
 politicians to gain power,  
 to pinpoint scapegoats; the  
 structure of today’s media

## C

Consensus |kən'sensəs|  
 noun: meeting of minds;  
 comradeship; eye alignment;  
 unity in harmony; an  
 understanding; social  
 agreement; agreed  
 objectivity; e.g. *certain  
 states patenting a set of ...*

## D

Disappointment  
 |,disə'pointmənt|  
 noun: struggle; who

envies the other artists?;  
 who envies others?; the  
 never-ending story; loss of  
 love; loss of peace, love,  
 harmony, aspirations

Disorganized |dis'ɔrgə,nīzd|  
 adjective: describing a  
 community with individual  
 manifold dishierarchies  
 and disharmonies or a  
 chaotic way of structuring  
 work and life

## E

Elated |i-'lā-təd|  
 adj. [p.p. of verb tr. *to  
 elate*]: elevated; fired up; in  
 seventh heaven; jubilant;  
 puffed up; turned on; elation,  
 noun: interaction among  
 friends; generous, often loud  
 acknowledgement; ecstatic  
 energy; oh, eternal sunshine  
 of the spotless mind.

Expectation |,ekspek'tāʃən|  
 noun: demand; responsibility  
 to the community; trust  
 in the good in people;  
 aspirations again; money is  
 often a goal or desired object

## F

Food |foʊd|  
 noun: something sweet, sour,

or bitter put in your mouth  
to make you feel good; best if  
consumed collectively; dinner  
table; potluck; eat, pray, love;  
mindfulness and drinking

## G

Game |gāml  
noun: play; dispute; argue;  
polyphonic disagreement;  
hegemony; *know the  
ropes*; the staging of

## H

Humble |'həmbəl  
adjective: simple;  
insignificant; unpretentious;  
gentle; modest; mild;  
unselfish credit;  
underestimated collective  
action; docile: *a dog  
readily trained or taught*

## I

Identity |ɪ'dentitēl  
noun: lost profile; a  
rabbit hole; never-ending  
story; the track or path

## Individuality

|,ɪndə,vijə'walitēl  
noun: imploding ideologies;  
personality; subjectivity; bad  
or good habit; restlessness;  
a do-it-yourself project;

independence; rarity; inflated  
egos; e.g. *starfucked*

## J

Joyful |'joifəl  
adjective: reacting to  
unexpected happiness from  
others: *thanks!*; good-  
fortuned; the privileged;  
nonmotivated good feeling;  
our unconscious humming

## K

Knowledge |'nəlij  
noun: know-it-all; know-  
nothing; know all the  
ins and outs; know a  
trick or two; instant  
wisdom; slow pedagogy

## L

Language |'laNGgwijl  
noun: communication; local  
laughter; translating; an  
eye-opener; construction  
of identity; rhetorical  
manipulations; talking black;  
explaining something in a  
language no one else can  
understand . . . maybe you  
do not even understand  
it yourself!; speaking in  
tongues; stimulating words;  
words can affect power  
structures; misunderstanding,  
misinterpretations; a word

is a word; word into action; words must be (mis-)trusted; verbal images; making limitations, manipulations; verbal attitudes or opinions; transformation of the world; *It is said, there are three things in life you can't take back once you have used them: time, words, and opportunities*

Laziness |'leɪzɪnɪs|  
noun: everything you can ever think of doing on a Sunday; individual sloth; collective idleness; joyfully practicing no-work; the right to be lazy; care of the self

M  
Mobility |mō'bilətē|  
noun: the ability to move from A to Å; flexibility; transfer from one job to another; to transfer; to be in a transition zone; movement from one (community) to another; interaction between parallel societies; the daily commute; inclusion and exclusion

O  
Okay |'ō'kāl|  
exclamation [informal]:

ma'lesh; whatever; bé ados; ceart go leor; nē rregull; bine; va bene; u redu; zopw; rendben; sawa; w porzadku; okej

P  
Pocket money |'pækət 'mənē|  
noun: poetic economy; state funding

Q  
Quality |'kwälətē|  
noun: valued time; human resources; exchange economy; flexible; available for (work) 24 hours; communities; the Fab 5: economy; time; professionalism; quantity; know-how; validation: *hot or not?*

R  
Re-new |ri'n(y)oō|  
verb [trans.]: re-make; re-invent; re-set; re-claim; re-strict; re-direct; re-educated; re-examine; re-born

S  
Sociality |,sō sh ē'alədē|  
noun: possible solidarity; liberty, equality, fraternity; the state or quality of

being social; a mixed or blended network; a ripple

T

Tremble /'trembəl  
verb [intrans.]: shake nervously; insecure; mistrustful; prejudiced; breathtaking events

U

Uninterested |,ən'intristid;  
-'intə,restid  
adjective: in happy ignorance; phlegmatic; not participating; parasite procrastination; indifference; laziness

V

Victory /'vikt(ə)rēl  
noun: nothing else matters; *walk the line*

W

Wonderland /'wəndər,landl  
noun: dystopia; heterotopia; belief in society; peace, love, and understanding; *my precious*; our utopia

X

X /leksl |ɛksl  
noun: X is something you once had; X is a beer on

Christmas; X is a man or a woman; X is Xenophobia; X the unknown

Y

Yes /yesl  
exclamation, noun: yippee-yee yeah!; yummy; yeah!; yes-man; yes-men; yes mum; YES we can!

Z

Zombie /'zämbēl  
noun: zip it; back to zero; zig-zag ambiguous; zapper mentality; *kick the bucket*

*Stage is otherwise silent.*



## Biographies

EDUARDO ABAROA is an artist and writer working in the fields of sculpture, installation and life action. He recently directed the Ninth International Symposium of Art Theory in Mexico City (SITAC), and is currently course director at SOMA, an artist-initiated educational program and residency in Mexico City. In 2012 he published a book, *Ensayos sobre el público*, with Alias.

MIRENE ARSANIOS is a writer based in Beirut. She holds a master's in contemporary art theory from Goldsmiths College and teaches at the American University of Beirut. In 2007, she cofounded the collective 98weeks research project. She is currently pursuing an MFA in writing at the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College.

MICHAEL ASHKIN studied Middle Eastern languages and cultures and received a master's degree from Columbia. He worked on Wall Street for eight years before choosing to become an artist. He received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Ashkin teaches at Cornell University, where he is an associate professor in the Department of Art.

DARIO AZZELLINI is a lecturer at the Institute for Sociology at Johannes Kepler University in Linz, Austria; a writer; and a documentary filmmaker. He was an associate editor for *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest: 1500 to Present* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and is an active associate editor for *WorkingUSA*, for *Cuadernos de Marte* (a journal of war sociology, University of Buenos Aires) and the Web site workerscontrol.net.

SÉBASTIEN BERTHIER is an artist who lives and works in Stockholm. He initially trained as an architect, and his work revolves around the political dimension of public space, monuments, and the figure of the artist commissioned to realize them.

MARY WALLING BLACKBURN'S website is [welcomedoubleagent.com](http://welcomedoubleagent.com). Search terms used to locate [www.welcomedoubleagent.com](http://www.welcomedoubleagent.com) for the month of March 2013: microgestures art, mace mulleady, lost john mammoth cave, double agent urbanism, womens ass picture, "bucks at early fucks,"

kounellis, live parrot, 1967, huong ngo radical citizenship, submitzineforreview, hair brush from the french revolution, mammoth cave mummies, craters vietnam war, asian plucked hair, parts of body assignments for class 1, freud, sigmund, “fetishism,” miscellaneous papers, 1888-1938. vol. 5 of collected papers. 198-204. weegee human head cake box number, the rear and exist suzan lori parks free, hong an truong, Unknown search terms.

ZACHARY CAHILL is an interdisciplinary artist. His writings have appeared in many exhibition catalogues and in *Mousse*, the *Journal of Visual Culture*, *Rethinking Marxism*, and *Shifter Magazine*, and he is a regular contributor to Artforum.com. Cahill teaches in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, where he is also the coordinator of the Open Practice Committee.

CAMEL COLLECTIVE is the name under which Anthony Graves, Carla Herrera-Prats, and Lasse Lau have worked since 2005. Through exhibitions and performances such as “Howls for Bologna” at Overgaden Institut for Samtidskunst (2010), “A Facility Based on

Change” at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (2011), and “Una Obra Para Dos Pinturas” at the Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan (2012), the group’s exhibitions have centered on the problematics of labor, education, performance, and collectivity.

MÓNICA CASTILLO is an artist living in Mexico City and teaching at the National School of Painting, Sculpture, and Printmaking (La Escuela Nacional, also known as La Esmeralda); she also founded and directed (2004–07) the Visual Arts Program at Escuela Nacional de Artes de Yucatán, Mérida, México. She coordinates Clínicas de Especialización en Arte Contemporáneo (CEACO) in Oaxaca and continues to work on participatory projects related to education.

SANDE COHEN received a Ph.D. in intellectual history from UCLA. He taught at Brown (1976–1979), UCLA (1979–1987 and 2008–2009), and CalArts (1980–2009). He currently divides his time between the U.S. and Thailand, especially Chiang-mai. He is the author of *Historical Culture* (1986, University of California Press); *Academia and the Luster*

*of Capital* (1993, Minnesota); *French Theory in America* (coeditor, 2001, Routledge); and *History Out of Joint* (2006, Johns Hopkins), among other publications.

ANDREA CREUTZ is an artist based in Stockholm. She has been a guest professor at the Institute of Sociology at Copenhagen University and is currently a senior lecturer in fine arts at Konstfack–University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm. She graduated from the Royal Danish Academy in 2000 and was a Whitney Independent Study Program fellow in 2002–2003.

ANTHONY DAVIES is a London based writer and organizer and a founding member of MayDay Rooms ([maydayrooms.org](http://maydayrooms.org)).

EVA DÍAZ is an art historian based in New York. Her book on Black Mountain College will be released in the fall of 2013 by University of Chicago Press, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the founding of the college. Díaz received her Ph.D. from Princeton University. She is currently assistant professor of contemporary art at the Pratt Institute, in Brooklyn.

SEAN DOCKRAY is an artist and a founding director of Telic Arts Exchange, a Los Angeles nonprofit organization established to promote critical engagement with new media and culture. He also initiated long-term projects such as the Public School and [aaaarg.org](http://aaaarg.org).

MIKLÓS ERHARDT was born in 1966 in Budapest. He is an associate professor of media design at Budapest's Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design and a lecturer on art theory at the Konsthogskolan in Umea, Sweden. He has translated critical authors, notably Guy Debord and Noam Chomsky, into Hungarian. He lives and works in Vienna and Budapest.

BENJ GERDES is an artist, writer, and organizer working in film, video, and other public formats. He teaches at the Cooper Union School of Art. His collaborative work with Jennifer Hayashida, has been screened and exhibited in venues including the Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, REDCAT Gallery (Los Angeles), The New Museum (New York), the Rotterdam Film Festival, the Museum of the Moving Image (New York), and the National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.).

SAM GOULD is a cofounder and the lead facilitator of Red76, an arts collaborative that materialized in Portland, Oregon in the early 2000s. The group often works toward creating a public by creating ad-hoc educational structures and discursive media forms. Gould is the editor of the group's publication, the *Journal of Radical Shimming*.

JENNIFER HAYASHIDA is a writer, artist, and educator based in Brooklyn, NY. She is Director of the Asian American Studies Program at Hunter College, City University of New York. Her collaborative work with Jennifer Hayashida, has been screened and exhibited in venues including the Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, REDCAT Gallery (Los Angeles), The New Museum (New York), the Rotterdam Film Festival, the Museum of the Moving Image (New York), and the National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.).

ASHLEY HUNT is an artist, activist and writer who engages with the ideas of social movements, modes of learning, and public discourse. His work is often concerned with questions of power and the ways by which some people acquire more and others less. Ashley teaches in the

Photography and Media program at the California Institute of the Arts.

C. KRYDZ IKWUEMESI, a former Japan Foundation fellow in Hokkaido and current ACLS-AHP fellow, is a painter, writer, and art critic. He is founder and international secretary of the Pan-African Circle of Artists and emeritus president of the Art Republic. An IFRA-Nigeria senior research fellow, Ikwuemesi is also a senior lecturer in Fine and Applied Arts and coordinator of the Humanities Unit, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

GARETH JAMES is an artist based in Vancouver, where he teaches at the University of British Columbia. The pedagogical scene was a central concern of "Human Metal," his 2011 exhibition at the Miguel Abreu Gallery in New York.

COLIN LANG is an assistant professor of contemporary art in the School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. He is currently preparing two manuscripts for publication, in Germany and the United States respectively: *Raum 19/Raum 20: Imi Knoebel und Katharina*

*Sieverding zwischen Beuys und Bauhaus*; and *A Brief History of the Remix: On the Artworld Origins of Electronic Music in West Germany, 1968–1973*.

TOM McDONOUGH is associate professor and chair of Art History at State University of New York at Binghamton, where he teaches the history of the European avant-gardes and modern art and architecture. His most recent book is the anthology *The Situationists and the City* (2009, Verso); other publications include “*The Beautiful Language of My Century*”: *Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945–1968* (2007, October Books, MIT Press) and the anthology *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents* (2002, October Books, MIT Press).

CARLOS MOTTA is a multidisciplinary artist whose work draws upon political history in an attempt to create counternarratives that recognize the inclusion of suppressed histories, communities, and identities. Motta is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program. He is on the faculties of Parsons the New School for Design;

the School of Visual Arts; Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College; the International Center of Photography; and the Vermont College of Fine Arts.

DITTE LYNGKÆR PEDERSEN is a multidisciplinary artist working in video, installation, and collaboration. She obtained an MFA from Malmö Art Academy in Sweden in 2004 and several grants, exhibitions and residency programs: the Mukoujima Program in Tokyo, Cité des Arts in Paris, and Flux Factory in New York. She is based in Berlin and Århus, Denmark, where she holds a part-time position as head of the video department at the Århus Art Academy.

FLO MAAK is an artist living in Seoul and Frankfurt. Besides focusing on his practice in extended photography, he is currently teaching at Chung-Ang University in Seoul.

NILS NORMAN works across the disciplines of public art, architecture, and urban planning. His projects challenge notions of the function of public art and the efficacy of much urban planning and large-scale regeneration. Norman is a professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Art

and Design, Copenhagen, where he leads the School of Walls and Space.

J. MORGAN PUETT was born in Hahira, Georgia, in 1957. She received her MFA in sculpture and experimental filmmaking from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1985. Though her practice is migrant in nature, Puett currently is living, working, learning, and teaching in Pennsylvania at Mildred's Lane and the Mildred Complex(ity), which she founded and codirects with Mark Dion.

JOHANNES PAUL RAETHER lives and works in Berlin. During his studies at the Berlin University of Fine Arts he initiated several self-organized projects, such as the regrouping of the Freie Klasse. Since 2006 he has been a member of the artist-run space Basso and has worked in several performance collectives.

OLIVER RESSLER was born in 1970. He lives and works as an artist and filmmaker in Vienna and produces exhibitions, projects in the public space, and films on issues such as economics, democracy, global warming, forms of resistance, and social alternatives. With Gregory Scholette, he coedited *It's the Political Economy, Stupid: The*

*Global Financial Crisis in Art and Theory* (2013, Pluto), a book based on a traveling show on the financial crisis. [www.ressler.at](http://www.ressler.at).

DOUGLAS ROSS is an artist living in New York City. Before a decided recess from teaching, Ross practiced unreliable narration as guest, visiting, and assistant professor in the Department of Musical Creativity and the Environment at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku); the Sculpture Department of Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; and the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning at Cornell (Ithaca, New York and New York City).

RUM46 was initiated in 1995 and is currently an artist- and curator-run noncommercial space presenting live performances, reading groups, screenings, smaller exhibitions, and book editions, as host and collaborator. Its work encompasses cross-disciplinary projects that combine art with issues related to society and everyday life.

SHIRIN SABAHI, born in 1984 in Tehran, is an artist based in Copenhagen. Working primarily in time-based media, in recent

projects Sabahi addresses the rituals and formats for the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural goods and the emotional and psychological experiences that feed creative labor. She is currently a 2012–2013 Film and New Media Fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart.

HOWARD SLATER is a writer and volunteer play therapist. His book *Anomie/Bonhomie* was published by Mute in 2011.

THE TEMPORARY INSTITUTE FOR WITCHPOWER has joined forces with many others over the years, going through a largely failed student movement and a starburst burnout; members now work underpaid or unpaid jobs and engage in experimental forms of unionizing and political therapy, building up to the next starburst.

JAVIER TOSCANO is an artist and writer. He is a founding member of Laboratorio 060, an interdisciplinary team that works around political topics from a cultural perspective. He was a member of the council of *Transitio\_MX*, a festival for electronic arts and video (2007–2009) and director of the Sixth Public Art Forum (2009),

both in Mexico City. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from a double program at the UNAM in Mexico City and the Freie Universität in Berlin, where he was a DAAD Fellow 2009–2010). He has been developing his work as artist and researcher at the University of Paris IV–Sorbonne, through a Mairie de Paris fellow, 2011–2013.

The UKK/YOUNG ART WORKERS' ASSOCIATION is a nonprofit organization that represents young artists and critics in Denmark. We work to further experimental contemporary art and to better the political and social rights of our 350 members. UKK was founded in 2002.

YES! ASSOCIATION/FÖRENINGEN JA! is an art collective, institution, art worker group, laboring to overthrow the ruling system of heteronormative, patriarchal, racist, and capitalist power structures by putting into practice a structural redistribution of access to financial resources, space, and time within the art scene.







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