

A creation of contexts, work on the context, creates the foundation for the possibility of common intellectual activity – in the artistic field that is in art criticism or theory, but not of it, and beyond. This new kind of field of practice is not isolated from the other fields and their actors. It positions itself as deviation and excess. It is about study, not critique.

Study, Not Critique

Lucie Kolb

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STUDY, NOT CRITIQUE

LUCIE KOLB

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The Fox, A.N.Y.P., e-flux journal

Trans. Kelly Mulvaney

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DEMATERIALIZATION, POLITICIZATION, INTELLECTUALIZATION

In an essay published in the February 1968 issue of the journal *Art International*, Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler analyze the development of conceptual art. Titled “The Dematerialization of Art,” the essay describes a tendency that had been apparent for years: the core of contemporary art was no longer made up of material objects, but of ideas. This development, in turn, implied potentially far reaching consequences for the way the art field was organized: “the dematerialization of the object might eventually lead to the disintegration of criticism as it is known today. [...] Sometime in the near future it may be necessary for the writer to be an artist as well for the artist to be a writer.”¹

In reality, a domain practice between art and critique emerged with the “dematerialization” described in Lippard and Chandler’s text, which would lend the art field an increasingly discursive character in the following decades. In growing numbers, artists would expand their working areas and join research endeavors and theoretical discussions, instead of producing artworks as understood in a narrower sense. This development was accompanied by a collaborative and project-based mode of work – a process aimed at undoing boundaries, which simultaneously brought forth new forms of discipline and valorization.²

¹ See Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art,” *Art International* no. 2 (February 1968): 35.

² Whereas Lippard and Chandler link dematerialization to a critique of the commodity form of art and to the development of political

The removal of the boundary around artistic production – which as such must always also be understood as a process of value creation – corresponded to a new economic paradigm known as “cognitive capitalism.”³ The foundations of this new form of capitalist accumulation rest not only on questions about the control of increasingly ephemeral products, but rather, and much more generally, new organizational forms of work. Isabell Lorey and Klaus Neundlinger have written that under the regime of cognitive capitalism, the possibility of generating economic value depends “more and more on the capacity of workers to subjectively engage with work, to constantly reorient themselves, to learn to express experience in acts of reflective communication; in short, to steer an unforeseeable happening.”⁴ The discourse around the concept of cognitive capitalism should be understood as a counter-discourse to the liberal theory of the “knowledge economy,” a concept

alternatives, Alexander Alberro understands conceptual art as the moment in which new forms of art marketing were developed. Dematerialization, as I discuss it here, takes place in a field of tension between a politicization of art and the creation of new markets. See Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 3–4.

3 Many publications in the 2000s elaborated the concept of cognitive capitalism, which was formed in the context of postoperaist theory. See Yann Moulier Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negro, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Michael A. Peters and Ergin Bulut, *Cognitive Capitalism. Education and Digital Labor* (New York et al: Peter Lang 2011).

4 Isabell Lorey and Klaus Neundlinger, “Kognitiver Kapitalismus. Von der Ökonomie zur Ökonomik des Wissens,” in *Kognitiver Kapitalismus*, eds. Lorey and Neundlinger. (Vienna: Turia + Kant 2012), 11. [Translator’s note: Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the German are my own. –KM]

that entered the OECD in 1994 to describe the rise of a “knowledge-based economy” in advanced capitalist societies. This description is based on the analytical insight that economic value today is created by knowledge, but as an approach the knowledge economy concept fails to consider conflicts around knowledge and power. For theorists of cognitive capitalism, in contrast, the conflict between knowledge and power – and between work and capital – is key. They understand the contemporary capitalist transformation to be a result of this conflict.⁵ Such considerations are foundational for my discussion. I too am looking for strategies that do not critique the existing apparatus of knowledge production with the objective of renewing it, and which work against economic motivations that enclose knowledge and make it scarce.

A conflictual relationship between the production of the common and its appropriation is typical of this paradigmatic economic transformation. Gigi Roggero has illustrated this relationship by drawing on the example of the telecommunications firm 3.⁶ In a forum linked to the firm’s website, customers answer questions about

⁵ See Carlo Vercellone, *The Hypothesis of Cognitive Capitalism* (London: Birbeck College and SOAS, 2005), 2. The paradigmatic change indicated by the term cognitive capitalism, however, only presents one part of capitalist development (even if it is a decisive part). Other forms of accumulation continue to exist. Industrial capitalism, for example, moved to countries where an unqualified labor force can still be found at a cheap cost and exploited. For a critical account, see George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, “Notes on the edu-factory and Cognitive Capitalism,” *transversal*, 05 2007, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0809/caffentzisfederici/en>.

⁶ See Gigi Roggero, “The Power of Living Knowledge. Crises of the Global University, Class Struggle and Institutions of the Common,” <https://transversal.at/transversal/0809/roggero/en>.

the devices and services on offer. Each month the firm publishes a ranking in which the performance of the customers cooperating in the forum is recognized and made public. According to Roggero, precisely this unpaid work of subjects is what allows labor costs to be decreased. No technical staff needs to be employed to answer consumers' questions. Instead, the telecommunications company pays new guards and agents whose sole function is to control the social cooperation of the productive consumers in the forums. In this way, the dynamics of individualized competition are reproduced, preventing subjects from appropriating that which they collectively produce.⁷

In its turn to knowledge, capitalism effectuates a double move. On the one hand, knowledge must constantly grow in order to drive valorization; on the other hand, in the course of its valorization knowledge gets controlled, privatized, and commodified – and thereby made scarce.⁸ Under the premises of cognitive capitalism, however, it is less the case that value adheres to a finished product and more that consumers create it.⁹ One result is that communicative practices play an increasingly important role with regard to economic action. The undoing of limits around production that tends to accompany dematerialization has not only resulted in new forms of work, but also new ways of organizing work. Under the conditions of cognitive capitalism work is increasingly performed outside the scope of a permanent employment relation –

⁷ Roggero, “The Power of Living Knowledge.”

⁸ See Enzo Rullani, “Wie wird durch Wissen Wert geschaffen?,” in *Kognitiver Kapitalismus*, eds. Isabell Lorey and Klaus Neundlinger (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012), 143.

⁹ Roggero, “The Power of Living Knowledge.”

as was characteristic of the phase of industrial capitalism – and is rather distinguished by project-based forms of organization and precarity.

According to Yann Moulier-Boutang, knowledge and art lie “at the heart of the system of cognitive capitalism [...] and not because of entrepreneurs’ love for art and knowledge, but because the kernel of economic value, in the past as today, lies in these areas.”¹⁰ Art is named in this context not least because it is connected with a specific form of subjectivation that gives shape to cognitive capitalism. In the activities of actors in the art field, the previous distinction between work and free time, between employment, domestic work and voluntary engagement has become blurred. They are seen as creative, intuition driven actors who move from one project to the next, from one world to another. These are defining characteristics of the entrepreneurial subject of cognitive capitalism.

Parallel to this, art and knowledge have been drawn closer together since the 1990s, as can be observed in large discursive exhibitions such as *documenta X* under Catherine David’s curation. The tendency towards the dematerialization of art, however, is not only linked to a discursive turn. It is also connected to a process in which the boundaries of works can no longer be clearly determined. They re-adapt and re-contextualize themselves in every process of circulation and production.¹¹

¹⁰ See Yann Moulier-Boutang: “Die Hochzeitsnacht des kognitiven Kapitalismus und der Kunst. Kunst in der Ökonomie der Innovation,” in *Kritik der Kreativität*, eds. Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig (Vienna et al: transversal texts, 2016), 465.

¹¹ See Lucie Kolb, Barbara Preisig and Judith Welter, eds.: *Paratexte. Zwischen Produktion, Vermittlung und Rezeption*, (Zurich: Diaphanes 2017).

Journals as Paradigmatic Sites of “Dematerialized” Art Production

As conceptual art quickly gained distinction in the 1960s and 70s, many artists founded journals.¹² Artists used these journals not only to assertively position their artistic works in art discourse, but also to try out new forms involving art and critique, and art and theory. Furthermore, the environment of 1968 saw the development of the first transversal lines through which artistic practices sought connections to social movements via their journals.

At the intersection of various social functions and as agents of transformation of artistic production and reception, journals played an important role in the renewal of art. With respect to the development of cognitive capitalism, the artist-produced journal is a site where discourse and valorization are short-circuited, and it is also a decisive participant in the broad dissolution of the boundaries between the (artistic) work and its frame.

Dan Graham, who appeared in the 1960s with a series of conceptual artistic works in journals, links this practice to his experiences as a founder of a short-lived gallery.¹³ It was here that he learned that an artwork

12 See among others Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011), as well as Marie Boivent and Stephen Perks, “Introduction” in *The Territories of Artists' Periodicals*, eds. Boivent and Perks (Rennes, De Pere: Éditions Provisoires, Plagiarist Press, 2015), 5–11. Here I use the term “journal” as an umbrella term for newspapers, periodicals and magazines.

13 See Dan Graham, “my works for magazine pages: ‘a history of conceptual art,’” in *conceptual art: a critical anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1999), 418–422. [First published in Gary Dufour, *Dan Graham*, exh. cat. (Perth: The Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1985), 8–13.]

has a hard time gaining recognition as art if it is not written about or featured in a journal. The relation between the journal and the artwork, according to Graham, is decidedly economic: the art journal is financed by advertisements that for the most part are run by galleries announcing their exhibitions. This leads to a certain coercion to cultivate favor with advertisers by reviewing or otherwise mentioning their exhibitions in the journal. And this is how market value is generated.¹⁴ Graham argues that artists' acknowledgement of this relationship between journals and art institutions in the 1960s and 70s animated them to start using journals in a strategic way.¹⁵ It was not rare for artists to use self-produced journals to react to texts about their works by critics in the established press. They joined the existing conversation and worked simultaneously to establish an autonomous counter-discourse.

David Rosand, an art historian who taught at Columbia University in New York in the 1960s and 70s, has written that journals during this time were also important because it was in journals that the "dematerialized" art of the time materialized. "It told you what was going on partly because so much of what was going on was not to be seen in the galleries."¹⁶ The exhibition space for "dematerialized" conceptual art practices had been displaced into the publication – as Seth Siegelaub paradigmatically acted out in the exhibition *Xerox Book* in 1968, in which he placed the cheaply produced exhibition catalog at the center of

¹⁴ Graham, "my works for magazine pages," 421.

¹⁵ Graham, "my works for magazine pages," 422.

¹⁶ David Rosand, interview by Amy Newman, in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962–1974* (New York: SoHo Press, 2000), 140.

the exhibit.¹⁷ The role of publications changed in this context, too. Having been a site for the *reproduction* of texts and images, it became a site of *production*.

The alternative space for art that emerged with this shift was not limited to the expansion of artistic goods and new possibilities for exhibitions. It also opened new space for thought and action. Beyond publications, this manifested in independent exhibition spaces and bookshops that challenged the established institutions of the art world, supporting experimental art outside of the commercial gallery system, promoting artists' rights and calling attention to gender, 'race' and class inequalities. In this regard, journals were in a position to create and support new relations in thought, but also in the social field, and they were able to have a sustained influence on relationships in the art field and beyond. Thus, these journals never only made space for alternative contents, but also for a different sociality and public space.

In the 1990s the "dematerialization" of art advanced in another form. In various ways, connections were drawn in the early 1990s to the conceptual practices of the 1970s. Communicative and aesthetic practices dealing with articulation and information were at the center of this development.¹⁸ In this context, a new self-understanding of artists emerged. The subject position "artist" became unbound and artistic work started to be understood as the traversing of various skills and fields, as an intervention

17 See Seth Siegel and John Wendler (eds.): [*Xerox Book*] (New York: self-published, 1968).

18 See Sabeth Buchmann, "Regeln des (Un-)Möglichen. Zur Kunstpraxis der späten 1980er und frühen 1990er," in *to expose, to show, to demonstrate, to inform, to offer, Künstlerische Praktiken um 1990*, ed. Matthias Michalka (Cologne: Walther König, 2015), 30.

into dominant systems of knowledge and representation. Journals published in limited numbers often provided an important stage for this practice and its reflection. As in the 1970s, it was once again in the 1990s the journals that provided the crossover space for art practice and theoretical-political analysis that would later be considered typical of the time.¹⁹

The growing turn to discursive practices – some of which were explicitly political in nature – in the art field of the 1990s occurred alongside new forms of valorization.²⁰ Following Marius Babias, the 1990s witnessed the emergence of a “discourse market” that acts through political-theoretical media.²¹ This market, Babias argues, forms a parallel to the “proper” art market and aims at removing artistic production from the valorization of the commercial market and emancipating erstwhile passive observers to become participants who can be included in processes of exchange.²² While

19 See Buchmann, 31.

20 In addition to the valorization of discursive art practices, the commercial art business increasingly includes theorists. Journals and exhibition catalogs are no longer sold simply via the symbolic capital of the artists, but also with that of the authors. See Isabell Graw, *Der große Preis* (Cologne: DuMont, 2008), 130. Ulf Wuggenig and Sophia Prinz underscore the applicability of “theory sells” with an empirical study about actors and institutions in contemporary art in Paris, Vienna, Zurich and Hamburg between 1990 and 2010. They discovered a broad familiarity with the names of theorists, including amongst gallerists. See Ulf Wuggenig and Sophia Prinz, “Charismatische Disposition und Intellektualisierung,” in *Das Kunstfeld. Eine Studie über Akteure und Institutionen der zeitgenössischen Kunst am Beispiel von Zürich, Wien Hamburg und Paris*, eds. Ulf Wuggenig and Heike Munder (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2012), 205–228.

21 See Marius Babias, “Vorwort,” in *Ute Meta Bauer. Kuratorische Praxis: Interviews und Gespräche*, ed. Babias. (Cologne: Walther König, 2012), 7–12.

22 Babias, “Vorwort.”

the “discourse market” enjoys an emancipatory connotation according to Babias, Andrea Fraser has observed the emergence of valorization processes in this market that are informed by the same principle of competition that shapes the commercial market.²³ Against this, the political art practices of the 1990s suggest that the art field was interpreted as a place bearing resources to use, re-purpose and steal.

Study

“The studio is again becoming a study,” Lippard and Chandler wrote in reference to the conceptual art of the 1960s.²⁴ In their book *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning and Black Study* Stefano Harney and Fred Moten discuss a strategy for dealing with the increasingly economically-driven university by drawing on their concept of “black study” (which over the course of the book loses its adjective and is simply called “study”),²⁵ which I would like to take up here. Harney and Moten describe a form of autonomous knowledge production that is simultaneously work on the conditions of production. It bears the potential to remove itself from measurability and discipline through incalculable excesses. As regards the knowledge institution of the university Harney and Moten are interested in an unmapped and unmappable non-place surrounded by the concepts of “study” and

²³ See Andrea Fraser et al., “Roundtable: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism,” *October*, no. 100 (2002): 204.

²⁴ Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art,” in *Art International*, no. 2 (February 1968): 31.

²⁵ See Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe et al: Minor Compositions, 2013).

the “undercommons.”²⁶ Their text provides tools for dealing with the dilemma of critique in the conditions of cognitive capitalism. Drawing on the example of the figure of the academic, they illustrate the problematic function of critique. To practice critique as an academic in the university means to recognize the university and to be recognized by it.²⁷ The resistance of academics is constitutive of the institution. It serves the obligatory improvement of teaching, curriculum and the university that undergirds the institution’s continued legitimacy. Critique always optimizes the mechanisms that exclude precisely those practices from which the institution constitutively distinguishes itself. Critical and academic education, in the eyes of Harney and Moten, are one and the same.

Against critique and its optimizing function, they posit their concept of study as a common intellectual practice. Semantically the term indicates a space (the working area, the study room), but also an activity (learning, studying), an event (test, investigation, study), and a context (course or program of study). Harney and Moten play with these layers of meaning in their book. The adjective “black” draws a connection to the radical traditions of African-American history, to approaches dedicated to the construction and reconstitution of the history of black dispossession, dislocation, incapacitation and slavery. Thus, the undercommons are placed in a context with the maroon communities of escaped slaves. Despite or precisely because of this

26 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, “Interview with Stephen Shukaitis,” in *The Undercommons*, 109–110.

27 Harney and Moten, “Interview,” 109–110.

explicit contextualization, the concept of study is made useful in more general ways, including for resistance in contexts of knowledge production within and beyond the university, which is my interest here. Study is an intellectual practice that Harney and Moten do not primarily locate in academic modes of subjectivation. It is something that runs athwart to the institutions, traversing them.

When I think about the way we use the term ‘study,’ I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It’s talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it ‘study’ is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present.²⁸

As Fred Moten elaborates here, studying is not clearly distinguishable from other activities, as all these doings are part of a common intellectual practice. Study is a certain form of placing oneself in relation to capitalist attempts at appropriation. It is often preceded by a misunderstanding or an unwillingness to understand, such as, for example, a refusal to understand a certain term in the way it is commonly used. Study can also be understood as a counter concept to “learning.” This is because

²⁸ Moten in Harney and Moten, “Interview,” 110.

learning in cognitive capitalism stands for something that touches all aspects of life – in addition to education, it reaches into the workplace, free time and everyday life – and it only ends with death. Contrary to study, learning obeys education strategies in which issues of certifiability and comparability play a significant role. Whereas learning is thus measured and the goals, content and progress of learning can be tested, study escapes both measurability and the image of progress. Study is neither fully developed nor totally thought-through. As a principle it misses the right moment. The subject's skill areas are not expanded in targeted ways as in the case of extended learning; they are instead exceeded, overshot.²⁹

I see a form of study, too, in Harney and Moten's handling of their own text. Their writing style challenges the sheltered emotions of anyone who feels at home in a language. With rhythm, poeticization, repetition and alienation, their texts continually produce new openings, cracks and crevices wanting to incite the reader to step in and perceive reading as a shared intellectual practice. This invitation does not follow a participation imperative, but instead expresses what Jack Halberstam identifies as the book's core in his preface: "reaching out to find connection."³⁰ In Moten's words, "I believe in the world and want to be in it. I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I believe in another world in the world and I want to be in *that*."³¹

²⁹ See Stefano Harney in Marc Bousquet et al., "On Study," *Polygraph*, no. 21 (2008), 160.

³⁰ Jack Halberstam, "The Wild Beyond: With and for the Undercommons," in Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 5.

³¹ Moten in Harney and Moten, "Interview with Stephen Shukaitis," 118.

Such an “other world in the world,” however, according to Harney and Moten, cannot merely be suggested. The form of suggestion itself must be openly applied.³² At stake here is a form of study that calls attention to given orders and to how borders are drawn, as well as to the politics of institutional framings, while simultaneously transforming them. The strategies that can be applied to this end include ways of unsettling oneself, which always also destabilize the ground from which one speaks.³³

Three Journals

The object of my investigation is made up by three editorial projects with different political and aesthetic agendas from the 1970s, 1990s and 2010s: *The Fox*, *A.N.Y.P.*, and *e-flux journal*. The three journals serve as a “random sample” to probe the respective state of cognitive capitalism and related counter strategies in the field of art. I am interested in how the editors describe their scope of action and the strategies they develop for its expansion.

The Fox, a magazine published in New York, was a creation of the British American conceptual art group Art & Language. The short-lived magazine marked the moment at which, as conceptual art ran its course, the “dematerialization” of the art object gave way to language as

³² Harney in Harney and Moten, “Interview with Stephen Shukaitis,” 106–107.

³³ See Irit Rogoff, who for her part has placed the neologism “criticality” alongside the concept of critique: Irit Rogoff, “From Criticism to Critique to Criticality,” *transversal* (August 2006), <https://transversal.at/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en>.

the primary artistic medium for a host of artists. In *The Fox* art is understood as a kind of scientific community. Thus, the editors called for the creation of a community practice and worked to expand the body of experts and to turn readers into producers. I read this as an attempt to respond to new modes of the economization and depoliticization of conceptual art. On the one hand, with *The Fox*, Art & Language created a context that profited from the fact that the magazine was validated as art. It received financial support and benefited from a distribution network that was anchored in the art field. At the same time, however, *The Fox* was used to perform institutional critique and to critique capitalism with the aim of creating an alternative common practice not unlike study, where the focus was on the process, on the shared time, on reading and discussion. In this way *The Fox* positioned itself critically vis-à-vis the institutions of the art field and the self-referential nature of alternative projects, as well as in relation to forms of engagement that called for the unconditional subordination of art to political goals.

In contrast, the newspaper *A.N.Y.P.* (“Anti New York Pläne”), published by the theater group minimal club in Munich and later in Berlin, is exemplary of an artistic practice that undoes boundaries, and which explicitly includes the development of theory that is oriented around the political and critical of institutions. As regards the publication project, the group and its milieu placed reflexive consideration of knowledge production at the center of their focus. This included critical inquiry into transformations of capitalism. Like *The Fox*, *A.N.Y.P.* worked to create a context in which critique is not aimed at an object, but rather at one’s own living and working conditions. In cooperation with diverse actors,

artists, activists and curators, the newspaper established an independent discussion space for the duration of ten years. For the editors and authors, the simultaneity of content-based work and the creation of living and working structures amounted to the basis and condition of political-artistic practice.

e-flux journal (New York, since 2008) is a contemporary online journal published by artists and theorists. At the time of its founding the figure of the artist working in theory and publishing had already moved from the margins to the center of the art field. The contents published in *e-flux journal* link up to the critical discourses of the 1990s on contemporary capitalist transformations in many ways – not least, the persons involved overlap with *A.N.Y.P.* In contrast to *A.N.Y.P.*, however, *e-flux journal* is a company operating for profit. In *e-flux journal* one can observe both the new market value of critical discourses in the art field, on the one hand, as well as the simultaneity of critique of capitalism and practices that radically affirm the “entrepreneurial self,” on the other. I am primarily interested in the relationship between critical contents and the commercial form of *e-flux journal* for the reason that ultimately, given its intertwining of advertisement, theory and critique, the project is exemplary paradigmatic of cognitive capitalism in its advanced stage.

In a concluding chapter I inquire into the potential of the journals and the possibility of actualizing this potential. If cognitive capitalism unfolds in the dialectic of undoing and re-drawing boundaries, and if new strategies of discipline are therefore also linked to new modes of production and new notions of work and subjectivity, then new forms of resistance must be

sought. And furthermore, almost 40 years after the turn from the studio to study, the task is also to invent new spaces of knowledge from which new subjectivities can emerge.

THE FOX (1975-76) COMMUNITY PRACTICE

In September 1976, an exhibition entitled *Three Centuries of American Art* opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. With one exception, all works on display were by men. The works came entirely from the private collection of John D. Rockefeller III, a member of the wealthy Rockefeller family. In response to the lacking consideration of women and African American, Latin American and indigenous artists, on the one hand, and the exhibition's exclusive sourcing from the collection of one individual, on the other, the group Artists Meeting for Cultural Change (AMCC) was formed before the exhibition opened. AMCC was a loose grouping of artists who met every Sunday in the exhibition room Artists Space at 155 Wooster Street in New York. They discussed strategies for opening up the Whitney's exhibition programming and promoting a progressive agenda in local cultural and institutional politics in general. Among other things, AMCC organized a meeting between members of the group and the curator responsible for *Three Centuries of American Art*. The group also sent letters to select people in the art scene, distributed flyers, made exhibitions in public space and attempted to place investigative texts in established art journals.

Almost a year before the opening of said exhibition, AMCC addressed the U.S. art community for the first time with an open letter. The letter expressed the aim of building a national network of protest against the exhibition planned at the Whitney and future instances

of “misuse of art and artists.”³⁴ Its authors summarized AMCC’s critique of the exhibition and called on the art community to join the conversation, mobilize other artists and donate money to cover printing, mailing and advertisement costs.³⁵

AMCC was not alone in the art community in New York and beyond, which had become more politicized in the wake of the 1968 movements. The said letter’s co-signers included not least the feminist Ad Hoc Women Artists’ Committee (AWC), Art Worker’s News, Artists & Writers Protest, Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, Creative Women’s Collective, Guerilla Art Action Group, W.E.B., Women in the Arts, the counterpublic documentation space Women’s Art Registry as well as the magazine *The Fox*, published by the artist group Art & Language, which allowed AMCC to use its postal box in SoHo.³⁶

Only three issues of *The Fox* were published – two in 1975 and one in 1976. Similar to AMCC, the journal’s content was primarily composed of institutional critique and criticism of cultural policies. Unlike other magazines of the 1970s, such as *Avalanche* (New York, 1970–1976) or *Art-Rite* New York, (1973–1978), *The Fox* did not foreground the journal as an artwork or as a site of documentation or source of secondary information about art. Its focus was instead on Art & Language as a group or,

34 Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, “To The American Art Community from Artists Meeting for Cultural Change,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 44.

35 Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, “To The American Art Community.”

36 P.O. Box 728 c/o The Fox, Canal Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10013.

according to the group's own conception, on a community practice of which the journal was a mere byproduct.³⁷ But *The Fox* can also be understood as playing an organizing role in this context. For one, the group was organized around the magazine, and secondly, the magazine significantly expanded the group's discursive context. In addition to the creation of community, *The Fox* was also about the dissemination of alternative information. Thus, Alexander Alberro describes *The Fox* as a medium that started a conversation about art that had previously been missing in mainstream media.³⁸ Because this new discourse had its stakes in a practice that would not only create a *different* public space, but also claimed to work *against* the given public space, *The Fox* can be understood as a counterpublic medium.

According to its editors, *The Fox* positioned itself against the ruling institutional divisions of labor, individual authorship and the interpretative power of art critics. In Marxian terms, they criticized the premises of an artistic practice that provided the basis for the established interplay of art criticism, museums and galleries in the art world. This critique of the art world was always articulated as part of a farther-reaching political interest. The editors saw their role as one of fighting on the "artistic front" for cultural and social change. The anti-canonical art criticism propagated in *The Fox* aimed to include social critique in discussions about art. Alongside critical theoretical work, *The Fox* was always also about creating a discussion space largely free of capitalist logics.

³⁷ See Andrew Menard and Ron White, "Media Madness," *The Fox*, no. 2 (1976): 114.

³⁸ See Alexander Alberro, "One year under the mast," *Artforum* no. 6 (2003): 206.

Precisely this double movement made the project distinct. It was as much about work on the conditions of production as work on texts.

The Fox was the journal of the U.S. branch of the art group Art & Language. The group was founded in 1968 in Cambridge, England, by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin and was shortly thereafter joined by additional artists, including David Rushton and Philip Pilkington, both of whom attended Baldwin's courses in Art Theory at Lanchester Polytechnic in Coventry from 1969 to 1971 as students in the Fine Art program. Later, U.S., English and Canadian artists including Joseph Kosuth, Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden joined, and while Art & Language today consists of Baldwin and Ramsden alone, in the 1970s up to 26 persons were acting under this name.³⁹ By 1969 the group was already publishing the *Art-Language* as its journal (in various locations in England, 1969–1985).

According to the art historian Charles Green, the journal played an important role in the group's constitution and the way in which its members organized themselves.⁴⁰ With reference to a statement made by Mel Ramsden, Green describes Art & Language as a "pragmatically organized editorial collective."⁴¹ Decidedly, it was the edi-

³⁹ See Art & Language, "We Aimed to Be Amateurs," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 447–448. While Art & Language names 21 members, Michael Corris adds another five. See Michael Corris, "Inside a New York art gang. Selected documents of Art & Language, New York," in Alberro and Stimson, 484.

⁴⁰ See Charles Green, *The Third Hand. Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 25–56.

⁴¹ Green, 47.

torial practice that structured the group's heterogeneous collaborative projects and constellations. In his history of the group, Thomas Dreher has similarly emphasized the central importance of the discussion that took place in the course of editorial work.⁴² In the case of *Art & Language*, Dreher argues, the group joined together not simply on the premise of a strategic alliance to promote individual careers, as with many other artist groups. Instead, it served to foster collective work that partook in social critique and always also included a reflexive practice vis-à-vis its own collective form, a labor both in and on the collective. Both Green and Dreher describe the collective working mode as a conscious alternative to the professionalization, individual careers and production of individual works that form the usual patterns of the art world. They also describe it as an expansion of the art field of action towards a practice that is simultaneously artistic, scholarly, and political.

While the journal *Art-Language*, under the editorial direction of art historian Charles Harrison, was firmly in the hands of the English members of *Art & Language*, *The Fox* was founded in 1975 as a journal for New York-based discussion. Alongside Mel Ramsden, the U.S. editor of *Art-Language*, Joseph Kosuth as well as artists Sarah Charlesworth, Michael Corris, Andrew Menard and Preston Heller were responsible for the first issue.

An important point of reference for the New York group was the left-wing art historiography of the time, which approached art in a social, economic and political context and considered the active role of art historians

⁴² See Thomas Dreher, "Blurring in A & L: *Art & Language* and the Investigation of Context" (last modified November 25, 2005), http://blurring-in.zkm.de/e/invest_context.

and the writings of artists in historiography. Exemplary figures of this current include Linda Nochlin and T.J. Clark, whose books *Realism* and *The Absolute Bourgeois*, respectively published in 1971 and 1973, were discussed in the first number of *The Fox*.⁴³ If we follow Andrew Hemingway, this proximity is typical of the situation in the United States of the 1970s, where links between activist artists' organizations and a new left art history as well as the women's movement had important stimulating effects.⁴⁴ In this context, it is worth noting that women were considerably underrepresented in *The Fox*. Beyond editorial member Sarah Charlesworth, women authors involved in the magazine included Eunice Lipton, Lizzie Borden, Kathryn Bigelow, Paula Ramsden and Jasna Tijardovic.

In addition to art criticism and sociological texts, *The Fox* also published highly experimental pieces that played with the technical language of linguistics and mathematics. A large part of the texts, however, were polemical or consisted of claims, criticisms or complaints and can be understood as calls to the readers to agree or counteract.

The journal was published with a run of 3,000 copies (no. 1) and 5,000 copies (nos. 2 and 3).⁴⁵ The three issues had an average length of 100 pages. The first two

⁴³ See Ian Burn, "Thinking about Tim Clark and Linda Nochlin," *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 136–137.

⁴⁴ See Andrew Hemingway, "New Left Art History's International," in *Marxism and the History of Art. From William Morris to the New Left*, ed. Hemingway (London: Pluto, 2006), 175. In the United States artists and art historians are organized in the same professional organization, the College Art Association (CAA).

⁴⁵ Charles Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language* (London and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 122.

issues appeared in a 21 x 26.3 cm format, and the third was somewhat larger (21 x 27.2 cm). The cover was made of a thin matte cardboard that was silk-screen printed in color, green for the first, red for the second and blue for the third issue. “The Fox” was printed vertically in large capital letters across the cover. The title was set in the all-capitals font Copperplate Gothic by Frederic W. Goudy – an anachronistic choice, as classical-modern sans serif fonts were fashionable in art publishing in the 1970s, for example in *Artforum* and *Studio International*. The journal’s format was similar to that of *Artforum*, but a matte recycled paper was used instead of coated paper. The material and the two column layout were simple and minimalistic, but thoughtful, giving an impression of elegance. Its design was inspired by aesthetics of conceptual art, not least, for example, the dictionary images of Joseph Kosuth, such as *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) The Word ‘Definition’* (1966–68). Today it is known that Kosuth was responsible for the design of *The Fox*.⁴⁶ The journal itself, however, did not include information about design authorship or typography.

The editorial and the address of the editorial office are printed on the first page. Then follows the imprint and table of contents. In the first issue, the table of contents only includes the rubric *Commentary & Reviews* in addition to articles. Starting with the second issue there are two new rubrics: *Discussions* and *Articles*. The former *Commentary & Reviews*, renamed *Correspondence & Notes*, is placed under *Discussions*. In the third issue, in turn, *Discussions* and *Articles* are placed at the same

⁴⁶ See Alberro, “One Year under the Mast,” 206.

organizational level. Notably, it is largely the (exclusively male) editors who make up the contributors to the *Articles* section, which, furthermore, is the rubric of the great settlements: “Work,” “History,” “Doing Art History,” “1975,” “The Organisation of Culture under Monopoly Capitalism” and “On the Class Character of Art” are some of the article titles.

As a matter of principle, half of the contributions to the three issues were made by editors and members of Art & Language. The other half came from artists and critics loosely tied to Art & Language. These contributions are primarily found in *Discussions*. Thus, the imprint and the articles already suggest an inner and an outer circle.

Theory as a Basis for Collaboration

It is the purpose of our journal to try to establish some kind of community practice. Those who are interested, curious, or have something to add (be it pro or con) to the editorial thrust...the revaluation of ideology ... of this first issue are encouraged, even urged, to contribute to following issues. All other correspondences should be addressed to the editors, post office box 728, Canal Street station, New York City, 10013.⁴⁷

If you are concerned with trying to reclaim art as an instrument of social and cultural transformation, in exposing the domination of the culture/administrative apparatus as well as art which indolently reflects that apparatus, you are urged to participate in this journal. Its editorial thrust is

47 Sarah Charlesworth et al., “Editorial,” *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 3.

ideological. It aims at a contribution to the wider movement of social criticism/transformation. (Our contribution will be on the art front but by no means limited to the fixed content-closure of 'art'). We need a broad social base in positive opposition to the ideological content and social relations reproduced by 'official' culture.⁴⁸

These two short editorials can be found in the first and second issue of *The Fox*. While the creation of a kind of community practice is emphasized in the first issue, the second issue employs a counter-narrative to provide information about the journal's strategic direction, which aims at transforming the notion of "official" culture. This editorial stance defines art as an instrument of social and cultural transformation and the group as a part of a broader (critical) social movement.

Before any more precise description of the journal's contents is given, the editorial of the first issue of *The Fox* articulates the aim of creating "some kind of community practice." There was no elaboration of what this might mean. Readers of *The Fox* correspondingly reacted with puzzlement, as one reader's letter signed "N.B.B.B." makes clear: "What does 'community practice' mean? Is it to try to establish an 'art-method' to be used to uproot the 'culture-makers' (the cats with bread)? A METHODOLOGY!?"⁴⁹

This initial lack of a more precise definition of community practice is typical of *The Fox*. The magazine foregrounds a dialogical moment: negotiation. As wanting as the definition of community practice may have

⁴⁸ Charlesworth et al., "Editorial," 3.

⁴⁹ N.B.B.B., "No title," *The Fox*, no. 2: 3.

been in the editorial, the numerous commentaries in *The Fox* are extensive. Discussions about community, its practice, methods and language made up a common thread of the magazine. Sarah Charlesworth, artist and editorial member of *The Fox*, described discussions at a meeting of the AMCC in her article “For Artists Meeting” as a process that is often very frustrating, but which would create the basis for responsible cultural and political action:⁵⁰

[S]uch discussions and collective struggle toward understanding are not only valuable and healthy in terms of personal growth and change but provide in and of themselves, a very tentative basis of social change, through a process of social interaction which occurs outside of (but not independent of) specific institutional forms.⁵¹

Charlesworth describes collective discussion and negotiation around mutual understanding and around an agreement on a political and cultural direction as a model for social transformation. Yet the question of in what this social transformation consists was left open.

Shared Time, Shared References

More concrete suggestions for social transformation can be found in other places in *The Fox*, including in an AMCC position paper co-written by six authors. The paper argues that discussion, a certain shared uneasiness

⁵⁰ See Sarah Charlesworth, “For Artists Meeting,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 40–41.

⁵¹ Charlesworth, 40.

and common stances do not amount to an effective community practice. The latter would require a collective theoretical basis elaborated within the group that could provide a “real and viable basis for continuing.”⁵² As the authors propose, this theoretical basis can be created by devoting a certain amount of time to discussion.

Within *this* context, we can begin to test our ideas, theories, suppositions and attitudes, collaboratively, and begin to develop as we proceed, an understanding of the way the system in which we are presently operating functions. In so doing we might begin to understand the nature of a group practise and how it might alter that very system.⁵³

Only with a common basis elaborated in shared time could the ideas, theories, assumptions and stances be developed that were necessary for understanding the artistic, economic and political fields in which the discussants were operating – an understanding that is not an end in itself, but rather the basis for a concrete intervention aimed at transforming the field.

The primary frame of reference here is the art field. The authors problematize works, actions and contributions to discussions that are based on the right (socialist) consciousness but which, in their form, reproduce the capitalist system. In a related position paper entitled “Why we are more interested in you than your artwork,” Art & Language members Mayo Thompson and

52 Charlesworth, 40.

53 Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, “A Tentative Position Paper,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 46.

Ian Burn argue that “progressive” works circulating on the market only serve to provide the market with further distinctions and thus, ultimately, to stabilize it.⁵⁴ Against this, they claim, the conditions of art’s circulation require transformation, which in turn demands reflection on modes of work and distribution. For this reason all other topics, desires and discussions, for example regarding art and value, should be postponed or deprioritized.⁵⁵ According to Burn and Thompson, to even have a discussion about art and its institutions would first necessitate inquiry into the modes of work in art spaces.

The significance this analysis took on for Art & Language became evident in the group’s refusal to contribute to the special issue *Art Magazines* (1976) of the art journal *Studio International*. Under the leadership of Richard Cork since 1975, the latter aimed to politicize art criticism under market conditions.⁵⁶ Against this backdrop, for a special issue on art magazines from a perspective informed by institutional critique, various art journals were questioned about the role of advertising in art criticism and possibilities of critique.⁵⁷ Art &

54 Ian Burn and May Thompson, “Why we are more interested in you than your art-work,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 113.

55 Burn and Thompson, 113.

56 “A damning case can readily be mounted against the *raison d’être* of modern art magazines. Their inevitable dependence on advertising revenue culled almost exclusively from the private gallery network means that they are bound up, to greater or lesser degree, with a value-system propagated by powerful and sometimes cynical commercial motives.” Richard Cork, “Pitfalls and Priorities: an editorial dialectic,” in *Studio International*, no. 976 (1975): 2.

57 The questions sent by *Studio International* in 1976 read: “1 Who owns you, and to what extent are the owner’s artistic/financial/political interests reflected in your magazine? 2 What are your sources of

Language's refusal to contribute was accompanied by a letter to the editors of *Studio International*. The refusal and letter occasioned Cork to formulate an oppositional response, which was then printed in *Studio International's* editorial together with excerpts from Art & Language's letter.⁵⁸ In their letter, Art & Language cited an article published in *The Fox* entitled "The Worst of All Allies."⁵⁹ Alongside eight other protagonists, Cork is characterized as "arrivist art critic, as radical as a Rotarian."⁶⁰ He is called a paranoid mutation of the pseudo-critical apparatus of the ruling class. "He's concocted a huge career by saying virtually nothing and worrying no-one in the establishment."⁶¹ The letter closes with the remark that collaboration with journals like *Studio International* would lead nowhere. On the contrary:

income, and do they give you a profit or a loss? 3 How many members of staff do you employ? 4 How many copies of each issue do you print, what is the cover price, and what is the average budget per issue? 5 What is your scale of payment for writers? 6 How important is the physical 'look' of your magazine – quality of paper, number of colour illustrations, high standard of design, etc? 7 What audience do you aim at, and would you be content to communicate only with a specialised 'art' audience? 8 Which is your first priority – art criticism or art information? 9 Are you international or national in your scope, and why? 10 Do you support a partisan area of art activity, or remain open to every new development? 11 Are you happy about the influence which art magazines exert on the development of contemporary art? 12 To what extent do you consider your magazine is shaped by (a) your regular advertisers, and (b) the power of the market?" Richard Cork, "A Survey of Contemporary Art Magazines," in *Studio International*, no. 983 (1976): 157.

58 See Richard Cork, "Editorial," *Studio International*, no. 983 (1976): 100–102.

59 Art & Language (UK), "The Worst of All Allies," *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 78.

60 Art & Language (UK), 78.

61 Art & Language (UK), 78.

There is a need for alternative socialist and realist projects to be developed by active students and those artists who see their situation as problematic. It is necessary that artists understand the class struggle. All projects, on pain of reinforcing hegemony, must avoid all 'participatory' relations.⁶²

Art & Language distinguished participatory relations from the community practice they propagated. Community practice was thought to include artists and students who saw themselves as part of the working class, and who would aim from this perspective to transform the precarious structures of the art world (the term 'art worker' as it is used in *The Fox* and its milieu should be understood in this context).

On the other hand, those who criticized the existing relations of production without actively working towards their transformation were considered to be on the opposite side. From Art & Language's perspective, such actors participated in political projects only for strategic or tactical reasons. Thus, Art & Language placed this kind of participation in quotation marks. From their perspective, participation (without quotation marks) takes place in a discursive context that does not reproduce capitalist structures but instead develops another, self-determined form of being-together and does so without giving up an 'aggressive' stance towards 'official' culture.

Radical Self-Observation

I consider the most influential elaborations on community practice to be found in Mel Ramsden's *The Fox* article

⁶² Art & Language (UK), 78.

“On Practice.”⁶³ Ramsden, who has belonged to Art & Language since 1971, described community practice, like Burn and Thompson, as collective reading and discussion. More than his colleagues, however, he emphasized the importance of determining one’s own context. This could only be developed by means of a “small community practice,” and thus by reducing the size of the group.

Ramsden understood this self-determined context as a group with its own forms and rules of exchange defined and controlled by those discussing. His considerations follow the Marxian idea that what distinguishes the capitalistic mode of production is ever-increasing total control over the production process by capital. Ramsden concluded from this that control over the entire means of production is necessary for community practice. This kind of practice possesses quasi-institutional characteristics and has the potential to develop its own standard of sociality, or, in other words: a form of social relation that is not defined by exchange-value.

Like Burn and Thompson, Ramsden directed his argumentation at art workers whose lacking understanding of their own situation and the role of their practice were considered to mark the biggest problem.⁶⁴ He argued that artists had completely internalized the logic of valorization. The central issue for Ramsden was critique and transformation of the economic structures of capitalism, which determine social relations and the formation of subjects. Because artists are influenced by how the market functions, Ramsden believed that the

⁶³ Mel Ramsden, “On Practice,” *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 67. The title is a direct reference to a text by Mao Zedong with the same name.

⁶⁴ Ramsden, 72.

only path to transformation was to critically examine social practices.⁶⁵ This kind of evaluation, however, could not be achieved with classical strategies of the kind employed by the Communist Party, but rather required a community practice that would always also bear in mind its own social structures. In Ramsden's perspective, the only way to create a revolutionary basis that would be capable of overcoming the capitalist logic of valorization was by creating this kind of context, in which life could prefiguratively embody new structures to a certain extent.⁶⁶ Yet with community practice Ramsden not only opposed forms of political engagement perceived to be antiquated; he also distinguished his proposed model from communities positioning themselves as alternative niche cultures. He mentioned among other things "small town community art-clubs" and "feminist art-workshops." Community practice, on the other hand, would similarly be a context outside of "Official Culture," but it would also remain "aggressive" towards it. The focus was on possibilities for intervention into the existing public sphere. Ramsden's way of conceiving this becomes clear in his understanding of art:

[R]egarding 'art' not as a definition outside of conversation but as a 'social' matter embedded in (our) conversation, may be both an effective opposition to the bulldozer of Official Culture *as well as* a way of affirming our *own* sociality outside of 'mere' contractual role relations.⁶⁷

65 Ramsden, 72.

66 Ramsden, 76.

67 Ramsden, 76.

Ramsden understood art as something that is only created through discourse. In this sense, everyone participating in this discourse also has a voice that they can make sound against the “Official Culture.” His proposal aimed not at a refusal to participate in the production of art and culture in art institutions, but rather at a conscious deployment of one’s own speaking position.

This kind of conscious deployment was expressed in the way Art & Language dealt with the questionnaire from *Studio International*. In this case, Art & Language practiced a refusal by not answering the questions given to them regarding conditions of production; on the other hand, the group used this opportunity to formulate a stance that was communicated to the editor and simultaneously printed in their own journal *Art-Language*. They did not use the space offered to them in *Studio International* but instead inscribed themselves – via Richard Cork’s citation of the letter from Art & Language – into *Studio International*’s editorial.

The editorial is the paratext in which the strategic direction of a journal is described. It is the domain of the editors, in which they guide readers through the contents of the issue and attempt to convince them of the relevance of the chosen topic. What Ramsden described as “outside of but aggressive to [Official Culture]” was thus put into practice in Art & Language’s attack on this editorial space. This is a form of institutional critique that does not indirectly affirm the object of critique but rather escapes it.⁶⁸

68 “To dwell perennially on an institutional critique without addressing specific problems within the institutions is to generalize and sloganize. It may also have the unfortunate consequence of affirming that which you set out to criticize. It may even act as a barrier to eventually

Commonality

In “On Practice” Ramsden does not only emphasize the necessity of intervening in the discourses of art criticism, however; he also repeatedly returns to processes of “learning” in his description, thus bearing a certain similarity to what Harney and Moten describe with their concept of study. In defining community practice, Ramsden likewise refers to education, understood as a moment of creating common points of reference. In Ramsden’s words:

Given two or three hours, given perhaps a day or two to talk to each other, we might generate enough points of reference to learn something about the question. Learn, that is, meaning understanding something of our own problem-world, not just consuming an existing body of knowledge.⁶⁹

Ramsden speaks of “learning” to describe two things: sharing time and linking discussion to one’s own and collective experiences. For him, it is less about the passing-down of knowledge from a position of authority than about the creation of a context, or more precisely, of a commonality, which emerges through practices of interaction and living together.⁷⁰ The focus is thus not centered on disseminating one’s own perspective, for

setting up a community practice (language... sociality...) which does not just embody a commodity mode of existence.” Ramsden, 69. See also Kim Charnley’s discussion of Art & Language’s approach to institutional critique in Kim Charnley, “Failure, revolution and institutional critique,” *Art & the Public Sphere*, no. 1 (2016): 35–52.

⁶⁹ Ramsden, “On Practice,” 76.

⁷⁰ Ramsden, 70.

this remains an object of consumption until it is transformed by learners and integrated into their practices.⁷¹ The aim is to appropriate theory and to connect it to one's own problems and to problems of the group.

Here Ramsden describes a dialogical moment in which the form of exchange is not predetermined. The rules are negotiated in conversation. Education or moments of learning require above all, Ramsden argues, a readiness for dialogue, a "commitment to commonality not point of view of authority."⁷² According to Ramsden, part of this kind of commonality is a "commitment to others on the level of their material problems."⁷³

Education, whether in the form of spontaneous common learning or in the scope of a formalized art education program, is interesting because it has the potential to create a "(partial) oppositional alternative."⁷⁴ This alternative is created by sharing time, speaking with one another and understanding one's own problem-world, and not through a predetermined, identitarian form, a feeling of belonging or an obligation. It presents a form of coming together, of approaching knowledge and questions, a place of becoming networked and organized and articulating necessary questions.

The detail and intensity with which Ramsden and other *The Fox* authors wrote about education can be understood not least with view to the development of Art & Language as a group of artists from the Art & Language Institute, an alternative, non institutionalized art school.

71 Ramsden, 69.

72 Ramsden, 70.

73 Ramsden, 70.

74 Ramsden, 70.

Mel Ramsden's attention to education allowed him to describe an oppositional alternative to commodity form art with the example of Art & Language and its being about exchange and discourse. Thanks to their work on creating a shared context for discussion, he contends, community practice is able to achieve precisely this.

Learning is – even when understood as part of artistic practice – never the object of an exhibition for Art & Language. The refusal of this is perhaps a key distinctive marker of the project, not least when considered in relation to the practice of Joseph Kosuth, who was a temporary member of Art & Language and whose works aestheticize reading and the figure of the well-read artist. Kosuth's work *Information Room (Special Investigation)* of 1970 is exemplary of this tendency. It included a selection of books from his private library. Books on the philosophy of language, structural anthropology and psychoanalytic theory were laid out on tables together with stacks of issues of large U.S. newspapers.⁷⁵ The artist exhibited what he read. Not coincidentally, documentary photographs can be found of the exhibit that feature Kosuth reading. With this he not only suggested that reading is essential to understanding his artistic works; he also used other authors as “critical capital.” The work is an illustration of the self-portrait of the artist as a theorist. This kind of portrait, aiming at the subject of the artist, is something *The Fox* knows to escape. In the journal, concern focused on what the group could do with theory rather than informing others about its own reading behavior.

⁷⁵ *Information Room* was first shown in 1970 in the exhibition *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* at the New York Cultural Center.

The Fox was interested in the moment of study, not the exhibition of erudition.

Not least, Ramsden's considerations on learning can be understood as exemplary of the shift from the studio to study, as formulated by Lippard and Chandler. This kind of shift indicated the expansion of artistic practice towards theoretical development and knowledge production, but it also pointed to a social process that does not take the shape of a product and is not closed/complete.

Learning does not mean to work through an existing corpus of texts to which the status of "knowledge" is ascribed. Rather, learning is about a decidedly situational practice that is dependent on the participants and the site, about comporting oneself in relation to one's own (common) problem-world.

Art & Language as Scientific Community?

Between the headwords "archive" and "arte povera," the 2014 new edition of *DuMonts Begrifflexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst* [DuMont's Encyclopedia of Concepts of Contemporary Art] (first edition 2002) features an entry composed by Sabeth Buchmann on Art & Language.⁷⁶ Here, Buchmann argues that the inclusion of an artists' group in an encyclopedia of concepts can be justified in the first place because Art & Language, rath-

⁷⁶ See Sabeth Buchmann, "Art & Language," in *DuMonts Begrifflexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*, ed. Hubertus Butin (Cologne: DuMont, 2014): 27–31. The encyclopedia, it is written in the preface, responds to increasingly distinctive discursive developments in both the reception and the production of art. This requires increased awareness of theory; see Hubertus Butin, "Vorwort," in ed. Butin, 6.

er than forming a unity that would be comparable with other groups in the field of conceptual art, is an exemplary case of cultural practice that has been expanded in a scholarly way.⁷⁷ In contrast to other conceptual practices the influence of Art & Language systematically extended the practical authority of art to other fields. The group's special importance, Buchmann writes, lies in this.

In fact, *The Fox* was founded against the backdrop of a certain disappointment regarding the development of the political project of conceptual art. Whereas the journal *Art-Language*, also published by Art & Language, still described itself in the editorial of its first issue as a "comprehensive report of conceptual art in the U.S.A." and "of a number of artists in Britain who have worked in this field for the past two years," conceptual art and its categorization in art criticism and art history were no longer key topics for *The Fox*. Thus, for example, the editors advertised for the first issue with an ad in *Artforum*, which in addition to announcing the title included a somewhat fragmented summary text. According to this text the first issue of *The Fox* would be about: "*Looking back on the art workers coalition... the failure of conceptual art... doubts about protest art. The priority of language: Does it constitute rather than merely reflect our world/practice?*"⁷⁸

The critique of conceptual art formulated in numerous articles published in *The Fox* foremost attacks the persistence of the commodity form, which is traced back to conceptual art's failure to question the presentation, reception and distribution of art – which Art & Language

⁷⁷ See Buchmann, "Art & Language," 27.

⁷⁸ See the advertisement for *The Fox* in *Artforum*, no. 4 (1975): 87.

still attested to conceptual art as of 1969 in *Art-Language*. This kind of questioning would require ceasing to identify the object of art and instead considering the institutional agreements that make up art's foundation. According to Art & Language, artists' scope of action would need to be extended to cover this area. The group considered the understandings of authorship and art linked to art's systems of production and distribution as its primary artistic material and therefore also considered art criticism and theory to be part of its artistic practice.

In a contribution to an anthology written together with Tom Holert, Sabeth Buchmann takes Art & Language to be exemplary of the link between artistic knowledge production and collaboration, which earns the group distinction as an antetype of tendencies of art in the 1990s and 2000s.⁷⁹ In this vein, Buchmann and Holert take up Thomas S. Kuhn's concept of the "paradigm shift," which Kuhn formulated in the context of the history of science and to which Art & Language repeatedly make reference.⁸⁰ Holert and Buchmann contest that Art & Language can be adequately described as a "community constituted by intellectual history."⁸¹ Re-

79 Sabeth Buchmann and Tom Holert, "Materielle Praxis, Wissenproduktion," in *Mit Sein. Gemeinschaft – ontologische und politische Perspektivierungen*, eds. Dorothee Richter et al. (Zurich: Edition Voldemeer, 2010), 190.

80 Buchmann and Holert, 190.

81 Buchmann and Holert, 190. Kuhn introduced a new understanding of intellectual history with his concept "paradigm shift" in 1962. He investigated the conditions under which scientific knowledge and methods are revised and the consequences these revisions entail. His analyses bring him to the conclusion that scientific development can no longer be understood in evolutionarily progressive terms; rather, the sciences are characterized by revolutionary breaks. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

ferring to statements made by Art & Language member Charles Harrison, Buchmann and Holert argue that Art & Language took up Kuhn's thesis that scientific revolutions begin in the interplay between given beliefs and changes in "scientific communities," because the group wanted to "replace art paradigms that are dominant and authoritarian because they are subjective and arbitrary with scientifically based, objective ontologies – ontologies that should also make their contingency and defectiveness transparent."⁸² Kuhn's model, they argue, provided the group with an instrument that allowed it to describe given definitions, rules and norms of art theory as dependent on their social and institutional context. Analogous to science, they maintain, the "truths" of art required the arrangement of a community, based on mutual exchange with other communities.⁸³

Surely, it is possible to observe some parallels between Kuhn's concept of scientific community and the community practice discussed in *The Fox*. Each creates a singular context via mutual reference amongst their members, the sharing of literature, the claim to a common language clearly distinct from others, the reference to other contexts and finally not least the stated need for a consistent theoretical foundation. Yet I think that drawing a parallel between the general practice of Art &

⁸² Buchmann and Holert, 190. According to Kuhn, a scientific community is to be understood as the totality of all scientists participating in the international practice of science. Scientists create their own networks via disciplinary channels in which they mutually observe and converse with one another. This takes place in a language specific to the discipline, which among other things emanates from the canonical standard literature, and which noticeably distinguishes itself from other communities.

⁸³ See Buchmann and Holert, 190.

Language and the model of the scientific community is only partially helpful. There are various reasons for this. First, as I have shown, Art & Language was never a constant group. Moreover, many different things in various fields were produced under the group's name. For example, Art & Language appeared as the author of text based artistic works – for exhibitions including *Information* (1970) at the MoMA New York, *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* at the New York Cultural Center and *documenta 5* (1972) as well as for journals such as *Artforum* and *Studio International* – and also as the editor of two journals in which art is discussed in terms of critical social theory. The group's members wrote articles about art, held talks and made music in cooperation with the band Red Crayola.⁸⁴ Alongside these kinds of artistic and publishing projects Art & Language was also politically active in the AMCC. Given the various fields in which Art & Language was active, it can barely be understood as *one community*.

Furthermore, the group's strategic orientation was heterogeneous. Ramsden's demand for a theoretical foundation of the group practice pointed more to a need than to a reflection of the reality of the group. Various artistic and political interests came together in Art & Language. *The Fox* was an attempt to develop a common analysis of the relations between art, society and politics on the basis of this heterogeneity. With view to the texts published in this context it is evident that there

⁸⁴ Collaborative albums include *Corrected Slogans* (1976), *Kangaroo* (1981), *Sighs Trapped By Liars* (2007), *Five American Portraits* (2010) and *Baby and Child Care* (2016). Following a legal battle with the crayon manufacturer of the same name the band, founded in 1966, has written its name as "Red Krayola" since 1994.

was barely agreement amongst the editors and authors on the methods and means of production and distribution adequate to this analysis. The compiled references to literature, philosophy and natural sciences, too, are so heterogeneous that it is impossible to speak of a canon, such as a scientifically community typically would create.

The Discrepancy between Community and Practice

Establishing community practice as a new sociality required clarifying its form; who is part of it and who is not; which concepts are linked to it and can become the basis of which a common language; and not least the relationship between the community and other groups in the art field. All of these questions provoked controversial discussions in *The Fox*. On the basic necessity of creating this kind of practice, however, there was broad agreement. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this agreement did not extend to questions of concrete action and application. Opinions on whether the undertaking could be successful in the context of *The Fox* also tended to vary. Lizzie Borden, for example, saw in Art & Language “the most radical attempt to create an independent context within the art world,”⁸⁵ while Ian Burn fundamentally questioned the group’s claim to develop a transformative practice: “I’m not sure that at present any of us would know a ‘transforming praxis’ if we fell over one.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Lizzie Borden, “Dear Fox...,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1976): 33.

⁸⁶ Ian Burn, “Art-Language Volume 3 Number 2,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1976): 55.

“Our Concepts, Our Rules”

It is a G and CE to regard language as a classless means of communication. Language belongs to the managers. Capitalist material relations transfix our social relations into discrete commodities. Our individual particularity gets transfixed into reified mind or self. This mind attributes psycho properties to itself, a mad attribution often called believing. A believe is an approximated correspondence between doubt, reified mind and a fetishized social reality of commodities. Conscious guiding of history by peculiar change gets mystified because nonsensuous interpretation insidiously transformed us all into tourists. Bustour contemplaters of a world not of our own making.⁸⁷

Both Mel Ramsden and Sarah Charlesworth called community practice the development of an own language. Language was understood by both not as a neutral instrument but as saturated and striated by the dominant capitalist logic. With respect to the “own” of the own language, members of Art & Language held different opinions. For example, Charlesworth criticized a writing practice that appropriates concepts from a particular vocabulary and does not develop these out of community practice.⁸⁸ Above all, her critique referred to anthropological, philosophical and historical theories based on abstract Marxian arguments. To grasp onto an existing language, whether revolutionary or bourgeois, Charlesworth argued, is always also connected to the

87 Music-Language, “Nine Gross and Conspicuous Errors/Statement No. 8” (transcript of a video recording originally produced in 1976), https://ubuvideo.memoryoftheworld.org/Red-Krayola_with_Art-and-Language_Gross-and-Conspicuous_Error_No.8.mp4.

88 See Sarah Charlesworth, “For Artists Meeting,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 40–41.

acceptance of certain rules and hierarchies that deserve to be questioned.⁸⁹ The mode of writing to which the group's spokespersons aspired, she contended, thus stabilized existing fields rather than contributing to the creation of a new sociality. Lizzie Borden argued in a similar direction.⁹⁰ According to Borden, references to theory often solely function to interpellate authorities: "Authorities are being summoned, whether Marx or McLuhanesque collage of anthropological opinion."⁹¹ In this way, traditional forms of domination tended to reinscribe themselves in the context of Art & Language. Women, for example, were radically underrepresented in *The Fox* and feminist methods and questions were categorically suppressed in discussion.⁹² The same mechanisms were at work here as in the United States and Western Europe in the late 1960s, when the anti-war movement was largely supported by the women's movement, without the latter's specific topics having found entry into the anti-war discourse.⁹³

Although Borden primarily named authors Michael Corris, Joseph Kosuth, Michael Baldwin and Philip Pilkington as examples for her argument, her critique is also relevant in relation to Ramsden's text "On Practice." In

⁸⁹ Charlesworth, 41.

⁹⁰ See Borden, "Dear Fox..."

⁹¹ Borden, 33.

⁹² "The very adequacy of the writing by women in your magazine suggests an insidious form of oppression. (In the acceptance of certain ideas, in the decision to perform within these concerns, and, maybe most important, in the use of language. [...].)" Borden, 32.

⁹³ "This is similar to the funneling of energy from the women's movement into the anti-war activities organized by men in the late 60's. The argument was that 'freedom' of women was only part of a larger struggle against capitalism, and that only after the struggle had been won could women's liberation be continued: this was a way of relegating women's independence to a secondary role." Borden, 32.

the latter text feminism appears in Ramsden's reference to "feminist workshops" merely as a particular interest; it is not considered necessary to attend to feminist critique. The gender imbalance of Ramsden's frame of reference is also evident in his list of works cited. The canon of theory he invoked, leftist art theory and political philosophy, is written exclusively by male authors. His thoughts on community practice were based – in addition to group members Michael Baldwin, Ian Burn, Andrew Menard and Terry Smith – on authors such as Lawrence Alloway, Michail Bakunin, Bertholt Brecht, T. S. Eliot, Søren Kierkegaard, Max Kozloff, W. I. Lenin, Georg Lukács, Karl Marx, George Orwell, Mao Zedong, Max Weber, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Harold Rosenberg.⁹⁴ However, beyond the gender imbalance, Ramsden's mode of deploying references also deserves criticism. Instead of using footnotes to refer to published sources and thus make his argumentation transparent, Ramsden assumed that the literature he draws on is already known to the reader. The text frequently makes references by a simple mention of a last name. The group discussions Ramsden cites are also only introduced in a limited way. These failures result in a mode of writing that tends to be both obedient to authority and authoritarian. In its manner of not reflecting his own foundations, Ramsden's text falls behind its own claim to a community practice.

Ramsden's writing style does not aim at the creation of any kind of community; it rather positions him in a conflict. The references throughout the text thus serve as assurance against awaited counterattacks. In this way Ramsden's text is quite typical of publications in *The*

⁹⁴ See Ramsden, "On Practice."

Fox, whose general theme Alexander Alberro identifies as “attack, attack, attack.”⁹⁵ In contrast, the demand expressed by Borden and Charlesworth to create a community practice of questioning imported language that, precisely because it is borrowed, is entangled with relations of domination, received little consideration. Beyond the critique of appropriating existing hierarchies via imported theory, Borden also criticized a tendency in *The Fox* to dismiss practice related problems as naïve or to declare them obsolete.⁹⁶ From her point of view, however, it is precisely practical problems that make up the foundation of economic and political relations. But in *The Fox*, Borden argues, these problems too often remain buried under heavy theory.⁹⁷ Ian Burn also wrote about a loss of authenticity with respect to problems of transformation, claiming that arguments that remain at an abstract or theoretical level without dealing with practical problems become a joke and ultimately create a world of academic luxury, isolated from the practical consequences of real life.⁹⁸ Borden argues for the need to avoid treating social conflicts only in abstract terms and as topics of academic debate – a tendency that ultimately matches the implicit criteria of bourgeois intellectuality.⁹⁹ At the same time, she contends, treating theory with a brash tone gets in the way of the group’s political aims. It scares off other groups and limits the potential effects of the discussion.¹⁰⁰

95 Alberro, “One Year under the Mast,” 163.

96 See Borden, “Dear Fox...,” 24.

97 See Borden, 24.

98 Burn, “Art-Language Volume 3 Number 2,” 55.

99 See Borden, “Dear Fox...,” 24.

100 “I’m bringing these problems up because it seems wasteful to undercut your efforts through the prejudices raised by your tone and presentation.” Borden, 24.

In contrast to this style, Borden promoted a writing practice that connects arguments to social embeddedness. The feminist Bread and Roses Collective's critique of the politics of the Weathermen provided a key point of reference in this regard.¹⁰¹ Borden identifies a writing style bearing more personal, autobiographical or confessional traits as characteristic of the feminist critique she wanted to employ for *The Fox*, which could thus have empowering effects.¹⁰² Despite the heterogeneity I mentioned earlier, this kind of differentiated argumentation, which would invest in a discussion amongst many voices, can barely be found in texts published in *The Fox*.

A further aspect of Borden's critique of *The Fox*'s political practice is the lacking will to create connections with related political contexts.¹⁰³ Lucy R. Lippard, too, repeatedly refers to Art & Language's lack of readiness to converse with other interested parties about the problems they discussed outside of the frame defined by the group.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Art & Language's dealings with other politicized projects were limited to the placement of

101 The Weathermen were a radical group that splintered from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and went underground in 1970.

102 Drawing on a conceptual vocabulary developed later by Donna Haraway, I would say that Borden is concerned with introducing situated knowledges that do not undertake a separation of object and subject, and which thereby bring into purview a discourse that always also considers the speaker and the speaker's context. See Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of a Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–599.

103 See Borden, "Dear Fox...", 23.

104 Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1997), 151.

ads.¹⁰⁵ That being said, it is difficult to find advertisements for art journals, galleries or art projects in *The Fox*, despite having its distribution network in this milieu. The one exception – in addition to Art & Language’s other projects, such as the music project *Music-Language* and the journal *Art-Language* – is an ad for the publication series *Nova Scotia Series* of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, directed by Kasper König.

All in all, the selection of advertisements appears to be carefully curated. The advertised projects are all non-commercial. By placing advertisement for them, *The Fox* achieves both the manifestation of sympathy and solidarity and the depiction of a network. It is foremost via advertising that *The Fox* symbolically locates itself in the suggested “art front.” The editorial’s claim of wanting to contribute beyond the narrowly defined art field, however, is barely realized by *The Fox*. It is primarily the practice of closure that repeatedly reduces the magazine’s potential political practice to the art field.

On the backside of all three published issues one finds references to *The Fox*’s distribution channels. In New York, the journal is handled by the established art

105 Advertisements, for example, for the self-published book *Language, Truth and Politics. Towards a Radical Theory for Communication* by the economist, historian and *The Fox* author Trevor Pateman (1975) or for journals such as the feminist and socialist *Radical Philosophy* (Kingston-upon-Thames, since 1972); the critical social theory journal *Left Curve* (San Francisco, since 1974), to which *The Fox* authors like Ian Burn and Terry Smith contributed; or the left literature magazine *Praxis* (Berkeley, 1975–1978), where *The Fox* also placed ads. Further, ads were made for the project and exhibition space *Franklin Furnace* in New York (since 1976), the *May Day Magazine* (Vancouver, since 1975) and *Black Graphics International* (Detroit, 1969–1975).

bookstore and publishing house Jaap Reitman, Inc., but it can also be found in other bookstores: Gerry Rosen in Los Angeles, Publix Book Mart in Cleveland, at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, at the artists' bookshop Art Metropole in Toronto, Carmen Lamanna in Toronto, and in Europe at Gian Enzo Sperone in Turin, Walther König in Cologne, Art & Language Press Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, Nigel Greenwood Books Ltd. in London and at Art & Language's Lisson Gallery, also located in London. Later, further locations in Paris, Carboro, North Carolina and St. Louis would be added. An existing network of galleries and art bookstores was largely relied on for distribution. Circulation of the journal outside of the art field can almost certainly be ruled out.

The project's political identity as part of a broader "art front" had few consequences. *The Fox* did not make any contributions to a critique of the art world that extended beyond its own circles. There was barely any exchange with other magazines engaged in art criticism. No direct participation in a larger context of discussion took place. All attempts of individual authors to publish elsewhere and join existing discussions were attacked in *The Fox*.

It is fitting that the magazine's colophon quickly informs the reader that the publisher, the Art & Language Foundation, Inc., retains copyright over the complete content of *The Fox*. No texts may be reproduced without permission of the named foundation. This specification contrasts with the identity expressed in the discussion around community practice. It suggests, contrarily, that the texts are in fact understood as commodities – and not as contributions to an open ended discourse.

The Aestheticization of Editorial Practice

It is not only this distribution network that indicates *The Fox's* status as art. My contention is that *The Fox* was a site not merely for holding discussions, but also for exhibiting them. This can be observed not least in the writing style, which aims more at display than comprehensibility. In the third and final issue of *The Fox* this tendency becomes particularly evident, where one-third of the printed matter is dedicated to a copy of a set of editorial meeting minutes. On the one hand, printing the minutes really does lend transparency to a discussion, thus fulfilling an important criterion for community practice. But in addition to this documentary function of the minutes, their printing here contains a performative element. And this is at least as important. The recording of minutes is what grants the editorial meeting the status of being a meeting in the first place, and thus, in a certain sense, it institutes the editorial body.

The minutes are introduced in *The Fox* by Peter Benchley, who compiled them from transcripts of three meetings that took place at the end of February 1976. From a total of seven meetings, Benchley selected the first and the final two.¹⁰⁶ The minutes are given the title "The Lumpen-Headache," a play on the Marxian term lumpenproletariat, or the most precarized layer of the proletariat, which is barely in a position to gain class-consciousness and carry out organized collective action. With 'headache' Benchley is probably referring to the pains he incurred by participating in the meetings

¹⁰⁶ See Peter Benchley, "The Lumpen-Headache," *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 1–37.

and recording the minutes. But the title also indicates Benchley's doubt that Art & Language and other groups would be able to glean information about community practice from the minutes that would help advance their work. This pessimistic stance should be understood in relation to the fact that the minutes note the dissolution of the group in its present form.

In a short introduction Peter Benchley claims authorial responsibility for the minutes and in a laconic tone proceeds to delineate the conflicts within the group, which some members consider a political party, others a kind of labor union and yet others a loose common context.¹⁰⁷ The minutes were recorded thanks to the idea that a rendering of the group discussion – which Benchley sees as nothing less than “internal pandemonium” – could be instructive for both the group itself and others.

Thirty-three pages long, the minutes read like a play script, not least because the meeting participants are not identified by name. Instead, Benchley gave them genus names of freshwater fish and primates, which lends the debate an ironic undertone. A recurring point is the question of the valorization of the “critical capital” accumulated by individuals in the context of group activities. One faction claimed that the group must be given more weight, that the privatization of knowledge needed to be countered by something else. A rule was proposed that would require all appearances and contributions to discussions on the part of individual members to be agreed on by the entire group and carried out under the name Art

107 See Benchley, 1.

& Language.¹⁰⁸ Even if the lines of conflict are made transparent in the minutes, the whole affair is simultaneously stylized into a drama staging the dissolution of *The Fox's* editorial body.

Art & Language had used meeting minutes as a format before. The German edition of the journal *Flash Art* in 1973 includes the following note:

In the new Art & Language Ltd. group, the discussion is consciously held with members, who have become many in number, continuously, that is, internally. Meeting minutes are published instead of the essays that were previously published.¹⁰⁹

This was interpreted by the editors as a public announcement “that their investigations of the art context are best conducted through oral communication.”¹¹⁰ In fact, as Art & Language developed into a larger group, various texts were created by editing taped live recordings alongside the internally circulating and published position papers. Transcripts of this kind were published, for example, with the title *Proceedings I-V* in a catalog for the Art & Language exhibition at Kunstmuseum Luzern in 1974.¹¹¹

108 See Benchley, 12. It is likely that the rule is aimed not least at Joseph Kosuth, the only member who regularly discussed his own works in *The Fox*.

109 Flash Art, “Notizen,” *Flash Art* (German Edition), no. 4/5 (1973): 41.

110 Flash Art, 41.

111 The catalog is relatively humble: written on a typewriter and photocopied. In addition to a brief introduction by curator Jean-Christophe Ammann it includes five transcripts in English, each with a German translation. Kunstmuseum Luzern, ed., *Art & Language* (Luzern: self-published, 1974). The exhibition ran from January 27 - February 24, 1974.

The usual function of meeting minutes is to allow outsiders to trace a discussion or understand resolutions. What gets foregrounded here, however, is the friction between an exhibition situation oriented around images, on the one hand, and exhibited transcriptions of fragments of a discussion about linguistic problems, on the other.

But this was not the first time Art & Language engaged the possibility of depicting group processes and discussions in the exhibition space, as the series of works *Index 1–4* illustrates in an exemplary manner. *Index 1* was shown in 1972 at *documenta 5* under Harald Szeemann's curation. The work consisted of an ensemble of eight card boxes in which all texts by group members published in *Art-Language* and other journals as well as other texts are filed and simultaneously captured in a quasi-documentary style. References to texts and text segments as well as their relationship to one another could be found on the walls of the exhibition space. Each text includes three categories: (+) stands for compatible texts or text segments, (-) for non-compatible and (T) for incomparable.

The categories, which are not really meaningful, make a formalistic joke of the attempt to depict a context of discussion. The aestheticization of the referential system transmits the message that the objective is not for visitors to really engage with the texts. Rather, the context of discussion becomes the artistic object – thus making it nearly impossible to approach the contents in a way that would foster participation. In this sense, Peter Fuller describes the group's output in *Studio International* as “interminable, muddled, obsessional theorisations.”¹¹² This

112 Peter Fuller, “Clearing a space for criticism,” *Studio International*, no. 983 (1976): 121.

bears little relation to the alternative art practice originally formulated as the group's aim. For Fuller the works of Art & Language, the medial representations of their discussions, are absolutely commodity-form. They were draped, objectified, boasted, exhibited, bought and sold in galleries between London and New York, he posits – all without the least consideration for their content.¹¹³

The curator Lynda Morris offers a more differentiated analysis of the Art & Language's works. They should be understood as “language art,”¹¹⁴ which means that rather than simply appropriating theoretical methods, they explore these methods' regularity and gaps. Thus, it would be wrong to expect a scholarly or political discourse. Language art does not replace art with philosophy, but is rather a “to question subjective paradigms as an intellectual restriction.”¹¹⁵ A moment of aestheticizing discourse is present, but the project must be situated in an *in between*. In this way, the challenges of developing other forms of knowledge from art become evident.

No. 4

A fourth issue of *The Fox* never materialized. The journal fell victim to the group's internal conflicts, which had already started to show in the discussion of community practice. With the exception of two members in New York, all members of Art & Language left the project. *The Fox* was

113 See Fuller, 121.

114 See Lynda Morris, Lynda Morris, “Do you see what they mean? Art & Language,” in *Artists' Bookworks*, eds. British Council, *A British Council Exhibition* (London: J&P Weldon, 1975), 88.

115 Morris, 90.

integrated into *Art-Language*.¹¹⁶ Mel Ramsden and Mayo Thompson moved to England and continued their work with Michael Baldwin, Philip Pilkington and Charles Harrison. Thus, the New York branch of Art & Language, organized around *The Fox*, dissolved. At the core of the pivotal conflict stood the question of whether the group and its journal should be understood as an artistic project or as a project of art criticism.

Was the aim of *The Fox* to develop a new form of art criticism or to reflect on art criticism as a discursive form? Departing from this question, further questions arose regarding the relationships of the individual members to the group and amongst themselves, and from there the group ultimately broke apart. The failure of the ambitious project can be explained in a two-fold manner: on the one hand, no collective answer was found to important questions, on the other, there was an obvious discrepancy between the postulated aim to develop a transformative community practice and the actual will to put it into practice.

Even if the discussion context created by *The Fox* was not free of capitalist logic, much less of authoritarian and especially patriarchal structures, its form was largely determined by the discussants. They defined the context and in so doing made the forms and rules a topic of discussion. By focusing on social process, *The Fox* temporarily created a space for self observation and reflection at the intersection of conceptual art and left art theory.

With respect to editing and authorial voice, the group continually observed and discussed its own actions. Parameters for discussion were collectively set in these discussions,

116 An image of *The Fox*'s lettering in the style of the previous issues together with the digit 4 is depicted on the cover of the October 1976 issue of the journal *Art-Language*; see *Art-Language*, no. 4 (1976).

and *as experience* they created an awareness of the social construction of the definitions, rules and norms of art theory. In this way, one can observe a sustained transformation of artistic self-understanding in *The Fox*. As they presented themselves in the journal, the artist as a figure worked in the group, and the knowledge required for artistic work was essentially produced in processes of learning, which in this context meant by means of developing a theoretical basis and incorporating methods from other disciplines.

The new self-conception of artists that accompanied this practice may not have been able to bring about the desired social transformation, but it did influence dominant imaginaries of artistic practice in the art field in a decisive manner, and it also created conditions for reformulating the tradition of artists actively intervening in art discourses for the contemporary moment.

Significantly, *The Fox* did not just provide academic methods to the art field; instead, this moment of transmission itself became a topic of consideration. This allowed assumptions and aspects that often went unnoticed in academic discourse to be made visible. Accordingly, the practice that made up *The Fox* can neither be completely understood as theoretical, nor is it entirely on the side of art. Rather, it was about attending to theoreticity and scholarliness with artistic means, and thus developing a new form of artistic art criticism.

In this way, *The Fox* is not only an early model of the politicized discourses of the 1990s, in which artists were re-defined as theorists and works as contributions to debates. As the journal successfully extended artistic competencies, it was also distinguished by the undoing of boundaries that is exemplary of the emergence of a new “dematerialized” phase of capitalist valorization.

ally *affecting* the society they were opposed to. /
 his light "art for art's sake" becomes an attempt
 establish another society of sorts. Also, it's in-
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THE FOX

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THE FOX

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ANTI-IMPERIALIST CULTURAL UNION

A MASS ORGANIZATION MADE UP OF

P eople from **V**ARIOUS **O** rganizations &

CLASS STRATA
WE NEED ART AND ARTISTS WHO SPEAK AND FIGHT ON THE SIDE OF THE PEOPLE: THE WHOLE

MULTI-NATIONAL WORKING-CLASS & OPPRESSED NATIONALITIES

OPPRESSED & EXPLOITED BY

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"... CULTURAL WORKERS MUST SERVE THE PEOPLE WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM AND DEVOTION, AND THEY MUST LINK THEMSELVES WITH THE MASSES, NOT DIVORCE THEMSELVES FROM THE MASSES. IN ORDER TO DO SO, THEY MUST ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE MASSES. ALL WORK DONE FOR THE MASSES MUST START FROM THEIR NEEDS AND NOT FROM THE DESIRE OF ANY INDIVIDUAL, HOWEVER WELL INTENTIONED." (MAO TSE-TUNG, ON LITERATURE AND ART).

ART-LANGUAGE

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A.N.Y.P. (1989-99)
**CONSTANT RESTRUCTURING, A DIFFERENT
ORDER**

Following *The Köln Show*, a group exhibition featuring recent European and U.S. art in nine galleries in the German city of Cologne, an extended catalog entitled *Nachschub* was published in 1990.¹¹⁷ Its editor was Isabelle Graw, who co founded *Texte zur Kunst* (Cologne/Berlin, since 1990) that same year. The group exhibition marked an occasion to “illuminate and expand the parameters of art,” Graw wrote in the introduction.¹¹⁸ Art was conceived in this context as something that could not be explained in and of itself, but rather only by considering the broadest array of factors, including aspects not related to art.¹¹⁹ The music magazine *Spex* (Cologne/Berlin, since 1980) published the catalog, which contained contributions Graw had collected from U.S. artists who took critical stances towards institutions and the market, such as John Miller and Andrea Fraser. The catalog’s international orientation indicates the globalization of the art field, but it is simultaneously an expression of an advanced alliance between the commercial

117 See Isabelle Graw (ed.), *Nachschub. The Köln Show* (Cologne: Spex 1990).

118 “Nachschub takes ‘The Köln Show’ as an occasion to illuminate and extend the parameters of art. Parameters should be understood as the external (art production in art schools and institutes, art business in galleries, art mediation in catalogs) and internal, artist-dependent (material, costs and questions of stance) conditions under which art develops.” Isabelle Graw, “Vorwort,” in ed. Graw, 4.

119 See Graw, 4.

art market, on the one hand, and forms of art and art criticism invested in social, political and historical contexts, on the other.

In view of this development in the art field, a host of individuals and groups came together in the German-speaking countries with the aim of advancing a politicized alternative to allying with the commercial art market. One prominent example of this moment is the Copyshop project space, which was run temporarily as part of the art fair Unfair 92 in November 1992 in Cologne. The convention presented a counter-program to Art Cologne, which took place at the same time. The topic of work in Copyshop was “counterpublic.” Beyond being only thematic in nature, the project also marked an attempt to create an actual counterpublic moment. In this way, Copyshop positioned itself in an emphatically political manner. It occupied a space in the art field and used it, according to its own understanding, for “politicization + to end the isolation of groups working in this area.”¹²⁰ In Copyshop, furthermore, art from the United States informed by institutional critique and critique of the market formed an important point of reference.¹²¹ Copyshop took the issue of parameters further. Unlike in *The Köln Show* and the associated publication two years earlier, Copyshop focused not only on art but also dealt with political questions that extended beyond reflexivity vis-à-vis

120 Stephan Geene, “Jeder November ist anders (Copyshop)”, in *Copyshop. Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit*, ed. BüroBert (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993), 78.

121 In addition to Martha Rosler and Fareed Armaly, whose work “Contact” is introduced in the reader, featured artists were associated with ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and the Women’s Action Coalition (WAC). The British artists’ group Art in Ruins was another important reference.

the art field. Copyshop tried, for example, to translate political questions of U.S. contemporary art with respect to the situation in Germany. To this end, Copyshop invited the New York video collective Paper Tiger Television, which worked on migration issues, to organize a workshop in Cologne. Against the backdrop of the 1992 pogroms in Rostock-Lichtenhagen, the focus was on migration in Germany, not in the United States. In addition to artists whose activities took place foremost outside of the art field, Copyshop also involved local political initiatives. Connecting art, critique and local activism in order to create a counterpublic was a distinguishing feature of Copyshop, and this was the case, too, for the newspaper that developed in this context: *A.N.Y.P.* ("Anti New York Pläne, Munich/Berlin, 1989–99).

A.N.Y.P. was a newspaper-format publication published annually. It had been in existence for three years when Copyshop took place. Founded in Munich in 1989, it was published for the following ten years. Although *A.N.Y.P.* remained a relatively marginal project in the broader context of proliferating artistic and political initiatives in the 1990s,¹²² its run of 1000 copies and targeted distribution allowed it to reach all "important" persons.¹²³ *A.N.Y.P.* was published by the theatre group minimal club, which had been making appearances in Munich with its own pieces and performances of theoretical texts since 1982.¹²⁴

122 For a comprehensive overview of groups, offices and project spaces working between art and activism in the 1990s, see Holger Kube Ventura, *Politische Kunst Begriffe in den 1990er Jahren im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Vienna: edition selene, 2002), 305–306.

123 See Alice Creischer, Roberto Ohrt and Andreas Siekmann, "Glanz und Elend des Papiers. Kunstfanziens," *Die Beute*, no. 5 (1995): 116.

124 For example, in the 1980s the group put on the play *initiative paladino* at Galerie der Künstler des Berufsverbands bildender Künstler

With origins in the free theater scene, minimal club had quickly taken to acting mostly in the art field, putting on plays in foyers and inner courtyards of museums and artists' associations. *A.N.Y.P.* was initially one of the group's means of expression. The first issue was published as a program for the play *Anti New York Pläne*, from which the newspaper also took its name. *A.N.Y.P.* had neither thematic issues nor editorials. Its strategic orientation followed the thematically diverse interests of those involved. Only rarely did this include questions about art or art theory. Above all the group dealt with questions of money, reproductive technologies and gender. "Technology [was] debated and sexism discussed" in an ongoing manner.¹²⁵ Poststructuralist discourses made up its theoretical framing. In addition to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the writings of Judith Butler influenced how those involved understood the project. With respect to the proliferation of poststructuralist theory in the art field and in academia, *A.N.Y.P.* called for a political reading of this theoretical current. Their concern was with the "proximity-to-action" ["Handlungsnähe"] of theory.¹²⁶ Unlike in the 1970s, however, this proximity-to-action of theory was not primarily concerned with organizing a working class. Instead, its goals were anti-essentialist intervention and the development of new kinds of anticapitalist practice, particularly by incorporating feminist, antiracist and queer discourses.

München. At Munich's Zweibrücken-Galerie, minimal club staged Thomas Brasch's *lieber georg*. Also in Munich, the group performed the play *michel foucaults theatrum philosophicum* at the Deutsches Museum.

125 Creischer, Ort and Siekmann, "Glanz und Elend des Papiers. Kunstfanzines," 118.

126 See minimal club, "Daß Du die Metropole willst, heißt noch lange nicht, daß es sie gibt," in *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 7 (1992): 179.

Its clear theoretical tone distinguished *A.N.Y.P.* from other art journals established around 1990, including *Artfan* (Vienna, 1991–1996) and *Dank* (Hamburg, 1991–1994). At the same time, in some way or another the main interest of all of these journals centered on their own publishing contexts and questions of publicity, of the public sphere. Together with tendencies towards an increasingly discursive rather than visual form of art, they mark a moment of increased reflexivity vis-à-vis the social and medial conditions of artistic and theoretical production.

Questioning the Newspaper

As with other publications that understand themselves as counterpublic projects, *A.N.Y.P.* aimed not merely to spread “alternative” content, such as non market conforming information, but also to consolidate a social nexus. The focus was on networking groups and individuals who had become repoliticized in the 1990s and whose practice was located primarily outside of the art field. For networks where ties were loose rather than fixed as a matter of principle, journals were considered capable of maintaining permanent structures for discussions. In opting for a print newspaper, the makers of *A.N.Y.P.* consciously chose what came across as an antiquated medium at a moment when much discussion focused on new electronic publishing forms. A decisive factor in this regard was the insight that the consolidating function of the newspaper comes not least from its specific materiality. In contrast to a website, for example, a paper is a decidedly local medium and can therefore generate different kinds of connection. But the

group members' stance towards "advanced technologies," as minimal club called them, was not dismissive in principle. Even as the "stripped" outlines of the *A.N.Y.P.* logotype give the impression of enlargement achieved by photocopying, the digital also became an aesthetic topic in the newspaper, not least due to the large pixelation of the lettering of article titles.¹²⁷

A Different "Sense of Order"

In the newspaper's first issue minimal club writes, "the elements of everyday life [should be subject to] a different 'sense of order' [*ordnungssinn*]." ¹²⁸ This appears to me to be a programmatic description based on an understanding of media as environments, the parameters of which are under constant reconstruction. In *A.N.Y.P.*, the newspaper as medium and the editorial practice were themselves put up to question.

The phrase 'sense of order' is emphasized twice in the original text – once with quotation marks, once with italicized font. With the quotation marks, minimal club creates a distancing effect vis-à-vis the formulation; it gets marked as improper speech or citation. The italicization, on the other hand, produces an emphasis that can denote a foreign term, a title or intonation. Minimal club gives no further indication about its use of the term 'sense of order' or what the term refers to. But we can assume that this is more about granting new meaning to the term than about referencing existing context of meaning.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Later, the title font was vectorized and well defined, but the cover of the final issue was once again designed with pixelated letters.

¹²⁸ minimal club, "Anti New York Pläne," in *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 1 (1989): 13.

¹²⁹ Beyond the use of this term that signifies a desire for order

I see a connection here with Michel Foucault's concept of "grammar." In his text "Theatrum Philosophicum" – on which minimal club bases one of its staged plays¹³⁰ – Foucault speaks of the necessity of a new grammar of events, a grammar that is fastened not to predicates, but to verbs in their infinite, present forms.¹³¹ The infinite verb neither provides information about whether an event lies in the present, past or future, nor does it shed light on whether a group or a person of a specific gender is concerned. This kind of grammar is not fully freed from subjection, which is inscribed into language, but as Foucault formulates elsewhere, it does introduce a different order in which subjects are "not being governed like that."¹³² This kind of work with and on language indicates an awareness of the inextricable link between language, subject and power, but it also points to the possibility of acting on these in a transformative way. *A.N.Y.P.*'s proposed method of subjecting daily life to a different sense of order was situated in this conflict-ridden field. In the *A.N.Y.P.* context, the method could be applied to how topics of discussion are treated, to the language used and the conventions of the medium as well as, more generally, to the conditions of work and production.

("German sense of order"), the term has been prominently used by art historian Ernst H. Gombrich in his writings on the psychology of the ornament; see Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979). The distance of minimal club's use from these mentioned contexts of meaning is evident.

130 Stephan Geene wrote a piece for minimal club's show; see Stephan Geene, *Michel Foucault's theatrum philosophicum* (Munich: Raben, 1987).

131 See Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum," *Critique*, no. 282 (1970): 885–908.

132 Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1997), 67.

Visually Enacting Different Orders

Let's take a look at the newspaper itself. Its format is 35 x 50 cm. The coated paper is pure white and relatively thick, but translucent enough to expose the next page. The length varies from 16 to 44 pages. At 16 pages the first issue was thin. The logotype "A.N.Y.P." is at the center of the cover page. To the left it reads "minimal club," to the right "Kunstverein München." Underneath, "Nr. 1," "5 DM," "Programmzeitung zur Aufführung + Ausstellung" and "26.4.89-30.4." This little information, spread over two lines, is set in more than five fonts and six font sizes. The letters, initially copied, cut out and taped (later this was done on a computer), are not on a straight line and are not right, left or center indented. On the left hand side of the lower half of the page, a table of contents can be found in two text boxes with blue backgrounds. In addition to information about the twelve contributions, which are listed with the author's name and page numbers, there are references to rubrics including "Fortsetzung" [Continuation], "Rätsel" [Riddles], "Horoskop" [Horoscope], "Bildgeschichte" [Image history], "Das ganze Stück" [The whole piece] and "Impressum" [Imprint], each of which contain one contribution. Not all contributions are listed in the table of contents. For example, activist Sylvia Hamberger's article "Der Naturidentische Stoff. Bananen, Knäuel / Dokumentation durch nicht dokumentarisches Material von Sylvia hamberger" [Matter identical to nature. Bananas, knotgrass / documentation with non-documentary material by sylvia hamberger] is listed separately. Four partial contributions are distributed in narrow columns across the page, entitled "ES GIBT MOMENTE IN DENEN

ALLES STIMMT. die landschaft die menschen der kaffee" [THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN EVERYTHING IS RIGHT. the landscape the people the coffee], "die zukunft der A.N.Y.P." [the history of A.N.Y.P.], "Ersatzhandlungen – Placebokunst" [Substitute actions – placebo art], "Pläne + Stoffe (unsichtbar + greifbar)" [Plans + materials (invisible + tangible)].¹³³

At first glance it is easy to understand why in an article about art fanzines of the 1990s, Alice Creischer, Roberto Ohrt and Andreas Siekmann describe *A.N.Y.P.* as a sea of text.¹³⁴ It is difficult to find one's orientation on the page, hard to tell where an article begins, where it ends, what belongs to the table of contents and what is advertisement. Neither the layout nor the typography is particularly reader-friendly. Many of the rules common to this area are broken: the fonts are too small, the spacing too large. The types are chaotically combined. An idiosyncratic use of upper and lower case letters adds to the effect.

The newspaper's design can be traced back to an amateurish practice that prefers admitting "bad" solutions to relinquishing parts of the production process to non-involved third parties. This is a matter of controlling production, but it is also a refusal to treat the processes involved in newspaper production separate from one another. At second glance it becomes apparent that *A.N.Y.P.*'s design bears a style that can be traced through all of minimal club's productions. The combination of handwriting and text and images set in narrow columns

¹³³ *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 1 (1989): 1.

¹³⁴ See Alice Creischer et al., "Glanz und Elend des Papiers. Kunstfanzines," *Die Beute*, no. 5 (1995): 118.

are typical of this style, as are various neologisms and a strict commitment to writing in lower case. This style is particularly evident in Stephan Geene's *Michel Foucault's theatrum philosophicum*. It has the effect of visually linking minimal club's various productions – plays, publications, exhibitions and journals. The distinct design characterized minimal club as a group. The look of its publications made them easily distinguishable from works coming from other contexts. In a certain sense this can be considered successful branding. A conscious treatment of design media is also observable with respect to a presentation given by *A.N.Y.P.* in the Munich event space Kasino in 1990. Here, two walls were designed to feature the oversized *A.N.Y.P.* logotype in the typical Xerox aesthetic, one handwritten programmatic sentence and one image. This simple but effective intervention turned the space into a theatre set.

However, *A.N.Y.P.*'s design cannot be reduced to a control over the means of production and its function as visual appearance. Beyond these aspects it is important to see how the different imaginaries of structures and orders mentioned at the beginning of this section were put into visual practice by means of design. In other words, the “sea of text” was part of a program. According to *A.N.Y.P.* editor Stephan Geene, the small, narrow and difficult to read text allows for ‘*Inhaltlichkeit*’ [‘contentness’] – as much content as possible in the least amount of space.¹³⁵ Not least, it expresses a certain urgency of the communiqué. *A.N.Y.P.* positioned itself with this stylistic gesture against other art journals that are tasteful, comfortable and leisurely designed. This gener-

¹³⁵ Stephan Geene in conversation with the author, December 10, 2014.

osity towards contributors and readers is not to be found in *A.N.Y.P.* And yet in terms of production, *A.N.Y.P.* is a relatively high grade publication. This can be seen, for example, in the paper selection and the print. Nevertheless, its aesthetic remains uneven, transmitting the D.I.Y. aspect of the project. Even the unclear separation of individual contributions has a conceptual function: previously separate discursive contexts were made to relate to one another via the layout. In many cases contributions in *A.N.Y.P.* whose contents appear unrelated at first glance are placed alongside one another. *A.N.Y.P.* author Renate Lorenz has noted a politicization of art in this kind of association of “areas of life that are usually held separate.”¹³⁶

In fact, it is not only by means of the layout that links were drawn between separate discursive contexts such as genetic engineering and conceptual art. Many of the texts are concerned with undermining the boundaries of journalistic genres. For example, they discuss bioengineering together with art, or the criminal prosecution of the German Red Army Faction together with discourses on autonomy. This raised questions about what topics, methods and theories can be treated in what journalistic genres. The genres of the texts, too, cannot be easily categorized. Interviews, reviews, essays, poetic and literary contributions are mixed, their boundaries flow.

Restructuring the Newspaper

The constant restructuring of the parameters of the newspaper as a medium is visible on the cover page of

¹³⁶ See Renate Lorenz, “Outing/Coming Out,” in *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 5 (1993): 8.

A.N.Y.P. The order of the table of contents, which is always printed on the cover, changes from issue to issue. At the beginning it takes up little place; later, when the issues grow in content, it fills an entire column or even the entire page.¹³⁷ Usually it appears as an unordered list of the contributing authors' names.¹³⁸ Occasionally the list is supplemented with the titles of contributions and page numbers.¹³⁹ A number of visual markers are repeatedly used for individual contributions or groups of contributions, including project-related contributions such as the texts produced for the exhibition "die minderung bei gesteigertem wert" [diminution in conjunction with increased value] (no. 4). Text genres such as "Interviews" (no. 6) or sections such as "Sport," "Talk," "Post" [Mail], "Markt" [Market] and "TV" are also distinguished.¹⁴⁰ These modifications to the table of contents from issue to issue suggest a constant restructuring of the newspaper.

With respect to its format and also in part to the sections and layout, *A.N.Y.P.* is reminiscent of the daily newspaper model. This kind of paper is based on the principle of the bourgeois public sphere. According to the foundational principles of the bourgeois public sphere, the daily newspaper has the function of spreading daily information and presenting the opinions of society, which are understood with a notion of content diversity.

137 See *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 8 (1997): 1.

138 In nos. 2 and 3 the table of contents is ordered only according to authors.

139 In nos. 4 to 6 all authors and titles are named.

140 In no. 7 – as was already the case in the first issue – rubrics are used. Articles belonging to a rubric distributed across the entire cover page in the same way as articles that do not belong to any rubric. In the final two issues, no. 8 and no. 9, the naming of rubrics is once again ended, but the visual distribution into blocks remains.

On the face of it, *A.N.Y.P.* took on the format of the daily paper in order to evoke a certain sense of urgency and timeliness. In fact, the daily paper was aspired to as a form because, as the representational medium of the bourgeois public sphere, it was the object of critique. *A.N.Y.P.* aimed to posit a different publicity against the bourgeois public sphere – a counterpublic. Some characteristics of the daily newspaper, however, were directly taken up by *A.N.Y.P.*, including the broad spectrum of topics common to a daily paper in contrast to a special interest publication. *A.N.Y.P.* reports on sports and horses just as it covers contemporary debates on genetic engineering and reproductive technologies.¹⁴¹ The largest discrepancy between *A.N.Y.P.* and a daily paper is its mode of publication. A radical slowing-down, *A.N.Y.P.* is published but once annually.

Action-Proximate Art Criticism

In its self-description, minimal club calls for “proximity-to-action” [*Handlungsnähe*] from its authors.¹⁴² There is also talk of a “necessity of the application of theory.”¹⁴³ The editors’ understanding of “proximity-to-action” became clear in an *A.N.Y.P.* interview with Judith Butler,

141 Under “Sport,” for example, Diedrich Diederichsen writes about football; see Diedrich Diederichsen, “Kleines runtergehacktes Räsonnement über die heiße WM 1994 im Sommer des gleichnamigen Jahres,” *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 6 (1994): 28. Marion von Osten answers in the next issue with an article on horses; see Marion von Osten, “Ponys und richtige Pferde,” *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 7 (1995/96): 18.

142 minimal club, “*A.N.Y.P.* eine Zeitung des minimal club,” in *Copyshop. Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit*, ed. BüroBert (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993): 84.

143 minimal club, 84.

where Butler was asked about the potential of her books *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter* “to make an intervention.” The *A.N.Y.P.* editors presented Butler’s role as co-editor of the anthology *Feminists Theorize the Political* as evidence that Butler is open to “an interventionist option” in her theoretical work. They write:

We assume that there needs to be public mobilization against genetic and reproductive technologies. In your theoretical move from an argument about construction to an argument about materialization in *Bodies That Matter*, we see the possibility for a critique of the genetics project.¹⁴⁴

What is precisely meant by “interventionist option” is illuminated in a text by minimal club co-founder Geene:

a commentary that wants to comment on an art that theorizes itself can rarely couple with that art, but must rather develop its own strategies. therefore it can/must frequently change its status from art criticism to art theory; for an art that presupposes its own new understanding of art, therefore, it can retroactively provide this understanding; but it can also pave the way for an art that is created through or in this new descriptive dimension in the first place.¹⁴⁵

Geene calls for an art criticism that develops its strategy by way of an interplay between critique and theory. He grasps critique as dealing with an object, while he understands theory as a praxis that positions itself, intervenes

144 *A.N.Y.P.* (Sabeth Buchmann and Juliane Rebentisch) in Judith Butler et al., “Discourse is not life, it’s time is not yours” [sic], *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 6 (1994): 8.

145 Stephan Geene, “the gift of critical insight,” *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 3 (1991): 14.

in modifying ways and develops alternatives, that is, a practice that results in a change of the object of discussion. The art criticism that Geene prefers thus does not interpret retroactively, but rather brings forth new art. To exemplify his understanding of action-proximate art criticism, he turns to Jutta Koether. This artist wrote exhibition reviews for years under the pseudonym “mrs. benway” in *Spex*, where she coined terms like “kissing the canvas” and “see-system.” The issues elaborated in her reviews are further developed in her own works. She takes the concepts she draws on to describe the works of other artists and uses these as artistic material. They show up, for example, as writing in her painting, are incorporated into her performances or get used as titles for her exhibitions.¹⁴⁶ Koether doesn’t simply extend and develop her art criticism in her art; she simultaneously breaks with a strict understanding of genre. The boundaries between art criticism and art become porous. For Geene it is important that Koether’s criticism does not stick to a purely analytic level, but rather also works on art itself.

Geene developed a critique of lacking proximity-to-action by drawing on a text by Isabelle Graw published in the first issue of *Texte zur Kunst*.¹⁴⁷ In the editorial text written with co-editor Stefan Germer, Graw explicates an approach informed by Social Art History that considers the social, political and economic context of art.¹⁴⁸

146 For example, *Kissing the Canvas* is the title of her exhibition at the Pat Hearn Gallery in New York, 1991.

147 Isabelle Graw, “Jugend forscht (Armaly, Dion, Fraser, Müller),” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 1 (1990): 163–176.

148 Isabelle Graw and Stefan Germer, “Vorwort,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 1 (1990): 27.

At stake here is an attempt to disclose meaning not in the object, but rather by means of discussing production and reception. Geene considers this approach to be insufficient, arguing that it lacks a simultaneous critique and transformation of existing relations. He criticizes the fact that in her article about political art in the United States (including ACT UP, Paper Tiger Television, General Idea), Graw does not discuss the questions this art raises – for example, about migration, ‘race’ and gentrification – about the situation in Germany. As such, Geene holds, Graw’s art criticism remains on the level of pure analysis without wanting to change existing relations.

Despite this critique of Graw and the journal she co-edited, the *A.N.Y.P.* editors published a self-portrayal in *Texte zur Kunst* in 1992.¹⁴⁹ The short text describes the contents of the existing four issues and presents the goals and self understanding of the newspaper. Blatantly ignoring German-language grammar rules, the text is completely written in lower-case characters. Its sound and the style of writing certain terms are characteristic of minimal club. These traits created a distancing effect vis-à-vis *Texte zur Kunst*. The article looks like a foreign object in the magazine, which clearly aspires to a professional appearance. By deviating in this way, *A.N.Y.P.*’s text made the rules, conventions and the stylesheet of *Texte zur Kunst* visible in the first place. The surface of the text receded into the backdrop. minimal club also claimed a certain degree of autonomy with this move. It extended *A.N.Y.P.* into *Texte zur Kunst*. *A.N.Y.P.* didn’t simply introduce itself in *Texte zur Kunst*; it is there as a

149 minimal club, “Daß du die Metropole willst, heißt noch lange nicht, daß es sie gibt.”

visitor. The typography is the means of this intervention. Together with its particular style and way of handling genres, the lower-case letters mark a distance. *A.N.Y.P.* thus demonstrated what it problematized in *Texte zur Kunst* – the dissociation of critical practice from its context.

Building Different Working Structures

With the help of *A.N.Y.P.*, minimal club aspired, as the group wrote in its self portrayal, to create an artistic context of a kind they had not been able to find elsewhere.¹⁵⁰ It was less important for the editors to discursively position themselves in the art field than to create a counterpublic. Thus, a social nexus that had gathered around minimal club at the beginning, or which the group had joined, became visible in *A.N.Y.P.* That being said, *A.N.Y.P.*'s ambitions were anything but humble: in the first issue the editors write that they are processing the previous six months and presenting proposals for the six months to come.¹⁵¹ In fact, the annual mode of publication and the relatively long, ten-year duration of the project allowed it to discuss a number of projects and discourses of the 1990s and to give a kind of sustained framing to its mapping of the field, without getting worn down by associated tasks and conflicts.

Even if its paper appeared only once each year, minimal club was active all year long. It put on plays, curated exhibitions, held lectures, organized film programs and

¹⁵⁰ minimal club, 180.

¹⁵¹ See Sabeth Buchmann et al., "Die zukunft der A.N.Y.P.," *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 1 (1989): 1.

event series, published book, audio and video cassettes and cooperated with various persons, groups and offices to all of these ends. In many cases, *A.N.Y.P.*'s contents developed directly out of these activities. The paper thus emerged in interdependence and cooperation with other projects. Not least, the paper was often funded through minimal club's participation in exhibitions that had access to a budget.

In a context where theory was self-evidently understood to be a part of artistic work, *A.N.Y.P.* initiated a theoretical practice whose effect was not directed at the art field, but was rather intended to have a broader social relevance. In contrast to *The Fox's* descriptions of community practice, *A.N.Y.P.*'s discussions of relevant theories focused less on internal group dynamics and more on the political environment. The idea of creating agreement and community by means of theory was barely at stake. The most important aspect of theory was its "use value," as the BüroBert group formulated in connection with Copyshop.¹⁵² Theory with "use value," BüroBert argues, places users in the position to act in response to events. Falling under this category in *A.N.Y.P.*, for example, was Edward Said's 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism*, which the artist Rainer Ganahl discussed in the fifth issue.¹⁵³ In his text, Ganahl calls for a politicization of German-speaking theorists and artists in relation to the increasing violence against migrants at the time, such as in Rostock Lichtenhagen. This implied

152 See BüroBert, "Gegenöffentlichkeit," in *Copyshop. Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit*, ed. BüroBert (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993): 23.

153 See Rainer Ganahl, "Edward Said's 'Culture and Imperialism,'" in *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 5 (1993): 26–27.

turning away from the systems theory that was then popular in the art field and reorienting towards Said's post-colonial analyses. *A.N.Y.P.* also evaluated art institutions on their stance and theoretical orientation. For example, the fourth issue includes discussions of exhibitions at all-girlsgallery and Fräuleins at ART ACKER, both feminist galleries in Berlin. Here, Sabeth Buchmann uses review as a genre to show how work in the galleries is collaborative and informed by institutional critique.¹⁵⁴ The proposals advanced by Ganahl and Buchmann are suggestive of *A.N.Y.P.*'s counterpublic strategy, its coordinates and nuances.

A particularly clear rendering of how *A.N.Y.P.*'s conceived of itself politically can be found in Geene's discussion of a work by Fareed Armaly and Christian-Philipp Müller. The two artists had filled the stairway of the exhibition space at the art fair *The Köln Show* 1993 with department store music. Drawing on institutional critique, their reference indicated the commercial nature of the art fair. For Geene, this was an instance of institutional critique disassociated from the conditions in which it can be activating.¹⁵⁵ And when the aim of critique is not to have an activating effect, Geene argues, it can no longer be considered critique. Economic influence on the art field occurs in the everyday lives of artists, curators and critics in the art scene, and this is where Geene believes that action should begin. Critical action in this sense thus must therefore mean "changing the 'business,' the conditions of production and communication practiced there,"

154 See Sabeth Buchmann, "Midtown," in *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 4 (1993): 13.

155 See Stephan Geene, "the gift of critical insight," in *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 3 (1991): 14.

as Renate Lorenz explains elsewhere in *A.N.Y.P.*¹⁵⁶ Institutional critique in the context of an exhibition, or of a magazine, does not in and of itself activate politicization. Critique is only credible when it confronts and transforms actual hierarchies, career options and exclusions.¹⁵⁷ In addition to critique, this kind of transformation requires, according to Geene, a “(life) investment in the contrary (= building structures for working + living beyond the institutions).”¹⁵⁸

An investment is a capital outlay linked to tangible assets that is usually long-term in nature. This is also how Diedrich Diederichsen understands investment when, in a contribution for *A.N.Y.P.*, he emphasizes that the investment of energy in alternative living and working structures could also pay off in career terms,¹⁵⁹ even if what is accumulated in such contexts is “subcultural capital.” The renunciation of fair payment usually associated with this kind of investment could possibly create the basis for invitations to give well-paid lectures at a later point in time.¹⁶⁰

A “(life) investment in the contrary,” however, needn’t necessarily be seen in terms subcultural capital as Diederichsen understands it. The basic principle of the

156 Renate Lorenz, “Outing/Coming Out,” in *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 5 (1993): 8.

157 See Renate Lorenz and Juliane Rebentisch, “Wir haben nichts zu verlieren außer unseren Anführungszeichen,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 24 (1996): 96.

158 Stephan Geene, “life is mittelschön + differenzfun,” *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 6 (1994): 7.

159 See Diedrich Diederichsen, “Selbstaubeutung – Anmerkungen zu einem Begriff aus der linken und subkulturellen Alltagssprache,” *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 7 (1995/96): 10–12.

160 See Diederichsen, 12.

proposal is to take one's own way of life as the point of departure; it confronts working and living conditions and presents an alternative in contrast to these. minimal club did not want to have to act according to commercial terms.¹⁶¹ This required adaptation of the mode of production. The decision to only publish the journal once annually, for example, traced back to this principle. With this move, minimal club contradicted a logic that demands the subject to remain in continuous motion because it is measured according to its activity – a logic pointedly at work in academic publication lists. The decision of *A.N.Y.P.*'s editors to take a year's time for the planning and production of each issue represents an attempt to resist the increasing economization of knowledge production in the art field. Those involved in *A.N.Y.P.* experimented with new forms of organizing knowledge¹⁶² that can be linked to Harney and Moten's concept of study. At stake in both *A.N.Y.P.*-related practice and the concept of study is a form of the common produced in the conflict-ridden space between processes of normalization, capitalist appropriation and the valorization of knowledge.¹⁶³ However, in contrast to Harney and Moten's discussion, forms of study showed up in *A.N.Y.P.* that did not begin with the university or in its environment, even if they referred to the academic world.

Longstanding working and living structures that extend beyond existing art institutions developed out of *A.N.Y.P.* The bookshop *b_books*, founded in 1995 by a

161 See minimal club, "A.N.Y.P. eine Zeitung des minimal club," 84.

162 See Gigi Roggero, "The Power of Living Knowledge. Crises of the Global University, Class Struggle and Institutions of the Common," <http://transversal.at/transversal/0809/roggero/en>.

163 See Roggero, "The Power of Living Knowledge."

number of *A.N.Y.P.* authors in Berlin, is an example. On the one hand, the bookshop emerged from the nexus of persons involved in *A.N.Y.P.* But furthermore, according to Geene, it grew out of a series of *A.N.Y.P.* presentations and other productions related to bookstalls at events. In Geene's eyes, these bookstalls were a continuation of *A.N.Y.P.* and formed a transitional moment to a bookshop. Furthermore, in a certain sense, the bookshop made *A.N.Y.P.* superfluous because it achieved the function of creating a social context for people to gather, spend time and begin discussions in a more efficient manner than the newspaper.¹⁶⁴ The alternative living and working structures that were created through *A.N.Y.P.* established the conditions to create a new area of theoretical and knowledge production. In this context, Holger Kube Ventura's description of b_books as a "materialization" of *A.N.Y.P.* is certainly on point.¹⁶⁵ *A.N.Y.P.*'s media-based public space was transformed into the social space of the bookshop.

Changing but not Making Unchangeable

The practice Geene called as a "life (investment) in the contrary" exhibits similarities to the community practice described in *The Fox*. Both concepts critique and transform the conditions of production in the art field. And both assume that this kind of critique can only be achieved when working structures are created and defined by the involved persons themselves. At the same time,

¹⁶⁴ Stephan Geene in conversation with the author, October 12, 2014.

¹⁶⁵ See Ventura, *Politische Kunst Begriffe in den 1990er Jahren im deutschsprachigen Raum*, 163.

both hold that the project cannot be limited to creating referential alternative structures, but must rather maintain a critical relationship with capitalist everyday life.

Whereas for Geene the control of the means of production and distribution formed a basis for critical art practice, Renate Lorenz took this one step further. For her, a critical way of relating to working conditions is not the basis for art practice; rather, this way of relating itself is art.¹⁶⁶ For Lorenz, all working and exchange relations that include a presentation (for example, contracts, wage negotiations and informal agreements) are art.¹⁶⁷ In this approach, the distinction and specification of artistic practice cease to be foregrounded. Instead, it is about a strategic use of the art field and its possibilities for a project whose primary determination is not artistic.

Lorenz's interest concerned primarily social and political processes, while art itself became less important. In an article entitled "Outing/Coming Out" she describes a model of lived institutional critique.¹⁶⁸ Whereas "outing" refers to the act of publicizing another person's disreputable sexual identity without their consent, Lorenz argues, "coming out" refers to a voluntary avowal of such an identity.¹⁶⁹ Inscribed in these terms is the fact that

166 See Renate Lorenz, "Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit," in *Copyshop. Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit*, ed. BüroBert (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993): 7.

167 Lorenz, 7.

168 Lorenz, "Outing/Coming Out."

169 "Because outing/coming out starts with the subject, the person coming out can claim (political, economic) values from society based on their own life circumstances, and can thus promote the reinsertion of a public and therefore political discussion starting with the 'foundations of society.' Subjectivation (the problem is one's own) makes transformative intervention possible without falling prey to deterministic discourse." Lorenz, 5.

what one comes out about – for example, being queer or trans – does not fit the societal norms. Lorenz begins with the way of life. Through this way of life, of lived digression, society is confronted with the exclusions and normative values it produces.

At the same time Lorenz defines “Coming Out” as a non-deterministic practice. Thus, it traverses various things rather than fixing something. This aspect of traversing can be linked to *A.N.Y.P.* and Genee’s notion of “(life) investment in the contrary.” Both aspire to ways of life, to investment in oppositional working and living structures. However, Genee and Lorenz don’t describe a new artists’ identity. Instead they propose letting go of the subject position of the artist. Given this figure’s characterization as autonomous and self determined, Genee argues, the artist represents the basic pillars of capitalist ideology. This is because the autonomy claimed or ascribed to the artist obscures the fact that the artist is economically determined. Artists working under capitalist conditions, Genee says, are primarily a product of their working conditions and economic necessities, and therefore they only appear to be self determined. In his view, the model of autonomy and self-determination associated with artists gets put into the service of confirming those very conditions that shape the capitalist subject.¹⁷⁰ As ideal representatives of an ideology of autonomy and self determination, the figure of the

170 In Genee’s words, “enough space to establish oneself as a producer of value (of art values) with this analysis/critique, which can remain separate from the “who” that expresses his dissensus with the institutionalizing form of art.” Genee, “life ist mittelschön + differenzfun,” 7.

artist supports the economic ideologies of the self and self-realization.¹⁷¹ This critique of the idealization of the autonomous subject did not merely receive thematic treatment in *A.N.Y.P.*; it was also inscribed in the group name, minimal club, which like Art & Language before it countered the model of individual authorship.¹⁷²

At the same time, a new understanding of the subject began taking shape at the beginning of the 1990s. In *A.N.Y.P.*'s milieu this was denoted by the term "cultural producer" – a container term for a practice that crosses the spaces of art, activism and theory. Justin Hoffmann has described this figure as follows: "cultural producers write texts, work by night as a DJ, are engaged in political groups and have a job in media."¹⁷³ The dissolution of the boundaries around the artistic identity was thus held off by the capturing effect of the figure of the cultural producer as a new artistic label. The term is referenced repeatedly in *A.N.Y.P.*, but neither Geene nor Lorenz used it to describe themselves. Lorenz even distanced herself from it resolutely, because cultural production emphasizes an individual achievement and the

171 The discussion of autonomy and reproductive and genetic technologies in *A.N.Y.P.* should be understood against this backdrop. New fields like reproductive technology and media studies were so successful in the late 1980s because – as Geene writes – they referred precisely to the "self" of "self realization." "this self," according to Geene, "is already a commodity + must therefore be addressed as a commodity." Ultimately, genetic and reproductive technologies sell us the "self" created under the coercions of capitalist working conditions, marketed as a refuge of autonomy. See Geene, 7.

172 Other *A.N.Y.P.* authors, such as BüroBert (Renate Lorenz and Jochen Becker) or Art in Ruins, also used group names.

173 Justin Hoffmann, "God Is a Curator," in: Christoph Tannert and Ute Tischler (eds), *Men in black. Handbuch der kuratorischen Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2004), 116.

concept of “culture” is too narrowly conceived. Thus, limiting the scope to “cultural production” would rule out participation in activities such as protests, for example, which Lorenz understood as central to lived critical practice.¹⁷⁴

Nevertheless, the concept of cultural production was interesting for the *A.N.Y.P.* context. It gave a name to an extended artistic practice that also encompasses knowledge work, while simultaneously pointing to its ambivalence. Authors like Marion von Osten and Simon Sheikh used the concept in an emancipatory sense to promote an understanding of art production that, instead of limiting itself to object references and market dependencies, would also include working modes that make use of productive and discursive practices developed in academic and political contexts.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, a new form of artistic biography emerged out of this kind of boundary-crossing practice in the 1990s, a biography “on the basis of which state subsidies or artists’ ateliers can be applied for,” as Ariane Müller laconically noted with contextual reference to the Hamburg Week of Fine Arts in 1994.¹⁷⁶ Hans-Christian Dany went one step further with his critique of the figure of the cultural producer. For him, the cultural producer stands for a new and particularly perfidious capitalist working model. According to Dany, the cultural producer instigated precise-

174 See Lorenz and Rebentisch, “Wir haben nichts zu verlieren außer unseren Anführungszeichen,” 96.

175 See Simon Sheikh, “Räume für das Denken. Perspektiven zur Kunstakademie,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 62 (2006), 115.

176 Ariane Müller, “Für Demontage,” in *Team Compendium: Selfmade Matches – Selbstorganisation im Bereich Kunst*, eds. Karin Günther and Rita Baukrowitz (Hamburg: Kellner, 1996), 214.

ly the kind of labor power, distinguished by flexibility, transformability and communicability, that is demanded in late capitalism.¹⁷⁷ In fact, the 1990s witnessed the growth in the economic significance of linguistic, cultural and affective practices, a phenomenon not limited to the art field. With this development, the entire person – their body and intellectual capacities – becomes labor power. Thus, subjects become the actual raw material and the product of a new paradigm of political economy.

Over time, the term cultural producer has taken on further meanings. The performances of the group kpD/ kleines postfordistisches Drama, which was made up by Marion von Osten, Isabell Lorey, Brigitta Kuster and Katja Reichard, present cultural production as a way to critically deal with the logics of cognitive capitalism. In a contribution published in the online journal *transversal* in 2005, they elaborate a politicized understanding of cultural production. Taking a stance against the cultural producer as a figuration of an identity, they present cultural production as a practice. For this group, cultural production is less a sociological category or a career label than a strategic tool to “traverse different things.”¹⁷⁸ Areas of competency such as the production of theory and design are thus not only combined under one name, but are traversed – as are various work settings and political and cultural self-organization, forms of collaboration, paid and unpaid jobs, informal and formal economies,

177 See Hans-Christian Dany, “100 Jahre Merve. Interview mit Peter Gente und Heidi Paris,” *Starskip*, no. 1 (1998): 84.

178 kpD (Brigitta Kuster, Isabell Lorey, Katja Reichard, Marion von Osten), “The Precarization of Cultural Producers and the Missing ‘Good Life,’” *transversal* (April 2006), <http://transversal.at/transversal/0406/kpd/en>.

temporary groupings, project-related work and life.¹⁷⁹ Traversing also includes various areas of cultural work, including not least design, scholarship and curating.¹⁸⁰ kpD saw in cultural production nothing less than a tool to undermine the narrowness of competency areas and simplistic models of identity and roles, but also academism and the profit-oriented distribution of knowledge. Thus understood, cultural production can be an emancipatory, self-enriching and self-organized practice.

Marion von Osten, who was close to *A.N.Y.P.* and whose writings appeared in the paper, wrote elsewhere that when she writes texts, she is not only concerned with radically extending and reforming artists' roles, functions and scope of work and competency. A central point of reference for the development from art to theory is found, too, she argues, in Judith Butler's model of "disidentification,"¹⁸¹ a specific form of subjectivation that is distinguished by an active refusal of normative identities and which practices resistance against the exclusion of that which is socially rejected as unsayable, unreadable and unthinkable.¹⁸² Von Osten explains that for her, Butler's 1990 book *Gender Trouble* and the German translation published one year later opened the way for a new approach to questions of gender, and it also

179 See kpD, "The Precarization of Cultural Producers."

180 See Marion von Osten, "Kulturelle Arbeit im Post-Fordismus," *trend*, no. 12 (2001), <http://www.trend.infopartisan.net/trd1201/t321201.html>.

181 See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (Routledge New York & London 1993), 100.

182 Marion von Osten and Kerstin Stakemeier, "Conversation between Marion von Osten and Kerstin Stakemeier," at First Former West Congress, Utrecht, November 6, 2009, video recording, <https://vimeo.com/83745367/>.

provided her with tools to develop her own artistic-theoretical practice. She emphasizes the significance of the queer-feminist input with respect to the concept of the subject, pointing out that this input allowed women and homosexuals in particular to conceive of themselves “as ‘speaking’ and ‘theory-producing’ without [this requiring] academic education.”¹⁸³ In a reflection on the 1990s that she wrote in 1999, Marion von Osten connects the figure of the cultural producer who traverses various fields with the simultaneous turn to collective and collaborative working modes:

The artists in the 90s no longer presented themselves as “just artists,” but rather also as critics, mediators and organizers, and this shattered the narrowness of the scope of action and responsibility defined by the (art) system. Instead of individual artistic achievements various strategies were developed to promote collective and collaborative work. Either as a label/group/band, as a temporary fusion for a project or as a working affiliation set up for the longer term.¹⁸⁴

In this regard, it becomes evident that *A.N.Y.P.* forms an example for a new kind of practice that developed around 1990, thanks to the largely queer-feminist “revolution of the subject.”¹⁸⁵

183 Marion von Osten, “Künstlerinnen-Subjekte. Knüppel aus dem Sack,” *k-bulletin*, no. 1 (1999): 31.

184 von Osten, 31.

185 See von Osten, 31.

Inclusions and Exclusions

In *A.N.Y.P.*'s case, a fragile form of organization that oscillated between continuity and discontinuity was the result of a poststructuralist understanding of the subject as decentered. In a text describing the ideas and aims behind the newspaper, minimal club spoke of a basic "fragility" of the commonality behind the project.¹⁸⁶ It is distinctive of the project that no attempt was made to stabilize this fragility with institutional measures, and that the aim instead was to find an adequate way to cope with it. Thus, *A.N.Y.P.* did not have a fixed editorial team. Its composition changed from issue to issue. Many editors only held the role for one or two issues.¹⁸⁷ From minimal club, Sabeth Buchmann and Stephan Geene were involved in each issue, while Elfe Brandenburger and Mano Wittman were not involved in several issues.¹⁸⁸ According to Geene, the organization of the editorial was relatively informal.¹⁸⁹ On the one hand,

186 "to the extent that the connections between persons with the same interests increase as a context emerges (of course also by means of a.n.y.p.), to that same extent, the group also problematizes itself, difference becomes visible underneath the unspoken assumed commonality; the commonality that emerges from a similarity in position (same position 'on the market,' the same financial problems, etc.) is fragile + can topple at any moment due to differences in worldview or life circumstances." minimal club, "A.N.Y.P. eine Zeitung des minimal club," 84.

187 Co-editors included Juliane Rebentisch (nos. 5–7), David Hudson (no. 3), Kucki Ludwig (no. 5), Mona Rinck (nos. 5–7), Pia Lanzinger (no. 6), Renate Lorenz (nos. 6 and 8), Frank Schmitz (no. 6), Katja Diefenbach (no. 8), Katja Reichard (no. 8), Nicolas Siepen (nos. 8–9), Florian Zeyfang (nos. 8–9), Katja Eydel (no. 8), Alice Creischer (no. 9), Andreas Siekmann (no. 9), Ela Wünsch (no. 9) and Tara Herbst (no. 9).

188 Elfe Brandenburger was not involved in nos. 5 and 9 and Mano Wittman was not involved in nos. 8 and 9.

189 Stephan Geene in conversation with the author, October 12, 2014.

this made it relatively permeable – because there was no active decision-making about who participated and who did not – but at the same time, the informal mode of this permeability also created boundaries: “you have to somehow belong,” in Geene’s words, otherwise it would have been almost impossible or at least very difficult to become part of the editorial team.¹⁹⁰ Because it was never totally clear who was actively involved at any given moment, it was also unclear who all needed to gather in order to make decisions that concerned the newspaper as a whole. Whereas *The Fox* had a clear organization including assistants, the *A.N.Y.P.* editorial team did not have clearly delineated areas of responsibility. At least on paper everyone was responsible for everything: writing articles, proofreading, copy editing others’ articles, production, layout and coordinating printing and advertisements. In practice, however, this meant that whoever showed up was responsible. The hierarchies were thus not totally gone, they were rather displaced into the domain of informal agreements and non-professionally determined relationships.

At the same time, *A.N.Y.P.* refused the conventional separation between those who researched and wrote, and those who formatted, reformulated, edited and took care of deadlines and appointments. Geene names this multifarious role of those involved as the reason for the relatively low status accorded to the editorial team. Time was not invested in constituting an editorial team that would prescribe a line, but rather into discussion with one another about the contents of articles. According to Geene, because all editorial

¹⁹⁰ Geene in conversation with the author.

members were also involved as authors, the notion of an editorial voice whose objective is to ensure a certain state became obsolete.

The editors were not so concerned with the paper representing a certain line or with the methods and questions defining each issue. Their focus was rather on debate itself – a debate that was depicted in *A.N.Y.P.* In this sense it comes as no surprise that considerable editorial time was devoted to arranging the order of contributions. In this way, a context could be structured that was dependent on the people who composed it, their life circumstances, motivations and interests. The paper was the result of the shared time of artists with similar interests. The project developed together with ways of life that were defined through common contexts of work and sets of values. The editorial team was conceived in such a way that it adapted to the lives of its producers.

However, as Geene mentioned, linking the newspaper to a social network also produced exclusions. Participation in *A.N.Y.P.* was only possible by sharing a way of life. Thus, compared with *The Fox*, it was less the case that *A.N.Y.P.* created and organized a group; it was much more a matter of a lived digression that related to artistic production but which did not understand one's own activity, like *The Fox*, as community practice. The relatively clearly defined group that existed at the beginning of *A.N.Y.P.* did not become closed, as *The Fox* did, but rather aimed at contributing to existing (art) theoretical and political debates. In this way a kind of discursive community was created that extended beyond the original group, and for which *A.N.Y.P.* served a framing function over the duration of ten years. This helped to stabilize the loose network without institutionalizing it. *A.N.Y.P.*

worked against institutional solidification by constantly restructuring the basic components of the newspaper. By traversing various work settings, disciplines and areas of competency, the project successfully removed itself from the logics of professionalization and appropriation.

Production at the Margins of Exhibitions

In addition to the makeup of the editorial team, *A.N.Y.P.*'s production and distribution conditions also remained flexible and modifiable. This was not least due to the fact that *A.N.Y.P.*, unlike *The Fox*, was financed through participation in various exhibitions and gallery residencies of minimal club and others involved in *A.N.Y.P.* The paper thus developed in interdependence with other projects. These dependencies allowed different interests and agendas to flow into the project.

Whereas for *The Fox*, the artistic practice of Art & Language justified the project's public funding, editorial and artistic work merged in *A.N.Y.P.* As an artistic project, *A.N.Y.P.* extended the exhibition space into each issue. But the newspaper also strategically used exhibitions for funding and distribution purposes. Thus, it can be argued that *A.N.Y.P.*'s program largely developed at the margins of projects and exhibitions. To the extent that *A.N.Y.P.* was variously published as participation in or as the documentation or continuation of exhibitions, the newspaper worked on the discursive frames of those exhibitions. It positioned itself at the intersection of reception, institutional framing and artistic form, where artistic, curatorial and theoretical practice often overlapped. For this reason it was also a place where conflicts around signifying power were carried out.

In the sixth issue of *A.N.Y.P.*, which developed as a publication accompanying the exhibition *when tekkno turns to sound of poetry* in 1994, the paper assumed the role of exhibition catalog. Similarly, the first and fourth issues document exhibitions by persons involved in *A.N.Y.P.* (at the Kunstverein München and the Galerie der Künstler München). However, the relation between the paper and the exhibition could also be defined differently: the mentioned exhibitions can also be read as an extension of the publishing frame of *A.N.Y.P.*, given how they represent, in a certain sense, the re-use of contents from *A.N.Y.P.* But the paper was far from being a mere paratext of a happening situated in the art field. There is seldom reporting on exhibitions in *A.N.Y.P.*; rather, exhibitions were production sites of articles for the paper. In a certain sense the exhibitions were displaced into the paper and further elaborated there.¹⁹¹ This allowed *A.N.Y.P.* to lend a sustained form to its project based working mode, which it carried out by participating in exhibitions and with videos, performances and theatrical plays. The imbrication of various formats and the permeability and the path from one theme to the next were decisive aspects of *A.N.Y.P.*'s first five years. This traversing of loose networks is reflected as a multimedia, social and active artistic practice in the newspaper's first six issues.

In 1996 Sabeth Buchmann, Alice Creischer, Katja Diefenbach, Stephan Geene, Judith Hopf, Juliane Rebentisch, Mona Rinck and Nicolas Siepen – who had all played important roles in *A.N.Y.P.* – founded the

¹⁹¹ The relationship to the exhibition is more distanced only in the fifth issue. Here, minimal club used an invitation to a group exhibition to produce an issue of the paper that was then offered for sale in the Vienna Secession.

bookshop, press and event space b_books in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg.¹⁹² b_books sells and publishes books in categories including “queer,” “film,” “art/art criticism,” “biopolitics,” “open formats,” “polypen” and “metrozones.” With an ongoing series called “MontagsPRAXIS” b_books organizes discussion events, book presentations, lecture-performances, readings and so forth. Today, texts are also published on the website <http://www.b-books.de>. *A.N.Y.P.’s* form and practice changed when b_books was founded. The newspaper dissolved its prior ties to the exhibition business and its dynamics. In a certain sense this led to a move away from the previously practiced mode of traversing contexts. At the same time, with the “materialization” of the project in Berlin-Kreuzberg, the interests of those connected to the newspaper developed in different directions.

“materials identical to nature”

A.N.Y.P.’s first issue was published on the occasion of the exhibition *naturidentische stoffe* [materials identical to nature], which minimal club curated at Kunstverein München (April 26–30, 1989). The paper and its context of publication were mutually imbricated in a number of ways. The exhibition in Munich was partitioned into two spaces. The first featured a white, architectural element with a wall and a mirror, three rolled carpets, some plates, potted plants and shoes. Part of the exhibition was made up of works by the group Tödliche Doris (Käthe Kruse, Nikolaus Utermoehlen and Wolfgang Müller),

¹⁹² Stephan Geene in conversation with the author, October 12, 2014. The shop is located at Lübbenerstraße 14, 10977 Berlin.

Nina Hoffmann and Jutta Koether. The exhibition objects gave the impression of set pieces, and in fact, this space served as the stage for minimal club's play *Anti New York Pläne*, which was performed daily during the exhibition.¹⁹³ In the play three people hold up printed A2-sized newspaper pages, while two others sit and watch. The three then use scissors to cut the newspaper pages into T-shirts, which they hang on a clothesline. The text becomes a clothing article, a robe that the performers later put on. Just as the newspaper makes its way into the play and onto the skin of the performers, so are the play, the set pieces and the performers part of the paper. On the front page of the first issue of *A.N.Y.P.*, which is published as the "program newspaper" for the exhibition, there is an advertisement for the play *Theoretisches Fernsehen* [Theoretical Television]. The ad includes a photo of a set piece from the play, an Emes brand alarm clock. The playscript takes up four pages. Newspaper, play and exhibition flow into one another. In this way, the first issue of *A.N.Y.P.* indicated the authorial claim of minimal club, whose handwriting extends from the play into the exhibition and onto the paper. The project thus has no end, but rather moves from one level to the next. minimal club's various projects were not only held together by the involved persons and topics – in this case, genetic engineering – but also by a certain style. The connection was designed.

193 The play was comprised of three parts: "naturidentische stoffe" [materials identical to nature], "modern mathematische probleme" [modern mathematical problems] and "der musikalische fall" [the musical case]. The first part was performed. The text was written by Stephan Geene. The play was performed by Sabeth Buchmann, Elfe Brandenburger, David Hudson, Mano Wittmann, Horst Bauer, Imke Toksoez and Andi Troeger.

when tekkno turns to sound of poetry

In the later years minimal club successively dissolved as a fixed group. This became clear in the sixth issue of *A.N.Y.P.* If authorship was initially composed mostly of minimal club members and collaborators, over time the nexus grew apart from the smaller group. The sixth issue not only portrays a broader discursive context – one in which *A.N.Y.P.* will position itself more strongly in the future. Beyond that, it asks how art can make a discursive contribution in this context. The issue emerged in the context of a working group on gender, the critique of (genetics) technology and feminism. Since the first issue these topics had been repeatedly taken up in *A.N.Y.P.* In addition, BüroBert, minimal club and Juliane Rebentisch organized an event series in 1993 entitled *geld*beat*synthetic* [money*beat*synthetic], which dealt with questions of biotechnology. Further examples of related work include the exhibitions *Dopamin* (January 1994) and *Game Girl* (April 1994) at Shedhalle Zurich.

The sixth issue of *A.N.Y.P.* was produced with the exhibition *when tekkno turns to poetry*, which was shown in 1994 at Shedhalle Zurich and in 1995 at Kunst-Werke Berlin. A group of female artists, authors and critics that had come together in Berlin, Basel and Zurich for an interdisciplinary feminist discussion about technology was responsible for the contents.¹⁹⁴ The exhibition *when tek-*

194 Members of this stable working group included Renate Lorenz, Sabeth Buchmann, Juliane Rebentisch, Tatjana Beer, Elfe Brandenburger, Mano Witmann, Susanne Deicher, Judith Hopf, Katrin von Maltzahn and the group Übung am Phantom (Anke Kempkes, Donata Koch-Haag, Eva Peters, Monika Rinck and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus). A further 18 female artists were invited for the exhibition. Other events and exhibitions on the topic that were organized by participants also give insight into the continuity of the discussion.

kno turns to sound of poetry aimed at a new evaluation of conceptual art from a feminist perspective. As critique it particularly targeted positions that had perceived a supersession of social distinctions and coercions in the “dematerialization” of art. The group linked these positions to contemporary discourses of media theory and described the latter, at their core, as masculine myths that aim to make women superfluous. The working group used the exhibition to create a network in which discussion could be continued on an ongoing basis. The concept paper describes the exhibition as part of a collectively established context for discussion that, beyond exhibition’s present goals, “attempts to formulate and exercise feminist critique of the unrestrained assertion of ‘new technologies’ (especially genetic engineering).”¹⁹⁵

Thus, the basic idea of our project is less to initiate a singular event than to develop counterproposals to the dominant discourses on technology and introduce these to an interested public. Against usual group exhibition practice, which is often defined by placing artistic positions under a thematic specification in an additive way, our initiative will be organized by means of elaborating the abovementioned question together.¹⁹⁶

In a review of the exhibition in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Justin Hoffmann writes that the exhibition – because it consciously inserts itself into a contemporary discourse – should be understood as the expression of a political

195 Shedhalle Archive, Ar D 076, concept paper for the exhibition *when tekknno turns to sound of poerty*, no date.

196 Shedhalle Archive.

movement.¹⁹⁷ Accordingly, Hoffmann argues, the categories “institution,” curator” and “artist” dissolve almost completely into discussion and cooperation.¹⁹⁸ Not least given how the project explicitly grasps discourse as a curatorial aspect equal to the exhibition, *when tekkno turns to sound of poetry* can be considered exemplary of a fundamental transformation within the art field. At the same time it represents an attempt to develop the traditional framing program of an art exhibition into something like a counterpublic.

The link between the newspaper and the exhibition is not initially apparent in the *A.N.Y.P.* issue produced for the latter. Only the imprint explicitly shows that the paper developed in conjunction with the exhibition and that it was financed, among other things, by Shedhalle and Kunst-Werke. In addition to Stephan Geene, Sabeth Buchmann, Mano Wittmann, Elfe Brandenburger and Frank Schmitz, those involved in the exhibition, Pia Lanzinger, Renate Lorenz, Juliane Rebentisch and Mona Rinck, are also listed as editors. With few exceptions, the artists and their contributions to the exhibition are all represented in the paper. Installation views can be seen of a few. For others, an attempt is made to translate a spatial installation into print format, or to use the space of the paper otherwise. *A.N.Y.P.* thus documents and comments the exhibition. Even if the paper is used as a kind of catalog for the exhibition, it does not remain reduced to this function. Rather than being placed in a subordinate

197 See Justin Hoffmann, “Mehr als ein kurzlebiges Etikett. ‘When tekkno turns to sound of poetry’ – eine Ausstellung in der Shedhalle Zürich,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 20, 1994, 14.

198 See Hoffmann, 14.

role vis-à-vis the exhibition, it accompanies the exhibition as an equal expression of the discussion that forms the basis of the project. Because its form is not limited to the timeframe of the exhibition, the periodicity of the paper extends the project-based logic of the making of the exhibition into a longer-term organizational logic that works not least to establish a link between various exhibitions.

The interesting thing about *A.N.Y.P.*'s mode of publication often being linked to exhibitions has less to do with its format as a catalog or as an artwork, and more with how the paper turned its various locations of publication into a context of production and distribution. In this way, *A.N.Y.P.* placed itself in a translocal network. Drawing on Donna Haraway's formulation it could be said that the knowledge produced in conjunction with the paper was "situated." This makes it possible to imagine a discourse in which the speaker and the speaker's context are always also considered. Knowledge takes on a body in the form of a nexus of discussion. In the way this knowledge became situated in a discursive context, its situatedness also opened new possibilities for connections.¹⁹⁹ This was the case insofar as the self published newspaper circulated in many places that were directly related to the project or to the paper's topics. Beyond art institutions this included bars, occupied houses and infoshops. In this way, the journal's physical presence also had the capacity to establish connections between distant worlds, to hold a kind of transition space between political activism, vernissage and seminar.

199 See Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of a Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14 no. 3 (1988): 575–599.

A New Consolidation

The mentioned consolidation of the loose network became apparent in *A.N.Y.P.*'s ninth issue. On this issue's cover, *b_books* is written next to *minimal club* in the same font, size and style. And the importance of *b_books* for the paper is not only graphically evident. Six of a total of eight editors are part of *b_books*.²⁰⁰ This development affected the paper's thematic focus. The increasing independence from exhibitions resulted in a considerable diversification of topics. Furthermore, the involvement of different authors resulted in the development of a discussion context that extended beyond *A.N.Y.P.* in a more significant way than some years before. This included authors from journals such as *Texte zur Kunst* and *Die Beute* (Berlin, 1994–1999).

The action-proximate theoretical work that *A.N.Y.P.* called for was not consistently put into practice in the ninth issue. Apparent, rather, was a turn to academic texts that in part contradicted the call for proximity to action. The paper lost its programmatic tone. Texts from this issue are noticeably historical, or they exhibit a distanced kind of philosophy. For example, Isabelle Graw discusses the role of women in the New York School,²⁰¹ Stephan Gregory comments on a text by Michel Serres²⁰² and Sabine Grimm writes in an emphatically academic tone about anticolonial subjects.²⁰³

200 As of *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 8, approximately half of the editors were involved in both projects. Three are still active in *b_books* today (Stephan Geene, Nicolas Siepen and Ela Wünsch).

201 Isabelle Graw, "Frauen und die New York School," *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 9 (1995): 15.

202 Stephan Gregory, "Es ist immer ein Hase im Garten. Michel Serres' Ökonomie des Parasitären," *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 9 (1999): 8–10.

203 See Sabine Grimm, "Subjekte des Antikolonialismus," *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 9 (1999): 19–20.

Compared with earlier issues, the 38 pages of the ninth issue of *A.N.Y.P.* are marked by an explicit disinterest in the art field. While the sixth and earlier issues often brought topics like gender, genetic engineering and nationalism into conversation with art and discussions about working and production conditions primarily related to the art field, art is no longer a topic in the ninth issue. Intervention into discourses or concrete structures is no longer directed at art institutions and journals, but rather at related debates in academia or in the political sphere.

According to Stephan Geene, the turn away from art as a topic and therefore also from the attempt to use a certain notion of art for social transformation was directly related to disappointment about the reception of political art in the art context.²⁰⁴ Art criticism read attempts to grapple with theory as merely artistic and/or curatorial gestures. It was primarily interested in the function of such work for the artistic context, for its effects on the concept of the work or on notions of “exhibition” and “art institution.” Similarly, collective forms of working were only considered with respect to their artistic and curatorial credos. While the topics of the work were mentioned in the commentaries, they were never taken up and elaborated.

For *A.N.Y.P.*, however, the aspect of elaboration, of connectivity, was crucial. This was always a matter of prioritizing the thematic debate of questions raised for discussion. Given its open structures, the paper was not beholden to a certain target audience or scene. The thematic focus of a discussion could shift. Thus, *A.N.Y.P.*

²⁰⁴ Stephan Geene in conversation with the author, October 12, 2014.

transformed over the course of its existence from the organ of an artists' group that established a specific kind of context for art, into a "realm no longer called art,"²⁰⁵ as it materialized, above all, with *b_books*.

This consolidation correlated with the end of activities at the margins of the exhibition world that had been performed up to that point, and thus also with the end of the practice of traversing. At the same time, the self-institutionalization established new conditions of production. Whereas various subjectivities, institutions and disciplines had been previously traversed, there was now a shift in practice towards publishing and the bookshop.

The discourse that developed in and with *A.N.Y.P.* was carried forward not only in *b_books*, however, but also in academia, where some of *A.N.Y.P.*'s protagonists were involved in developing experimental forms in the years after 2000. Today, former *A.N.Y.P.* authors are actively shaping the professionalization of the area between art, theory and research. For example, Juliane Rebentisch teaches Philosophy and Aesthetics at the University of Art and Design (HfG) in Offenbach, Katja Diefenbach Aesthetic Theory at the Merz Akademie in Stuttgart and Alice Creischer Spatial Strategies at the Weißensee Academy of Art Berlin. Sabeth Buchmann, Renate Lorenz and Diedrich Diederichsen are lecturers at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where Buchmann teaches Modern and Postmodern Art History at the Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies and Diederichsen and Lorenz have used their positions to start new programs of study between theory and art, including the Master in Critical

²⁰⁵ Ventura, *Politische Kunst Begriffe in den 1990er Jahre im deutschsprachigen Raum*, 161–162.

Studies (2012) and the PhD in Practice (2010). Given increasing precarization, the university has become a career model for artists with a project-based and discursively-oriented practice.

The move into the university or the art school on the part of some protagonists of the counterpublic publishing project *A.N.Y.P.*, which radically questioned institutional forms of knowledge and their conditions of production and developed alternatives to such forms, can be read as an incorporation of critique into the university or art academy. For the institution, this marks an opportunity for renewal – a renewal that increasingly means little more than an optimization of disciplinary forms. At the same time, the university is an important site of the struggle around the property form of knowledge and the reproduction of labor power. The development of alternative forms and practices of education in and beyond the university plays an important role with respect to the re-appropriation of “knowledge” as a resource. Establishing new programs of study and designing curricula are parts of an alternative practice of education that can be seen as a form of working at the university without being part of it. Working on curricula, after all, means nothing less than working on the conditions of production of knowledge.

MINIMAL CLUB

Nr 1 3-

A.N.Y.P.

PROGRAMMZEITUNG ZUR AUFFÜHRUNG + AUSSTELLUNG

KUNSTVEREIN MÜNCHEN

26.4.89 - 30.4.

ES GIBT MOMENTE IN DENEN ALLES STIMMT die landschaft die menschen der kette

Der Naturidentische Stoff

Baum, Holz, Stein, Eisenwaren durch Licht, Akustisches Material von Tjibb Langner ab Seite 18

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ein theoretisches
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gegeben —

A.N.Y.P.

A.N.Y.P.

A.N.Y.P.



impresum

A.N.Y.P. nr. 6

redaktion: sabeth buchmann, elfe brandenburger, stephan geene, pia lanzinger, rene lorenz, juliane rebentisch, mona rinck, frank schmitz, mano wittmann

satz: pfühl-studios

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adresse: A.N.Y.P. pfuelstr. 5 kasten 9
10997 berlin, tel. 030*6181699, fax 6185810

erscheinungsort: shedhalle zürich,
august 1994, in kooperation mit dem projekt
"when tekno turns to sound of poetry", das
im januar 1995 u.a. in den kunst-werken
berlin fortgesetzt wird.

finanziert durch minimal club, shedhalle
zürich + kunst-werke berlin

when tekno turns to sound of poetry

wird unterstützt von: präsidialamt der
stadt zürich; institut für auslandsbezie-
hungen, stuttgart; senat für kulturelle
angelegenheiten, berlin; sony schweiz;
gärtnerei schröter, zürich; kunst-werke
berlin und shedhalle zürich.

dank an: ursula biemann, oliver gold,
louisa van zwieten.



Das Projekt wird im Januar '95 u.a. in den Kunst-Werken, Berlin fortgesetzt.

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Die Flick-Collection wird geschlossen

veranstaltung/texte gegen die Flick-Sammlung im Hamburger
Bahnhof xxxxx, 2005



16.12.04 19 Uhr Hörsaal (Coe HAU) Halle (Coe) 1012

hell_p!

ein netzprojekt + veranstaltungen von b_books 2003

hell_p !

assembly international

ein projekt von herbst/siepen mit preciado, thaemlitz, etc.



prime time déclassément

ein projekt von b_books in der ausleihhalle aufgebaut vor b_books,
sommer 2002

keiner ist böse keiner ist gut/ fassbinder wäre 60

PostPornPolitics

ein projekt von tim stütgen mit preciado, thaemlitz, etc.

transinterqueer

filmsquat

filmfestival von b_books + kino eiszeit 2000 + 2001



godard/méville: norden gegen süden, bartleby, i am not : content

active air

projekt: five*wasser
mit unterstützung des hauptstadtkulturfonds
zum magazin

E-FLUX JOURNAL (SINCE 2008) SUPERCOMMUNITY

The online publication *e-flux journal* was founded in 2008 by the artists Julieta Aranda and Anton Vidokle and the theorist Brian Kuan Wood. According to its self-description, the journal features “essays and contributions by some of the most engaged artists and thinkers working today.”²⁰⁶ It is published up to twelve times annually and reaches an audience of over 90,000 readers.²⁰⁷ As such, *e-flux journal* is considered influential. In 2009, its editorial team received eighth place in the “Power 100” ranking of the renowned art magazine *ArtReview*, which ranks the art world’s most important figures.²⁰⁸ The journal’s importance was ranked above institutional directors such as Iwona Blazwick (Whitechapel Gallery), Alfred Pacquement (Centre Pompidou) and Michael Govan (Los Angeles County Museum of Art); gallery directors such as Iwan and Manuela Wirth, David Zwirner and Barbara Gladston; and artists such as Mike Kelley, Jeff Koons and Bruce Nauman.

The “Power 100. This year’s most influential people in the contemporary artworld” ranking has been conducted by *ArtReview* since 2002, and according to *ArtReview* it is

206 *e-flux journal*, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/>.

207 See e-flux: “About,” <https://www.e-flux.com/about/>. According to its own figures, this number was “more than 50,000” in 2009; see: e-flux: “About,” January 6, 2009, <http://web.archive.org/web/20090515185429/https://www.e-flux.com./pages/about/>.

208 *Art Review*, “2009 Power 100. This year’s most influential people in the contemporary artworld,” https://artreview.com/power_100/2009/.

“the longest-running and most authoritative guide to the forces that are driving the international contemporary art scene.”²⁰⁹ The ranking is determined by an anonymous committee of “art world figures,”²¹⁰ who order artists, collectors, gallery directors, critics and curators according to their influence and thus provide what they consider to be “the world’s definitive guide to the often invisible structures of the current artworld.”²¹¹

The editors of *e-flux journal* are listed under the category “artists.” And in fact, Aranda, Vidokle and Wood conceive of their publication as an art project. The ranking also suggests that in 2009, editorial work and publishing counted as an established artistic genre. Yet the ranking of the online publication ahead of large galleries also indicates a significant shift in the power relations in the art field.²¹² Compared to the 1990s, discursive practices gained significant symbolic and economic value in the first decade of the new millennium, not least in the commercial art business.

e-flux journal is part of the e-flux company, which is directed by Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda and had existed for ten years at the time of *e-flux journal*’s founding. The company was first started by Vidokle and others in 1998,²¹³ and had its initial headquarters in a

209 Art Review, “About us,” https://artreview.com/about_us/.

210 Art Review.

211 Art Review. The editors of the “Power 100” list do not provide further information about what “influence” means to them or the criteria used for evaluation.

212 See Isabelle Graw, *Der große Preis* (Cologne: DuMont, 2008), 130.

213 Other founders included Adriana Arenas, Josh Welber and Terence Gower; see Hans Ulrich Obrist, Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda, “Ever. Ever. Ever.,” in *The Best Surprise Is No Surprise*, eds. Julieta Aranda, Elizabeth Linden and Anton Vidokle (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2007), 16.

one-room apartment. Aranda joined in 2003 and in the following year, an exhibition space was opened on Ludlow Street in New York's Lower East Side,²¹⁴ a historically working-class and immigrant neighborhood that was undergoing gentrification at the time.²¹⁵ e-flux later moved into various storefronts, before the business relocated in 2011 to a two-story space²¹⁶ that includes an office, a library and space for exhibitions and events. e-flux's global activities trace back to this physical location.

At the core of these activities are the website e-flux.com and various commercial newsletters. The most important of the newsletters, *e-flux announcements*, sends press releases about art exhibitions multiple times each day to around 90,000 recipients.²¹⁷ Subscription is free of cost, while customers pay for the announcements. In

214 53 Ludlow Street, New York, NY 10002.

215 This process of gentrification landed the area on the list of "America's Most Endangered Historic Places" in 2008; see America's Most Endangered Historic Places – Past Listings, <https://savingplaces.org/11most-past-listings>. Other significant art organizations also have headquarters in this neighborhood, including the gallery 47 Orchard (47 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002), which existed from 2005 to 2008, and since 2007 the New Museum (235 Bowery, New York, NY 10002).

216 41 Essex Street, New York, NY 10002.

217 e-flux began with this newsletter, Anton Vidokle explains in an interview. He sent the invitation to his twelve-hour exhibition "The Best Surprise is No Surprise," which took place in a hotel room at the Holiday Inn in New York's Chinatown in 1998, by email. The success of this email, the attendance of hundreds of guests, was what occasioned him to initially start e-flux as a newsletter service sending out press releases and announcements from art institutions. See Obrist, Vidokle, Aranda, "Ever. Ever. Ever.," 16. Together with Artforum e-flux maintains two further newsletters: *art & education*, a market-leading platform for job seekers in the art world, and *art agenda*, which allows commercial galleries to advertise their exhibition programs and sends out exhibition reviews published in Artforum.

addition, e-flux runs a number of (art) projects and co-operates with various institutions, fairs, museums and universities.²¹⁸

e-flux's various projects are gathered on the website, which is partially also rented out as advertisement space.²¹⁹ The website is home of e-flux journal, the content of which can be accessed free of charge. The website also mentions a print version that can be purchased at an array of art institutions in the United States, Canada, South America and Europe as well as in Beijing, Gwangju, Beirut, Dubai, Hong Kong, Johannesburg and Melbourne.²²⁰ However, in contrast to *The Fox* and *A.N.Y.P.*, the distribution of e-flux's content is no longer dependent on this kind of physical network. The listed addresses, spread across continents, are not material to the journal's operations, as *e-flux journal* can reach anyone with internet access. What they do indi-

218 Examples include various exhibitions at biennales (Venice 2003, 2015; documenta 13, 2012) and art institutions and fairs (ARCO Madrid, Art Basel, both 1999). Further, numerous contributions for publications and journals have been published (Parkett Magazine 2001). Together with Hans Ulrich Obrist, e-flux has also maintained the Agency of Unrealized Projects (AUP) since 2014, which provides access to works that for various reasons were never realized.

219 It is possible to place ads on a banner. Institutions represented in advertisements include Asia Art Archive, Moderne Museet, Sorlandets Kunstmuseum, Schirm Kunsthalle, Mousse, MAK, Japan Media Arts Festival, Frieze, White Flag, World Biennial Forum, Kaleidoscope, Bidoun, Kunsthalle Wien, N.B.K., Fondazione Galleria Civica, Strom Den Haag, Casco, Piktogram, Art Agenda, Saltonline, BookForum, New Documents, Texte zur Kunst, Springerin, ArtReview, nkdale.no, Flash Art, Kunsthalle St. Gallen, ISCP, Parkett, Artforum, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Bi-City Biennial of Urbanism/Architecture. See e-flux, July 12, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20160617122207/https://www.e-flux.com>.

220 e-flux, "Distribution Network," e-flux journal, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/>.

cate, however, is that e-flux conceives of itself as a global actor. That being said, a glance at all 331 of the journal's authors depicts another image:²²¹ the majority is from the United States, Canada or Europe.

e-flux journal is financed by the services sold by e-flux. the e-flux company's publishing activities in the areas of theory, art criticism and art, however, are not limited to the journal. In cooperation with Sternberg Press, e-flux regularly publishes texts by the online journal's contributing authors.²²² Since 2014 the company has also run a discussion forum, *e-flux conversations*, in which the journal's readers can converse online.

Altogether e-flux is a heterogeneous enterprise, incorporating the distribution of press texts, the production of art and discussion about art production and art history as well as social media activities. With this array of activities and products, e-flux covers the entire chain of processes involved in the creation of art. It is therefore not surprising that in a widely noted text, Alix Rule and David Levine call e-flux the most powerful voice in communication about art, the ultimate symbol of art discourse.²²³

221 e-flux, "Contributors," *e-flux journal*, July 13, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160713090019/https://www.e-flux.com/journals/>.

222 This includes anthologies such as *e-flux journal reader 2009* (2010) and *Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art* (2011) as well as books by individual e-flux authors such as Boris Groys' *Going Public* (2010), Hito Steyerl's *The Wretched of the Screen* (2013), Martha Rosler's *Culture Class* (2013) and Benjamin H. Bratton's *Dispute Plan to Prevent Future Luxury Constitution* (2016).

223 See Alix Rule and David Levine, "International Art English. On the rise – and the space – of the art-world press release," *Triple Canopy*, no. 16 (2012), https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/international_art_english/.

An Independent Project

The issues of *e-flux journal* are numbered and appear in chronological order on the website.²²⁴ Since the first publication, each issue has been arranged in the same way and includes a cover, a table of contents, an editorial and numerous articles. The “cover” consists of a background image, the name of the journal, the issue number and the publication date. The background images are typically photographs, the sources of which are rarely named. The issues, however, contain copyright information that identifies e-flux and the issue’s authors as holders of the rights of image and text. Each issue contains six to nine articles. These are introduced by an editorial text generally written by the editors. As each issue is arranged in the same format, the journal’s design and technical aspects do not play a significant role in general production.²²⁵ These aspects of production are accordingly outsourced.²²⁶ Editorial work is also carried out according to a division of labor.²²⁷

224 *e-flux journal*, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/>.

225 According to Vidokle, the idea for the design of *e-flux journal* traces back to a suggestion made by Liam Gillick. As part of Night School, an educational project initiated by e-flux in New York, Gillick wanted to launch a publication platform for position papers. The idea was to publish papers as they were submitted, rather than designing the publication, in order to emphasize the urgency of the contents. The platform was not realized, but *e-flux journal* was founded in its place. See Anton Vidokle, “What Is Our Ideology?,” in *School*, ed. Sam Thorne (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 78.

226 Alan Woo is responsible for the design and technical production of the entire website. The print version of *e-flux journal* is designed by Jeff Ramsey.

227 The journal is published by Julieta Aranda, Stephan Squidd, Anton Vidokle and Brian Kuan Wood. Kaye Cain-Nielsen and Mariana Silva are responsible for editing. Copy-editing is done by Michael Andrews,

In a conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Anton Vidokle describes e-flux as a long-term artistic project, as an artists-run space. According to Vidokle, what makes the project different from other similar projects is the fact that e-flux makes its own decisions about its economic and institutional conditions of production.²²⁸ In contrast to other artists' initiatives, he argues, e-flux does not simply implement existing institutional structures – calling together a supervisory board, recruiting members, selling volumes and organizing beneficiary events. An alternative practice, Vidokle contends, requires new institutional and commercial models.²²⁹ Thus, it is necessary “to stay fully independent of normal power structures that are just killing everything these days: the market, government, funding organizations, collectors and sponsors.”²³⁰

Vidokle sees e-flux as an independent project, as an alternative practice. The enterprise, in his view, doesn't follow any strategy or business plan, but rather is driven by the pleasure principle and the principle of improvisation. Julieta Aranda has made similar remarks elsewhere, stating that she largely fades out readers when conducting her publishing activities. Her primary aim, she says, is to discuss and follow what she considers relevant.²³¹ Talk of independence is frequent in discussions about the

and Daria Irincheeva is employed as an assistant.

228 See Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, “Ever. Ever. Ever.,” 20.

229 “I really don't think it's feasible to think of alternative practices or organizations without rethinking their economic links and dependencies on the existing system.” Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, 20.

230 Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, 18.

231 See Julieta Aranda, “Supercommunity” (lecture), Post Digital Cultures, Lausanne, December 4, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CbBQcXLJ_I.

identity of *e-flux journal*. It refers, for the most part, to independence from public funding and large institutions.

Dependencies and Alliances

e-flux journal is distributed via the *e-flux announcements* newsletter. The journal thus shares its channel of circulation with the press releases of art institutions and reaches the same users.²³² In other words, the journal's editors, who are also the founders of e-flux, use their newsletter service for their own purposes. According to the e-flux website, this service is reserved for public art centers and museums.²³³ Commercial galleries and art schools send their announcements via separate newsletter services offered by e-flux, including *art agenda* and *art & education*. In this sense, *e-flux journal* portrays itself as public precisely through this selection of its distribution channel. In this way it appears as a public service rather than primarily commercial in nature.²³⁴

232 With sendings to 90,000 readers, *e-flux journal* thus enjoys a platform with a significantly larger reach than the comparably marginal journals *The Fox* (5,000 readers) and *A.N.Y.P.* (1,000 readers) in the 1970s and the 1990s, respectively. Furthermore, due to their small print runs and self-organized distribution networks, *The Fox* and *A.N.Y.P.* are difficult to access today. However, *The Fox's* accessibility has improved since 2013, thus expanding its reach. This is primarily due to Arnaud Desjardin's careful digital reproduction of the magazine for the exhibition "Re: the Fox" at the gallery UNIT/PITT Projects in Vancouver. See UNIT/PITT Projects, "Re: The Fox," November 15 - December 21, 2013, <http://www.helenpittgallery.org/exhibitions/past/arnaud-desjardin-everday-press-john-slyce-re-the-fox/>. This digital reproduction can now also be accessed via the platform ubuweb. See ubuweb, "The Fox, <http://ubu.com/historical/fox/index.html>. Accessibility is not an issue for e-flux journal at present. But at the latest it will become a concern when then journal's URL is no longer active.

233 See e-flux, "About," <https://www.e-flux.com/about/>.

234 Various art fairs including Art Basel, art magazines such as *Par-kett*, publishers such as JRP Ringier and private collections such as

An archive of past *e-flux announcements* mailings is accessible on the e-flux website. It can be classified by year or by customer. According to e-flux, the archive documents “some of the most significant exhibitions that have taken place since 1999.”²³⁵ In other words, e-flux describes its service as material for art history. While this self-depiction is consciously compatible with the interests of advertisers, it also strengthens e-flux’s own monopoly position and accredits e-flux with a permanent status in art history since 1999.

Even if e-flux has established a powerful position as a global disseminator of current information about contemporary art, the journal, as an “appendage” of this service, is dependent on the decision of art institutions to advertise their exhibitions, events and job offers on e-flux. The attractiveness of e-flux as an advertising platform, in turn, has not only to do with the breadth and exclusivity its recipients and advertisers. It also draws from the cultural capital of projects like *e-flux journal* and its topics, authors and collaborators. It is therefore no surprise that customers of the e-flux company sometimes also have a hand in determining the content of the journal that is indirectly financed by their orders. A number of issues of *e-flux journal* have resulted from collaboration between the editors and institutions that are customers of *e-flux announcements*: collaboratively organized exhibitions, educational projects and events series. One example is a yearlong event program and two issues of *e-flux*

the Julia Stoschek Collection send their announcements via the *e-flux announcements* newsletter. Thus, for e-flux these institutions count as “public art centers and museums.”

235 See e-flux, *e-flux announcements*, <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/>.

journal that were conceived in cooperation with the art institution Ashkal Alwan, which was founded in 1994 in Beirut.²³⁶ The program took place in 2013 within the framework of the Home Workspace Program (HWP),²³⁷ an informal and experimental school, and was supervised by Jalal Toufic and Anton Vidokle.²³⁸ The program was dedicated to the topics “Creating and Dispersing Universes that Work without Working” and “Art without Work, Art with Sovereignty,” and it is the subject of issue numbers 48 and 49 of *e-flux journal*.²³⁹

The journal thus appears to act as an accomplice – quite in the tradition of publications like *A.N.Y.P.* In this case, it published two issues that resulted from a program co-organized by a member of the editorial team, which took place in an institution to which the editors have personal ties. The journal documented the events and thereby served a consolidating function. At the same time, it played a role in determining the content.

236 Ashkal Alwan has been an e-flux customer since 2010 and has sent a total of eleven ads via the e-flux newsletter. See e-flux, “Ashkal Alwan,” https://www.e-flux.com/client/ashkal_alwan/.

237 See Ashkal Alwan, “HWP 2013–14,” <http://ashkalalwan.org/programs/hwp-2013-14/>.

238 The program was free of cost. Each of the 10 to 15 accepted participants was given a budget of 1,000 USD to cover project costs. It was expected that all participants cover their own living, housing and travel costs for the duration of the program in Beirut; see Ashkal Alwan.

239 No. 48 includes texts by both organizers and a reflection by participants on the Home Workspace Program. No. 49 elaborates on the topic. See Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, “Editorial – ‘Pieces of the Planet’ Issue One,” *e-flux journal*, no. 48 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/48/60026/editorial-pieces-of-the-planet-issue-one>; Aranda, Wood and Vidokle, “Editorial – ‘Pieces of the Planet’ – Issue Two,” *e-flux journal*, no. 49 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/49/59998/editorial-pieces-of-the-planet-issue-two>.

A further elaboration of Vidokle's article "Art without Work?" comprised part of the program.

Whereas in the case of Ashkal Alwan, e-flux collaborated with a non commercial institution, collaborations have also taken place with commercial institutions. For example, in 2009 Vidokle organized the four-day event series *What Is Contemporary Art?* at the art fair SH Contemporary in Shanghai. At the time, SH Contemporary housed a large survey exhibition of Asian Art. Vidokle's involvement was not limited to the one-time organization of a discursive program to accompany the exhibition; rather, he conceptualized the exhibition itself, which in 2009 was in its third iteration, together with Wang Ijanwei, Mami Kataoka and fair director Colin Chinnery.²⁴⁰

Contributions to the event series appeared two months later in the eleventh issue of *e-flux journal* – and again in January 2010 in the twelfth.²⁴¹ The journal evaluated the event series indiscriminately, thus affirming the appropriation of theory by the art market and even offering the latter a place to materialize. e-flux was not just locally involved in a sales-driven fair in order to channel funding to its own project. Rather, it took the content produced and framed it as articles of *e-flux journal*, which simultaneously presents itself as a public service.

240 e-flux, "What Is Contemporary Art," *e-flux announcements*, August 23, 2009, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/37860/what-is-contemporary-art>.

241 Gao Shiming's contribution was not published, while supplementary contributions by Zdenka Badonivac and Dieter Roelstraete were published in addition. See Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, "What is Contemporary Art? Issue One," *e-flux journal*, no. 11 (2009), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/11/61342/what-is-contemporary-art-issue-one/>; Aranda, Wood and Vidokle, "What is Contemporary Art? Issue Two," *e-flux journal*, no. 12 (2010), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/12/61332/what-is-contemporary-art-issue-two/>.

The texts written within the scope of the art fair were also published in a highly regarded anthology, *What is Contemporary Art?*, published in 2009 by Sternberg Press.²⁴² This publication was in part *e-flux journal's* response to a controversial discussion in the 2000s about contemporary art, which raised questions not only about how contemporary art should be understood, but also about how its history should be written.²⁴³ With its publications on this topic, *e-flux journal* both inscribed itself into a debate about art theory and offered itself as introductory literature to the debate for educational purposes. While other voices in art education primarily come from contexts of traditional art and educational institutions, most of which are publicly funded, the publication *What is Contemporary Art?* emerged from a mode of production based on the laws of the market. The consequences of this kind of economic entanglement for art historiography, however, were not problematized.

In contrast to the 1990s – or for example, in contrast to *Texte zur Kunst – e-flux journal* no longer attempts to justify a critical alliance between the market and theory that would maintain the possibility of theory having an influence on the market. Rather, theory in this case contributes to the attractiveness of the commercial fair and

242 The volume includes texts by Cuauhtémoc Medina, Boris Groys, Raqs Media Collective, Martha Rosler, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Jan Verwoert.

243 Alongside magazines like *October* and publications by Terry Smith, T. J. Demos and Donald Kuspit, *e-flux journal* is a central place for this debate. See Hal Foster, “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary,’” *October*, no. 130 (2009): 3–124; T. J. Demos, *Return to the Post-colony. Spectres of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013); Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

thus indirectly to the sale of art, without reflection on the fundamental structure on which this is based, let alone a desire to change it.

e-flux journal primarily gains entry to the market with the infrastructure thus available to it. For example, the project has cooperated with various organizations, including with the Remai Modern Art Gallery of Saskatchewan on an artistic contribution to the Venice Biennale. This gallery advertises in the *e-flux* newsletter and financially supported *e-flux journal's* Biennale contribution.²⁴⁴ The contribution consisted of three parts: a Biennale issue of *e-flux journal*, a wooden board in the Giardini onto which a new text is posted daily for the duration of the Biennale and, as the primary component, the website supercommunity.e-flux.com, which was created for the event and made the texts accessible to a global audience.²⁴⁵

As the title of the *e-flux journal's* Biennale issue (no. 65) the editors introduced the concept Supercommunity, a term that was used above all to characterize the journal itself and its readers.²⁴⁶ The discursive practice of *e-flux journal* and the Supercommunity emanating from it have thus developed in a space that is largely determined by processes of aestheticization and commodification. The editors appear less concerned with making a transformative intervention into these processes

244 e-flux, "e-flux journal at the 56th Venice Biennale," *e-flux announcements*, April 23, 2015, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/29645/e-flux-journal-at-the-56th-venice-biennale/>.

245 The 88 texts posted during the Biennale were excerpts from articles that had the effect of a teaser. Each of these texts ended with a reference to the website.

246 e-flux, "e-flux journal at the 56th Venice Biennale," *e-flux announcements*, April 23, 2015, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/29645/e-flux-journal-at-the-56th-venice-biennale/>.

than as actors who know how to work skillfully and innovatively within the given modes of operation.

Knowledge for a Hegemonic Position

Its distribution network grants the journal a hegemonic position in the art field. The fact that the editors are aware of this was already evident in the first editorial from 2008, in which they describe the situation of art criticism and programmatically present their aims for the newly founded *e-flux journal*:

Historically, more than any single institution, art publications have been primary sites for discourse surrounding the artistic field. And yet most recently, the discourse has seemingly moved elsewhere – away from the formal vocabulary used to explain art production, away from traditional art capitals, and away from the printed page. At times, new discursive practices even replace traditional forms of art production. Given the current climate of disciplinary reconfiguration and geographic dispersal, it has become apparent that the urgent task has now become to engage the new intellectual territories in a way that can revitalize the critical vocabulary of contemporary art. We see a fresh approach to the function of an art journal to be perhaps the most productive way of doing this.²⁴⁷

Here, we learn that the art discourse (“discourse surrounding the artistic field”) has moved away from print, away from the centers of art, away from a formal

²⁴⁷ Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, “Editorial,” *e-flux journal*, no. 0 (2008), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68454/editorial/>.

vocabulary. It is not clear how art discourse is understood. The same holds for the historical and geopolitical location of the aspects to which they allude. We do not learn what places and times are being talked about, or about the (theoretical) references on which the editors are drawing. The editorial text does not analyze the transformation of the art discourse. There is no differentiation or argument; instead, it is assumed that readers know how “formal vocabulary” or “the current climate of disciplinary reconfiguration” should be understood. A movement away from something and towards something undefined is repeated over and over in various formulations. These formulations, moreover, are conspiratorial in nature, as if they want to activate the readers themselves.

The idea that the journal could revitalize the critical vocabulary of contemporary art with a new approach raises the question: under what circumstances has the vocabulary that the editors identify as critical been ‘vital’ or not? This kind of question is not given any attention. The claim to a revitalization of the critical potential of contemporary art thus does not stray from the level of pure marketing. It does, however, underscore the activity and power of the editors of the newly founded journal.

The Editorial as Coullisse

While the editors only appear periodically as authors, they do produce an editorial text for each issue.²⁴⁸

248 While Aranda never appears as an author, Vidokle has written a total of five articles, including programmatic texts on the new definition of artistic and curatorial practice. See Anton Vidokle, “Art Without Artists?,” *e-flux journal*, no. 16 (1020), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/16/61285/art-without-artists/>; Vidokle, “Art Without

Thus, the editors are primarily active in the paratextual domain, in the framing of the journal. In one of the editorials, the domain of discursive practice is staked out: the authors largely prescribe how something is to be categorized and in what context it should be discussed. They define the parameters of the issue and state what is and is not utterable therein. Thus, they design the editorial like a coulisse, a stage set of illustrative decoration and subjective architecture. In this regard *e-flux journal* is clearly different than *The Fox* and *A.N.Y.P.*, where the aim was to overcome the separation between paratext and text. With *The Fox*, this corresponded to the creation of community practice through the magazine, which in turn helped to frame a context for discussion. For *A.N.Y.P.* this meant a continuous questioning of the structure of the newspaper and its rubrics.

Work?," *e-flux journal*, no. 29 (2011), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/29/68096/art-without-work/>; Vidokle, "In Conversation with Ilya and Emilia Kabakov," *e-flux journal*, no. 40 (2012), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/40/60278/in-conversation-with-ilya-and-emilia-kabakov/>; Vidokle, "Art Without Market, Art Without Education: Political Economy of Art," *e-flux journal*, no. 43 (2013), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/43/60205/art-without-market-art-without-education-political-economy-of-art/>; Vidokle, "Energy of Kosmos is Indestructible!!," *e-flux journal*, no. 48 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/48/60028/energy-of-kosmos-is-indestructible/>. Brian Kuan Wood, the third editor, has written a total of four articles on different topics including universalism, relationships, conditions of production and the sublime. See Brian Kuan Wood, "A Universalism for Everyone," *e-flux journal*, no. 7 (2009), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/07/61392/a-universalism-for-everyone/>; Wood, "We Are the Weather," *e-flux journal*, no. 45 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/60131/we-are-the-weather/>; Wood, "Is it Love?," *e-flux journal*, no. 53 (2014), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59897/is-it-love/>; Wood, "Is it Heavy or Is it Light?," *e-flux journal*, no. 61 (2015), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/61/61018/is-it-heavy-or-is-it-light/>.

However, the purely paratextual function of the editorial is regularly exceeded in *e-flux journal* as well. The editorials do not attend to the texts in the journal, but are rather used by the editors to write about topics that are only loosely connected to the content of the individual articles collected in a given issue. Often the editorial will refer to a recent political, economic or social event, which is then related to the editors' own interests, questions and ideas for action. The tone of the editorials is borderline agitating. The first paragraph of the editorial of the second issue from 2008 is exemplary of this style:

Following the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai, doctor and New Age guru Deepak Chopra commented on CNN that perhaps the worst thing for terrorist groups would be for someone like President-elect Obama to befriend the Muslim world and turn them against terrorists – simple as that! Such a statement is symptomatic of the idea that power today should, whenever possible, be exercised through attraction and seduction rather than through direct coercion. [...] When political power begins to look less like a tank and more like your best friend, where do you look to locate the sources of its authority, and how do you articulate new, flexible modes of resistance?²⁴⁹

Taking up a statement given by Deepak Chopra on CNN with respect to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai of November 2008, the editors assert that power has been transformed. Power today, the text reads, is exercised less by coercion than by attraction and seduction. The

249 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, "Editorial," *e-flux journal*, no. 1 (2008), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/01/68472/editorial/>.

political event to which Chopra refers is irrelevant for the editors' argumentation. It has an atmospheric function. In this function it introduces qualities linked to the attacks, including urgency, timeliness and shock – values that the editors then relate to their own question about possible forms of resistance against a power that appears to be your best friend.

The editors' question about new forms of resistance, however, is barely revisited in the journal.²⁵⁰ There is similarly little discussion in the issue about the concept of power, which in the example was identified with a head of state, and how it is to be understood. It appears that the question raised in the editorial is neither really meant to be answered, nor does it serve to relate the heterogeneous contributions to the issue to one another in a meaningful way or to interpret their positions. Rather, it serves a claim to social relevance. The editorial proceeds logically from one question to the next but develops no argument. The individual elements remain standing alongside one another. In this way, it is less the case that the editors take part in a discourse, and more that they use discourse to “perform” relevance and index the global dimension of their own interests.

250 The articles collected in the issue, by Metahaven, Jan Verwoert, Dieter Lesage, Simon Sheikh, Carol Yinghua Lu, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and Staš Kleindienst are mostly about art. While Jan Verwoert explores questions about authorship and the autonomy of the art field based on the example of Joseph Beuys' work, Dieter Lesage discusses the role and function of *documenta* exhibitions. Simon Sheikh, in turn, comments on a text by Craig Owens about the art scene in the East Village of the 1980s. Carol Yinghua Lu traces the developments of a Chinese conceptual art that emerged independent from its Western equivalent.

International Art English

A jargon oscillating between marketing and critique, as can be found in *e-flux journal's* editorials, also characterizes the press releases distributed by the e-flux newsletter. At least this is the conclusion reached by Alix Rule and David Levine in a widely acclaimed article entitled "International Art English" that was published in 2012 in the U.S. online magazine *Triple Canopy*.²⁵¹ The article also confirms the hegemonic position of e-flux, insofar as the announcements disseminated by the newsletter are read as an expression of the current language of practice in the art field.

Rule and Levine's investigation is based on an evaluation of thirteen volumes of *e-flux announcements*. They used the computer-linguistic software Sketch Engine to

251 See Alix Rule and David Levine, "International Art English. On the rise – and the space – of the art-world press release," *Triple Canopy*, no. 16 (2012), https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/international_art_english/. For a discussion of the article see Zoë Lescaze, "Critics Debate 'International Art English' at CAA Conference," *Observer*, February 25, 2013, <http://observer.com/2013/02/critics-debate-international-art-english-at-caa-conference/>; Andy Beckett, "A user's guide to artspeak," *The Guardian*, January 21 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/27/users-guide-international-art-english/>; Ben Davis, "The Joke that Forgot it was Funny," *Huffington Post*, June 7, 2013, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/artinfo/international-art-english-the-joke-that-forgot-it-was-funny_b_3397760.html?guccounter=1; Mostafa Heddaya, "When artspeak masks oppression," *Hyperallergic*, March 6, 2013, <https://hyperallergic.com/66348/when-artspeak-masks-oppression/>; Mariam Ghani, "The Islands of Evasion: Notes on International Art English," *Triple Canopy*, May 28, 2013, <https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/the-islands-of-evasion-notes-on-international-art-english/>; Peter Richter, "Deutsch ist doch provinziell," *Süddeutsche Zeitung online*, June 18, 2013, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/geheimsprache-iae-in-der-kunstwelt-wer-in-berlin-deutsch-spricht-ist-provinziell-1.1698901>.

examine the sentence structure of the newsletters and the frequency of use of terms. They conclude that the use of English language, measured according to the guidelines of the British National Corpus (BNC) is often amateurish and grammatically incorrect. This, they argue, has an unintended poetic effect. The sentences are often unnecessarily complex, and terms are often used incorrectly. The culture of mistakes, Rule and Levine contend, is so developed that they speak of a new “universal foreign language,” which they call “International Art English” (IAE). IAE is distinguished by linguistic ambiguity and meaningless formulations. They argue that these have become so characteristic that the content of texts is no longer comprehensible. Given the proliferation of this kind of text, Rule and Levine conclude that content must be relatively unimportant in art discourse. Thus, they consider the primary relevance of IAE to be its function of distinction. The use of this language, according to their argument, serves less to deal with a topic than to signal belonging in the art scene.

IAE is highly recognizable. It is composed of a conspicuous vocabulary that includes nouns such as *aporia*, *space*, *proposition*, *biopolitics*, *tension* and *autonomy*; adjectives like *radical*, *transversal* and verbs like *interrogate*, *question*, *encode*, *transform*, *subvert*, *imbricate* and *displace*. Adjectives are often used to make nouns: *visual* becomes *visuality*, *global* becomes *globality*. In addition, the language features distinct grammatical characteristics, including frequent use of adverbial constructions like *radically questioned* or the use of two adverbs like *playfully* and *subversively invert*. All in all, the tendency is to use more words rather than less. IAE draws on influences of various theoretical currents and approaches

(institutional critique, feminism, antiracism, postcolonialism, critique of technology, economics, urbanism) in a more or less aesthetic way, that is, with a certain poetic mode of operation that typically features endlessly long sentences with subordinate clauses and the frequent use of the present participle or perfect tense.²⁵² To summarize, Rule and Levine problematize that IAE is influenced just as much by marketing mechanisms as by art and theory.

e-flux journal reacted to Rule and Levine's article and the critique of press release jargon with an issue on "Language and the Internet."²⁵³ In contrast to the title's suggestion, neither language nor the internet is a major topic in the editorial, which instead focuses on a change pertaining to student fees at Cooper Union, an art school in New York that to date had been free of charge. With respect to formulating a response to Rule and Levine's critique of the dominant language of the global art discourse that e-flux shapes in significant ways, the editors turned to longtime e-flux journal authors Hito Steyerl and Martha Rosler.²⁵⁴ Steyerl and Rosler dissected Rule and Levine's article from various perspectives. They

252 Aaron Young's exhibition *No Fucking Way* 2012 at Company is taken as an example: "This blurring of real and constructed, only existing in the realm of performance, speculation and judgment, implicates the viewer in its consumption, since our observation of these celebrities will always be mediated." Rule and Levine, "International Art English."

253 See *e-flux journal*, no. 45 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/>.

254 See Hito Steyerl, "International Disco Latin," *e-flux journal*, no. 45 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/60100/international-disco-latin/>; Martha Rosler: "English and All That," *e-flux journal*, no. 45(2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/60103/english-and-all-that/>.

accuse the authors of making arguments of the educated elite: as native English speakers and Americans, Steyerl and Rosler contend, Rule and Levine ultimately call for grammatically correct press releases.²⁵⁵ Their text, they continue, expresses an implicit regret about the downfall of language that tends to contain a racist or white, colonial gesture. Steyerl counters this regret by affirming a migrants' culture of mistakes, and she associates both her own writing and the *e-flux journal* with this migrant culture.²⁵⁶ Only by first breaking grammatical rules, Steyerl writes in reference to Ana Teixeira Pinto, is it possible to say something truly important.²⁵⁷

I consider this critique to be on point given Rule and Levine's approach, but the defense of e-flux seems inappropriate. Steyerl removes e-flux from the line of fire and places it on the side of a multitude of migrants – and therefore on the “right side” – against old elites like the British National Corpus. Steyerl's contention that breaking linguistic rules is the requisite for making a statement of any importance raises the question of what “important” means in the context of the discourse cultivated

255 Vidokle states his agreement elsewhere: “I find it very awkward when privileged Americans or Brits accuse foreigners of contaminating English language or not speaking it correctly, etc., because the purity of language argument almost always has racist undertones. Hito Steyerl and Martha Rosler wrote in-depth responses [sic] to this article and I fully agree with the problems they point out.” Anton Vidokle in Nkule Mabaso, “Interview with Anton Vidokle,” *Curating*, no. 22 (2014), <http://www.on-curating.org/issue-22-43/interview-with-anton-vidokle.html>.

256 Steyerl proposes to turn the gaze from the jargon to the conditions of production of press releases and editorials of this kind, and to ask who writes them, in what timeframe and under what employment relations. The language identified by Rule and Levine, she argues, is a result of these conditions. See Hito Steyerl, “International Disco Latin.”

257 See Ana Teixeira Pinto cited in Steyerl, “International Disco Latin.”

by e-flux. If importance is understood in the sense of a transformative intervention that expands the space in which action can be taken, then the discourse e-flux promotes is distinguished by a decisive harmlessness.

Knowledge Production in the Art Field

While the parameters of action stipulated by *e-flux journal* are not up for discussion, one development from which the journal largely emerged and to which it contributes – the transformation of the art field into a discourse that takes shape in line with the market – is discussed in various ways. The contributions to this discussion are critical and sometimes radical, but they do not put the position of the journal or of the author in the art field at risk in any way. In addition to the issue *Education Actualized*²⁵⁸ edited by Irit Rogoff, another example is a contribution by Boris Groys that describes the entry of theory into contemporary art as the beginning of a global discourse.²⁵⁹ In this text, Groys argues that today, artists turn to theory during the time they spend as students in order to find out what art actually is and what artists do. Against this backdrop, they need theory in order to make art at all. Theory, in turn, globalizes art because it enables artists to step away from their cultural identities. If art becomes discursive in the way Groys describes here,

258 See Irit Rogoff, “‘Education Actualized’ – Editorial,” *e-flux journal*, no. 14 (2010), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61300/education-actualized-editorial/>.

259 See Boris Groys, “Under the Gaze of Theory,” *e-flux journal*, no. 35 (2012), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/35/68389/under-the-gaze-of-theory/>.

the art field also changes. It expands into a transdisciplinary field that takes up academic discourses and also acts upon these.

This development is also discussed in an article by Tom Holert.²⁶⁰ Holert places the partial autonomy of the art field against the concept of research based art. He argues that the latter is linked to a development in education politics that, by modeling artistic work on formats of learning and research, has led to more control, regulation and result-oriented approaches. Holert criticizes the positioning of European artistic research for primarily aspiring to inscribe itself into an existing history, instead of asking, for example, about forms of knowledge production that have historically emerged from artistic practice.²⁶¹

Holert is interested in making this kind of form politically useful. He claims that a historical example for a similar approach can be found in the students' protests at the College of Art in London in 1968, where for six weeks a films were shown, lectures given and self-organized seminars and meetings organized for collective discussion. For Holert, collective discussion is a particularly attractive form of knowledge production for the art field. He argues that for the students in London, discussion was a form that allowed them to productively engage with their education.

260 See Tom Holert "Art in the Knowledge-based Polis," *e-flux journal*, no. 3 (2009), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68537/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/>.

261 Holert sees a confirmation of artistic research wanting to inscribe itself into this new knowledge economy in a strategy paper published in 2008 by the European League of Institutes of the Arts, in which artistic research is linked to the production of new knowledge in a creative Europe; see Holert, "Art in the Knowledge-based Polis."

Holert is interested in a knowledge produced in the art field by various actors in various places. The heterogeneity and multiplicity of voices must be recognized as a specific form of knowledge production. In this context, he sees in conversation a format in which various stances and modes of operating can be made visible and confront one another. Holert grants a potentially empowering function to conversation as a format in the context of artistic knowledge production. Because the discursive rules of the participants are continually negotiated in conversation, it has the potential to create a temporary independence for participants, from which collective autonomy can emerge.

In evident contrast to this understanding of artistic knowledge, which in a certain sense is also assumed by considerations on community practice in *The Fox*, Holert's text is classically academic in style. Its publication in *e-flux journal* thus indicates the increasing significance of academic forms in the art field, that is, precisely the development that Holert laments in his text.

Postcapitalist Self

In her guest issue of *e-flux journal*, entitled *In Search of the Post Capitalist Self*, Marion von Osten inverts the relations usually dominant in e-flux's work.²⁶² In this issue, *e-flux journal* does not become a repository for work produced and paid elsewhere, but rather is used by von Osten as a tool for her artistic contribution. The cultural surplus value in this case does not flow to the e-flux company, but rather to the guest editor.

²⁶² See *e-flux journal*, no. 17 (2010), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/17/>.

In her editorial text for the issue von Osten calls attention to the guest editorship by indirectly describing her collaboration with *e-flux journal* and with Vidokle. She writes about a meeting at a café of his choice, where they discussed von Osten's question, "whether the (cultural) Left is still capable of thinking and acting beyond the analysis of overwhelming power structures or working within the neoliberal consensus model."²⁶³ With the support of the journal's editors, von Osten explains in the editorial, cultural producers and theorists were invited to react to her diagnosis of "zombie neoliberalism."

With this move, von Osten actively searched for new postcapitalist and postidentitarian imaginaries. The new formulation of a project of the left was a topic, and it was simultaneously reflected in von Osten's practice as a cultural producer. This is because the cultural producer who continually traverses various contexts can be described as a form of a postcapitalist self. Traversing various work settings, ways of thinking, research agendas and ways of making things public leads not only to questioning categories of work and value, but also to breaks in the conditions of production. Traversing thus has an emancipatory, self-empowering potential. Von Osten traverses the commercial context of *e-flux* as well as the spectacle of the Berlin Biennale. The political economy of this institution is the material with which she works and which she transforms. However, von Osten's traversing here – in contrast to what was

263 Marion von Osten, "Editorial – 'In search of the Postcapitalist Self,'" *e-flux journal*, no. 17 (2010), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/17/67350/editorial-in-search-of-the-postcapitalist-self/>.

called for by the group kpD²⁶⁴ – is limited to an individual practice. Border-crossing is attributed to her as an author. According to Marina Vishmidt, however, this attribution is what allows the border-crossing to be registered.²⁶⁵

Absorbing Surplus Value

In 2014 e-flux expanded its offering to include the discussion forum *e-flux conversations*. This forum allows articles from *e-flux journal* to be discussed. Like other commercial providers, e-flux counts on embedding the content created by its users into the website. The forum presents itself as an answer to the transformed conditions of the distribution and production of texts in digital space. In the press release announcing the forum, which was sent out via the newsletter, e-flux writes:

Is your social media feed drunk on likes? Did Big Brother kick you off Facebook for posting medieval torture paintings? Do 140 characters leave you unfulfilled? Us, too. That's why we built e-flux conversations – a new platform dedicated to in-depth discussions of urgent artistic and social ideas. We need to talk.²⁶⁶

264 See kpD (Brigitta Kuster, Isabell Lorey, Katja Reichard, Marion von Osten), "The Precarization of Cultural Producers and the Missing 'Good Life'," in *transversal* (April 2006), <http://transversal.at/transversal/0406/kpd/en>.

265 Marina Vishmidt, "Beneath the Atelier, the Desert: Critique, Institutional and Infrastructural," in *Marion von Osten. Once We Were Artists* (A BAK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice), eds. Maria Hlavajova and Tom Holert (Utrecht and Amsterdam: BAK, Valiz), 228.

266 e-flux, "We Need To Talk," *e-flux announcements*, March 9, 2015,

The press release reads like a call to action: “We need to talk.” It suggests urgency, dismay and participation. The text addresses those who are dissatisfied and calls them to join e-flux and to work together on an alternative. The alternative presented is the format of conversation, where the rules are defined and controlled by those discussing – a form of communication, thus, that displays a high degree of autonomy.

In the press release, the discussion forum is depicted as a solution for the inadequacies of Facebook and Twitter, which censor information or limit the character count of posts. *e-flux conversations*, in contrast, would be a perfect mix of blog and discussion forum. This would enable a discussion that is both deeper and open. Registered users can take part indiscriminately: “We want to be a place where a Beijing art student can chat with Charles Esche,” the press release explains.²⁶⁷ In other words, discourse about art should take place on a level playing field. According to this logic, each person has a voice, regardless of their position in the art field. This self depiction corresponds to the idea that internet culture takes place in a digital public sphere that has been democratized by social media, blogs and other platforms.

However, by naming exemplary conversation partners, Esche and an art student from Beijing, the press release already reveals an obvious contradiction. While Esche requires no description or geographical location, as the authors assume readers will be familiar with the curator of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, with

<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/29874/we-need-to-talk/>.
267 e-flux, “We Need To Talk.”

respect to his counterpart we learn only of a location and of a student status. Here, a trap becomes visible that contrasts with the claim of a level playing field.

A glance at the forum itself also shows that claim and execution lie far apart. The forum is comprised of user contributions that are published chronologically. There are “topics” – themes that can be proposed by registered users, to which other users then reply. In the post “FAQ & Community Guidelines,” e-flux names a number of rules. The forum is defined as a “civilized” place for public discussion. It is stipulated that contributions only be posted when they advance the discussion. Behaviors are defined: no swear words, no personal attacks, no thoughtless reactions.²⁶⁸ The forum is not a public park. Like Facebook, Twitter and other user-generated content sites, it is privately owned. To stay with the terminology of the self-depiction, it is a park maintained by e-flux, which can be closed by the company for no reason and from which people can be excluded without further explanation.

The content of the forum is heavily influenced by actors linked to e-flux. A glance at the statistics shows that 1,500 topics were posted by e-flux, 647 by the curator and critic Karen Archey, who is employed by e-flux as an editorial employee, and 90 by the education and research institution The New Centre for Research & Practice, which also publishes at e-flux’s invitation.²⁶⁹ WOther relatively active users posting topics include Anton Vi-

268 e-flux, “FAQ & Community Guidelines,” *e-flux conversations*, October 16, 2014, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/faq-community-guidelines/100>.

269 e-flux, “Users All Time,” *e-flux conversations*, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/u?period=all>.

dokle as well as a number of e-flux authors who are listed as moderators. e-flux thus largely determines the topics of discussion. The users, in turn, react to the defined topics.

The discussions vary in character and in function. For example, the forum is repeatedly used for mediation and advertisement, to comment on conferences organized by e-flux, such as a summer school organized by The New Centre for Research & Practice in 2016 in New York,²⁷⁰ the symposium *Machines that Matter* co-organized by e-flux and The New Centre for Research & Practice and the *World Biennial Forum*, carried out as part of the São Paulo Biennale in 2016.²⁷¹

The way *e-flux conversations* functions as a platform for advertising and mediating e-flux projects is especially evident with respect to the series Superconversations, which was developed around *e-flux journal's* contribution to the Venice Biennale. At e-flux's invitation, The New Centre for Research & Practice commented in the discussion forum on the articles that were published each day in the Superconversations series and simultaneously moderated the discussion. This began with a more-than-generous reading of the editorial and ended with the same. The New Centre for Research & Practice did not assume the role of an independent authority in the project, but rather functioned primarily as a mediator: "Our work [...]"

270 The New Centre for Research & Practice, "Live blog: The New Center 2016 NYC Summer Residency, July 18–22," *e-flux conversations*, July 16, 2016, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/live-blog-the-new-centre-2016-nyc-summer-residency-july-18-22/4077>.

271 See Karen Archey, "Live Coverage: World Biennial Forum No. 2, 26–30 November," *e-flux conversations*, November 26, 2014, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/live-coverage-world-biennial-forum-no-2-26-30-november/767>.

immediately doubled e-flux's original plan in terms of size, strength and diversity." Thus, The New Centre for Research & Practice retrospectively interpreted the entire Biennale Project as a reflection on intellectual work in the digital age and simultaneously as a utopian attempt to develop forms of collective content-based work removed from the pressures of the commodity form for the duration of the Venice Biennale.

The forum contains 37 reactions to the first contribution to this series. Some discuss the term Supercommunity – with interpretative suggestions ranging from the concept of general intellect to illustrative associations with an ice block or a crack in the wall. The general mood is euphoric. The users agree with the tone and thematic direction of the editorial summarized by The New Centre for Research & Practice and happily anticipate more articles. One user writes, "some of the upcoming articles we're discussing are going to be amazing, without a doubt. Can't wait."²⁷² Between these euphoric messages there are a few posts that question the function of the commentary, the speaker position and the role of a medium, that is, the setting of the forum itself. In the commentaries, however, a certain helplessness or resignation is perceptible vis à-vis the framework of debate: "Because let's face it: we're all homogenized behind the keyboard."²⁷³ But there is little reaction to comments like this, and in general, reflection of the debate's con-

272 See The New Centre for Research & Practice, "Welcome to Supercommunity & Superconversations, Day 1," *e-flux conversations*, May 2, 2016, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/welcome-to-supercommunity-superconversations-day-1/1551>.

273 The New Centre for Research & Practice, "Welcome to Supercommunity."

textual conditions is met with little interest. For a “zone of collective imagination,” as one *e-flux conversations* user calls the forum, questions of democratic participation play a surprisingly minor role in the Supercommunity.²⁷⁴ Users are evidently accustomed to the quasi feudal relations of digital social networks, in which there is no room available for desires to expand the space defined by the private owners.

The forum is also used to treat or advertise external content, or works produced by others. Karen Archey and e-flux post new topics each day that only rarely launch discussions. Often, these are reposts, that is, content from other websites is copied or briefly summarized. But there are also examples where discussion does in fact develop. One example started with an open letter written by the employees of the Berlin Volksbühne on the theater’s new directorship, which was translated into English and published in the forum.²⁷⁵ In this case as in others, e-flux made a local discussion accessible to its global readership. With Volksbühne, the local matter concerned whether or to what extent the selection of Chris Dercon as new director was a sign of a neoliberal takeover of the institution.

The discussion of the letter in the forum was controversial. The controversy, however, was primarily about the design of the Volksbühne’s current poster campaign, which features Gothic print from the 1930s. Hito Steyerl

274 The New Centre for Research & Practice, “Welcome to Supercommunity.”

275 See e-flux, “Volksbühne staff on Chris Dercon: We fear job cuts and liquidation,” *e-flux conversations*, June 23, 2016, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/volksbuhne-staff-on-chris-dercon-we-fear-job-cuts-and-liquidation/3911>.

engaged in a heavy exchange of blows with a pseudonymous user about the connotations. This kind of exchange is not atypical of online debate culture, which is often distinguished by the polemical and not particularly productive comments that get left behind: ultimately everyone can be connected, even if nothing at all connects them with one another. This kind of debate culture is symptomatic of the lack of a collectively situated practice in which the trust necessary for a productive conversation amongst those involved could develop.

Gemessen an der Größe der internationalen Measured in relation to the size of the international art scene, the participation of 3,364 users in the discussion forum counts as a success for e-flux, but this kind of platform is worth nothing without the time and work invested by its users.²⁷⁶ If in a certain sense, *e-flux journal* makes its readers dependent on it by providing a platform for discussion, it also depends on them – not least for economic reasons. Ultimately, the Charles Esches among them could also decide to cease to use the services of the e-flux newsletter, which would deprive the journal of its economic basis.²⁷⁷

The e-flux company is not only the owner of the discussion forum, where articles published in *e-flux journal* and elsewhere are discussed. It also controls and evaluates the users to an extent that reaches far beyond the conventions of similar discussion forums. In the statistics

276 e-flux, “Users All Time.”

277 Charles Esche visited the forum on five days, spent 16 minutes reading, read 47 contributions within 16 minutes, received zero likes, gave 12 likes, posted no topics and wrote one commentary. e-flux, “Charles Esche Summary,” *e-flux conversations*, https://conversations.e-flux.com/users/charles_esche/summary/.

already mentioned, alongside titles of contributions, users participating in a discussion, the number of contributions, commentaries and views, it is also possible to see who logged in for how long, who has read what and how many responses or likes the comments have generated. Each click is recorded and communicated to the community. Karen Archey, for example, has posted 640 topics, written 243 posts and received 433 likes. She has logged in 52 times, read 2200 posts and given 223 likes.²⁷⁸

The discussion forum and its statistics bring to mind the customer support websites of companies described by Gigi Roggero, where consumers help one another and are evaluated by the company. Roggero showed how the consumers collectively produced value for the company, while the company's ranking of consumers simultaneously prevented the latter from appropriating the fruits of their common production.²⁷⁹ This analysis can be applied to e-flux. Karen Archey and The New Centre for Research & Practice, as moderators, and e-flux, as owner of the forum, are the guards of the discussion, controlling and directing the work of other forum users. This form of participation is how unpaid work creates surplus value for e-flux.

The e-flux brand is a social product. All who invest work in e-flux contribute to the creation and growth of its value. In the case of *e-flux journal*, in addition to authors, this includes readers, advertisers and collaboration partners. *e-flux journal's* discourse gains its efficacy

278 e-flux, "Karen Archey Summary," *e-flux conversations*, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/users/karenarchey/summary/>.

279 See Gigi Roggero, "The Power of Living Knowledge. Crises of the Global University, Class Struggle and Institutions of the Common," <https://transversal.at/transversal/0809/roggero/en>.

through the fact that actors connect to it during their cigarette breaks, at the pub and on Facebook. The journal is thus dependent on the existence of a discussion context that extends beyond its institutional channels. The unpaid contributions created in non institutional settings flow, in turn, into the growth of *e-flux journal's* value. With e-flux journal, therefore, e-flux has created not only a container in which discussions about the journal's articles can be controlled, but also a basis for future accumulation of surplus value.

Art, Work, Self-Realization

Against this backdrop, the emphatic assertion of a claim to a “common social project of our times,” at least by Vidokle, is notable.²⁸⁰ The latter's text “Art Without Work?” and published in e-flux journal in 2011,²⁸¹ contains considerations about the relationship between art and work that illuminate his understanding of this common social project and e-flux's role therein.

In this text, Vidokle discusses a series of artistic works and approaches with reference to a new understanding of artistic production that these express. Vidokle's references include Andy Warhol's Factory in the 1960s, Rirkit Tiravanija's cooking performances in the 1990s and the ‘productivistic’ arm of the constructivist movement in the Soviet journal *Lef* between 1923 and 1925.

In addition to the journal's distinguished design made in part by Alexander Rodschenko, *Lef* is mentioned, primarily due to the sociopolitical engagement of its artists.

²⁸⁰ See Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, “Ever. Ever. Ever.”

²⁸¹ See Vidokle, “Art Without Work?”

With respect to Tiravanija, Vidokle appreciates the use of the container “art” to do something other than simply fulfill the role and function of the artist. And Warhol, in turn, seems to be included because of Vidokle’s fascination with the fact that the former created conditions of production that allowed him to produce art with mere presence. The objects were made by others.

In one of the interviews I saw, from 1966 or so, Warhol says point blank that he has not worked in three years and is not working at the time of the interview. [...] It also seems to me that the most important mechanism of the Factory, its central activity, was not so much the production of art objects or films, but the production of very particular social relations: a new way of life that in turn resulted in films and other things.²⁸²

Drawing on Warhol’s example, Vidokle discusses a fundamental transformation in the relationship between art and work. Warhol’s factory produced not commodities but social relationships, he argues. Warhol’s relatively late admission that for him “being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art”²⁸³ suggests an interpretation that sees Warhol as a model of the entrepreneur at a moment of transition to new forms of production. The immaterial work linked to cognitive capitalism incorporates not least the maintenance of social relationships and network-building. For Vidokle, the meaning of Warhol in this context, however, has much more to

²⁸² Vidokle, “Art Without Work?”

²⁸³ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B & Back Again)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 92.

do with Warhol's introduction of the artist taking distance from labor. Drawing on a concept of labor derived from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, Vidokle distinguishes between labor, work and action. He subsumes under "work" all actions that are necessary for the maintenance of life, while "work" indicates the capacity to adapt the world to human needs. For Vidokle, however, art is practiced in the realm of "action." With Arendt, he understands action to be interpersonal activity without intermediary things or matter.²⁸⁴ Vidokle presents his understanding of "art as action" as a counter-model to the idea of cultural production. He rejects the notion that art is a result of work.

What I mean by art without work is perhaps closer to a situation where you play a musical instrument for the sheer enjoyment of making music, where the activity is a pleasurable one not defined by labor or work per se.²⁸⁵

Vidokle understands Warhol, Tiravanija and *Lef* to be attempts at transforming labor and work and thereby liberating art from dependency on those forms. The creation of art, according to Vidokle, is foremost a certain approach to life, a certain way of life. Vidokle defines this as being influenced by the desire for non-alienated work and a society in which social identities and roles are so permeable that art and daily life are ultimately indistinguishable. He is concerned with the old dream of dissolving work and art in life:

284 Vidokle, "Art Without Work?"

285 Vidokle, "Art Without Work?"

If art is produced as an outcome of certain conditions (rather than simply an act of genius, which is not interesting or possible to discuss), then creating such conditions would actually produce art. If the ultimate conditions of production are the world and life (rather than a studio or art museum), it would then follow that a certain way of living, of being in the world, would in itself result in the production of art: no work is necessary.²⁸⁶

Vidokle's statements on e-flux make it clear that he sees this project in part as a realization of this imagined overcoming of work. In the statement that e-flux is based on "just the pure pleasure of improvisation and communication,"²⁸⁷ he suggests a proximity of the company's activities and "pleasurable activity," which he illustrates with the image of playing a musical instrument out of the pure joy of music. e-flux developed, he explains, as he and Aranda followed a need "to do certain things that we were personally interested in."²⁸⁸ For him, the basis of e-flux is self-realization, while the necessity of earning a livelihood does not come up in his story. Vidokle's self-realization is the self-realization of an entrepreneur. He simultaneously universalizes this model when he says, "by addressing our own needs and interests, we sometimes find ourselves touching on certain things commonly lacking."²⁸⁹ Notably, one's "own needs" are not in contradiction with common interest; instead, the two are almost identical. At the core of Vidokle's "common

286 Vidokle, "Art Without Work?"

287 See Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, "Ever. Ever. Ever," 18.

288 See Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, "Ever. Ever. Ever," 17.

289 See Obrist, Vidokle and Aranda, "Ever. Ever. Ever," 22.

social project,” thus, are autonomy and self determination, characteristics of the artist as well as of the enterprise. Vidokle’s descriptions affirm a capitalist subjectivity that builds on autonomous adaptation to the demands of the market. The economic coercion that comprises the activity of the working subject is not mentioned. The vision that builds on this kind of idea – of collective, self-organized management – can also be found in the editorial of the 50th issue of *e-flux journal*. Here, the editors describe a rising importance of individuals whose actions hold everything together and who thus replace traditional institutional structures:

Individual people have become more important than institutions. The stabilizing role of art institutions has been transferred to a growing class of professionalized artists, curators, and practitioners who hold the whole thing together. We are severely underqualified and overqualified at the same time, and we like it that way.²⁹⁰

The editors count themselves amongst a growing class of simultaneously under and over-qualified artists, curators and practitioners, who largely work in at least two or three professions.²⁹¹ The last part of the sentence is notable, because the joyful affirmation of a situation that does not pay out for most people can also be understood as an implicit threat: it is no longer

290 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, “Editorial,” *e-flux journal*, no. 50 (2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/50/59967/editorial/>.

291 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle, “Introduction,” in *Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 5–7.

enough to merely sacrifice oneself to projects whose profits flow to others, one needs to love it.

Soft Discourse

Its critical content notwithstanding, e-flux journal largely subordinates itself to the capitalist logic of valorization without contestation. In this sense, the simultaneity of an “oppositional” identity and the success of the project in the art field is remarkable – or in other words, the simultaneity of radical theoretical approaches and market-conforming behavior. In no way does the published content endanger the position of the journal, its authors or editors in the art field; on the contrary, it seems to be *precisely* the “critical” stance that makes the project so wildly successful in accumulating cultural capital.

From an entrepreneurial perspective, e-flux journal is highly innovative. The content is not artificially made scarce by limiting access; everything can be viewed free of cost. This kind of promotion of the free flow of produced content is in line with the principles of successful business in cognitive capitalism, where, with respect to value creation, it is not ideal to limit access to content but rather to activate “horizontal production:” the content must spread and be enriched by use.

As a business model the editors approach their model in risk-attuned and flexible ways. They bring together the ideology of the “entrepreneurial self” that accompanies capitalism in its Postfordist stage with a market-conforming critique of capitalism. Thus, Vidokle’s ideas about the relationship between art and work give the impression that they were taken directly from 1990s management literature in which successful business and

personal realization melt together. The fact that there is clearly also a need here to present one's own activity in the context of critical artistic practice is quite remarkable.

With this reinterpretation of the tradition of critique, e-flux journal commits at a social level what Yann Moulier-Boutang has called in another context the “betrayal of critique’s radical form.”²⁹² Artistic theoretical practice should not ignore its own conditions of production; it must begin with the structures that define it. This kind of practice must simultaneously distance itself from the privileged position of the artist and attend to regularities that are not always the same for everyone and not always visible in the same ways to everyone. A critical practice such as the one to which e-flux makes claim is limited to content without work on the conditions of production. This work encompasses questions of ownership, of power, of production, of distribution, of circulation and of consumption – questions of social relations.

292 See Yann Moulier-Boutang, “Die Hochzeitsnacht des kognitiven Kapitalismus und der Kunst. Kunst in der Ökonomie der Innovation,” in *Kritik der Kreativität*, eds. Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig (Vienna: transversal texts, 2016), 462.

e-flux

About e-flux

e-flux is a publishing platform and archive, artist project, curatorial platform, and enterprise which was founded in 1998. Its news digest, events, exhibitions, schools, journal, books, and the art projects produced and/or disseminated by e-flux describe strains of critical discourse surrounding contemporary art, culture, and theory internationally. Its monthly publication e-flux journal has produced essays commissioned since 2008 about cultural, political, and structural paradigms that inform contemporary artistic production.

In November 1998, the exhibition *The Best Surprise is No Surprise* at the Holiday Inn in Chinatown used a new communication technology—e-mail—to disseminate the press release. One month later, Vidokle started e-flux whose mailing list is made free for its 90,000+ readers by a set fee paid by museums and other institutions of art to publish their press releases and other communiqués via e-flux. All information disseminated is permanently archived for reference and research. While its network is limited to public art centers and museums, e-flux offers similar platforms to commercial galleries through its art-agenda subsidiary, and to art schools and art academies through art&education, which e-flux jointly administers together with Artforum International.

Since its inception e-flux has maintained a dynamic international program of exhibitions and events including: unitednationsplaza, Utopia Station, Martha Rosler Library and AUP. In 2003, the artist Julieta Aranda began collaborating with Vidokle on e-flux and in 2004, Aranda and Vidokle opened e-flux's first public space, a tiny storefront on Ludlow Street for experimental and ephemeral programs in New York City's Lower East Side.

e-flux [Wikipedia](#)

[Hans Ulrich Obrist interviews Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda about the history of e-flux](#)

[Daniel Birnbaum's essay "Temporal Spawns"](#)

Website: www.e-flux.com

Design: [Alan Woo](#)

Technical realization: [Systemantics](#)

RAC

What are e-flux's announcements?

e-flux announcements are a direct e-mailing of text and image press releases to our growing database of art professionals in North America and Europe (see demographics below). The e-mail announcement includes an active URL which links directly to each client's site.

Who uses e-flux?

Nearly all the leading art museums, biennials, cultural centers, magazines, publishers, art fairs, and independent curators worldwide, including:

Museums such as:

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Guggenheim, New York; Whitney Museum, New York; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Tate Modern, Great Britain; Moderna Museet, Sweden; Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Italy; Generali Foundation, Austria; and others.

Biennials such as:

Sao Paulo Biennial; Istanbul Biennial; Whitney Biennial; Venice Biennial; Berlin Biennial; Athens Biennial; Lyon Biennial; Dakar Biennial; Valencia Biennial; Manifesta; Moscow Biennial; and others.

Art fairs such as:

Art Basel, Frieze Art Fair, Art Hong Kong, Artissima and others.

Magazines, including:

Artforum, Parkett, Frieze, Flash Art, Bookforum, Cabinet, Afterall, Aprior, Text zur Kunst and others.

Art book publishers and distributors such as:

Phaidon, Great Britain; D.A.P., USA; JRP|Ringier, Zurich; Revolver, Frankfurt; and others.

Who reads e-flux?

e-flux is read by 90,000+ visual arts professionals: 47% in Europe, 42% in North America, and 11% Other (South America, Australia, Japan, etc.) 18% writers/critics, 16% galleries, 16% curators, 15% museum affiliated, 12% artists, 10% consultants, 8% collectors, 8% general.

What are e-flux's rates?

For current rates please [contact us](#).

supercommunity

#65

CLOSING EDITORIAL

1. Supercommunity is now finished. You won't get any more texts to your mailbox. We survived. You survived. Looking back, there is a question lingering: What is the supercommunity?

2. The supercommunity does not propose a new form of togetherness. It does not replace cozy humanist universalism. It knows things will not be better when we come together. Our commonality won't make up for our differences. We are not united. We don't even like each other. We are simply stuck together, like a bad group exhibition.

3. The supercommunity is not the world. It is a disastrous new ecology of bad faith closeness. But it comes with vast new powers that are only starting to become apparent. It knows all matter is alive at its core as long as there is enough enlivening energy. In zones of swelling opacity, of encroaching dark forces, of fading details, of extravagant expenditures of energy without positive outcomes. These new powers convene where teleological visions of progress counter intuitively reverse, showing that the apocalypse has already taken place in the past, but also that everything in the world is human. They appear where the kids spin superficial linking into an optical economy of reflection, splendor, and shine.

5. In v
—Julie

[continue reading at www.e-flux.com/supercommunity]

Supercommunity
September 4th

RIAL

is delivered
just one

4. When
the future
collapses onto
the present, time starts
moving differently. The border
between life and death trembles
and goes haywire. The distinction fades.
Survival becomes less terribly brutal and more
startlingly ambiguous. The future becomes a vector
of investment into the dreams of clairvoyant artists
who might or might not make artworks. Artworks themselves
become prey to a new class hoarding surplus information to
the future interest. Now there are special discounts
on roundtrip airfares between life and death.
Whether you live surrounded by the walking
dead or have already arrived in the
afterlife, you can travel freely back
and forth and still get to
work Monday morning.
refreshed and
ready to
fight.

the wild, parrots address each other by name.

Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle

e-flux journal

A black and white photograph of a computer keyboard, viewed from a slightly elevated angle. The keyboard is the central focus, with various keys visible, including the 'Alt', 'Shift', and 'Ctrl' keys. Overlaid on the keyboard are three text boxes: a black box with white text 'e-flux journal' in the upper left, a black box with white text 'issue #45' in the lower right, and a white box with black text '05/2013' in the bottom right corner.

e-flux journal

issue #45

05/2013

e-flux conversations is a new platform for in-depth discussions of urgent artistic and social ideas. Using a hybrid editorial model, the open forum allows for participation from any user as well as specialized discussion moderated by resident editors. Read the [Latest](#) conversations below or see a list of the [Top](#) ongoing discussions.

[Latest](#) Conversations

.art

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DEVIATION AND EXCESS

The “dematerialization” described by Lippard and Chandler opened a field of practice in the 1960s between art and critique, which was intensely reworked in the following decades by artists who extended their fields of work to include theory production and art criticism – and who in many cases collectively published magazines. These artists often worked in the interstices of the art field and in spaces between the latter and other fields. At the same time, and this became evident in the 2000s at the latest, capitalist valorization carried their modes of production into new spaces. The successful undoing of borders was followed by new forms of discipline, valorization and instrumentalization. Processes that in principle were open and interminable became subject to new boundaries that were then removed and in this way made valorizable. The undoing and redrawing of boundaries are elements of cognitive capitalism as it now operates, a double movement where the one cannot be separated from the other. What interests me about *The Fox*, *A.N.Y.P.* and *e-flux journal* are the possibilities for escaping this logic in a way that intervenes and transforms by reflecting on and responding to the simultaneity of opening, bordering and valorization.

Learning in Conceptual Art

The “dematerialization” of art, understood as the turn to discursive, process based practices, indicates the increasing significance of linguistic and communicative

action in the art field of the 1970s.²⁹³ The undoing of the boundaries of the artistic work that was linked to this development was quickly met in the art field by adapting the logic of exhibitions and with new kinds of work and commodity forms.

Art & Language played an important role with respect to the spread of conceptual art practices. The magazine associated with the group, *The Fox*, positioned itself in this context with an artistic practice that drew on politics, art criticism and theory. *The Fox* thus benefitted from a situation in which the various aspects of its work became validated as artwork. This is evident from the financial support the magazine received from public arts funds and its distribution network based in art bookshops. The recognition of *The Fox* as an artistic project is indicative not only of the far-reaching extent to which the borders between artistic practice and critique or knowledge production had been undone, but also of the establishment of new forms of valorization, including the characterization of the practice of undoing borders as an artistic genre. This kind of genre-making and discipline creation must also be understood as a form of imposing a logic of scarcity on art criticism and political and theoretical work.

The Fox responded to this new limitation on the border-blurring potential of conceptual art with a discussion of a community practice that located itself in proximity to practices of self-organized education. It is no coincidence that *The Fox* did not formulate a program, but rather emphasized discussion. As practice, *The Fox* was

²⁹³ See Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International*, no. 2 (1968): 31.

not limited to polemics directed at political opponents; it also consisted of a strategy of removing itself from a certain context. The editors removed themselves – for example, in the case of the invitation to participate in *Studio International's* questionnaire – from being categorized as a self-critical art magazine that questions its own foundations.²⁹⁴ They withdrew in a way that became an intervention into the editorial framing, as the publisher of *Studio International* then discussed their refusal in his editorial text. However, their withdrawal can also be understood differently. The refusal provided *Studio International's* publisher with a coulisse that could serve as the backdrop for the staging of his own critical stance. Understood in this way, the intervention made by *The Fox's* editors could be read, drawing on Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, as a reforming and stabilizing function within a system that requires critique of its institutions.

The Fox's approach to community practice was promising, especially with respect to the space it helped create for acting and thinking. The resignification of the studio to the study – and to the activity of study – implies not only that artistic practice was becoming discursive, but also that its temporal boundaries were being undone.²⁹⁵ Study does not result in, does not limit itself to works; it remains study, as long as it is not concluded, as long as study is set forth.

At *The Fox*, this kind of study was introduced as “learning.” In Art & Language, learning took place collectively, in a certain location and with certain people.

294 See Richard Cork, “Pitfalls and Priorities: an editorial dialectic,” *Studio International*, no. 976 (1975): 2; Art & Language (UK), “The Worst of All Allies,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 78.

295 See Lippard and Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art.”

Collective learning, as Mel Ramsden called it in this context, is a form of invitation to open up to and rely on each other through shared time, reading and discussion.²⁹⁶ This is the basis for the trust that allows people to think further together. The process is open in principle, it cannot be predefined. Duration, procedure and contents cannot be fixed. It cannot be written down, copied or repeated. It also cannot be clearly separated from other activities. Learning reaches into other areas just as other areas flow into learning. In this sense, learning is understood as the creation of a space that makes it possible to move beyond the given capitalist frame.

While Ramsden's notion of learning resonates with the concept of study developed by Harney and Moten, there are also differences: whereas Ramsden's model refers to a community of likeminded artists, Harney and Moten's concept explicitly points beyond the narrow frame of this kind of group. Study in this sense is not limited to collective reading and discussion, as Ramsden would have it, but rather involves considerably more. Nevertheless, proposals for collective learning at *The Fox* contain approaches that evidently point beyond that which is commonly associated with the term.

Extending the Sphere of Production

The Fox was also reacting to a second situation, even if this did not occur as directly as in the case of their resistance strategies for evading the established exhibition modes of conceptual art. This second situation was marked by a fundamental change in how art institutions

²⁹⁶ See Mel Ramsden, "On Practice," *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 76.

conceived of themselves and their work. In the 1970s, art institutions began successively expanding their discursive programming, which became a distinct working area. In time, education and mediation became a field of activity of almost equal importance to exhibitions.²⁹⁷ At the same time, mediation started to be understood in new ways that are today reflected in new job descriptions, such as “Audience Developer” and “Public Engagement Curator,” which aim at the creation of publicity.

An early example of this development is the Rockefeller Foundation Training Program for Museum Educators, which is institutionally linked to the MoMA. In this context, the leftwing British art historian John Berger was invited in 1976 to give a seminar series in New York.²⁹⁸ In an article in *The Fox*, the art historian Eunice Lipton interprets this as an attempt on MoMA’s part to experiment with new methods in order to attract new visitors.²⁹⁹ Berger’s approach was motivated by emancipation, and his success amongst an audience less familiar with art was meant to be copied, Lipton writes, while the singular concern of the MoMA was

297 Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson describe this incorporation of education and mediation into curatorial practice in the anthology *Curating and the Educational Turn*. Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, 2010). Starting in the 1990s at the latest, this new way of thinking could be observed in many art institutions in Europe and the US. For a critical engagement with this development as “new institutionalism,” see Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger (eds.), *(New) Institution(alism)*, *On Curating*, no. 21 (2014), <http://www.on-curating.org/issue-21.html>.

298 At this time, Berger was primarily known for the book *Ways of Seeing*, which was based on the BBC television series of the same name. See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

299 Eunice Lipton, “Book Review. John Berger’s ‘Ways of seeing’ (New York: Viking Press, 1973),” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 6.

about business. Lipton criticizes the commercial valorization of critical approaches. The art institution isolates the part it can valorize – the fresh style – and siphons this off. As a methodological basis, theory becomes part of MoMA's program with the primary goal of attracting more visitors. Against this backdrop, MoMA's appropriation of Berger's approach indicates not only the capture of critical positions; it also points to a transformation of art institutions. Moreover, the example shows that this process, which ultimately aims to expand the sphere of production, is not especially advanced. For MoMA, it is not a matter of asking how an audience can participate along the value chain of art in a sustained manner, but rather how it can reach as many potential visitors as possible for a given exhibition.

The anticapitalist magazine *The Fox* – with its counterpublic strategy of simultaneously creating alternative content as well as community practice – was in a certain sense already further with respect to the economic paradigm shift that was becoming more and more evident at this time. Part of this shift involved the dissolution of clearly defined roles and career profiles based on a division of labor and their replacement by project-based, multidisciplinary activities: one transforms from the artist into the critic or theorist and then back again.³⁰⁰ In this setting, the form of critique and its relation to art are up for debate. Even as the notion of the subject and the field of practice linked to *The Fox* are precursors of cognitive capitalism, *The Fox's* turn to study and the political practices associated with this turn are indicative of

300 See Sabeth Buchmann and Tom Holert, "Materielle Praxis, Wissensproduktion," in *Mit-Sein*, eds. Dorothee Richter, Elke Bippus and Jörg Huber (Zurich: Edition Voldemeer, 2010): 193.

an approach that aims to act differently within the relations of production, rather than merely locating oneself in opposition to them. In this sense, *The Fox* presents an adequate reaction to the situation in the 1970s. Its materialist understanding of the art field allows art to be seen as work and helps advance the organization of art workers in order to improve their situation. Moreover, the medium is used to experiment with counterpublicity and alternative forms of knowledge production.

The Economization of Knowledge

The accelerating technological transformation became a definite topic in the 1990s. This transformation promoted market and innovation-driven business models, while classical production operations lost importance. In this context, the art field established itself as a model for innovative modes of entrepreneurial action oriented towards a highly dynamic market. Parallel to this, the expansion of digitalization led to a spatial and social fragmentation of work. In this context, the previously articulated demand for flexibility took on new significance. Here, not only the production process, but also the professional status of workers became increasingly flexible: previously typical employment relations were more and more replaced by precarious work conditions.

Simultaneously, in galleries and museums, discursive programming became increasingly important. A growing interest in discursive contributions also took hold in the German-speaking art field, which made way for new practices that found space in the interstices of this world. In art spaces and organizations, reading rooms and documentation spaces were set up; artists founded journals;

conferences were organized where actors spoke from the expanding field between art and theory.

The newspaper *A.N.Y.P.* was part of this development. The newspaper was on the one hand clearly located in the art world; it was funded through its editors' participation in various exhibitions and by public institutions and arts funding. On the other hand, the increasing monetary value of theory and criticism was noted and problematized. *A.N.Y.P.* observed that political engagement with problems like HIV/AIDS, homophobia or sexism were considered trendy in the contemporary art field.³⁰¹ In particular, the reception of political discourse as art was a subject of commentary in *A.N.Y.P.* As Stephan Geene showed with the example of *Texte zur Kunst*, politically engaged aspects of art projects often became isolated rather than included in the art field. The connection of political art in the 1990s to antiracist and feminist movements was made invisible in this way. At the same time, *A.N.Y.P.* used the fact that the art field proved to be open to politically and theoretically informed discourses for its own purposes. For example, *A.N.Y.P.* promoted a rethinking of anticapitalist critique with queer-feminist approaches. They situated topics considered "trendy," linking these to concrete conflicts and local initiatives, and located discourses in places where there was a possibility that they might be effective.

The way *A.N.Y.P.* handled topics made form relate to content. Thus, the editors' claim of contributing to social transformation expressed itself in a collective working mode that was characterized by the attempt to surmount

³⁰¹ See Art in Ruins, Stephan Geene and BüroBert, "trap," *A.N.Y.P.*, no. 5 (1993): 28.

the dichotomy between theory and practice. *A.N.Y.P.*'s critical strategy expressed itself at the level of content, in the way in which content was developed, in the form in which it was presented and how it circulated. The result of considering form in this way was that strategies could not simply be transmitted, but required reformulation for each and every situation. A practice that aims to remove itself from subsumption and discipline needs to constantly find new forms. The attention *A.N.Y.P.* gave to form can be understood analogously to Harney and Moten's practice of introducing openings in their texts through poeticization. Both have in common the conviction that it is not enough to formulate or argue something. Rather, the formulation, the argumentation must itself be in the form.³⁰²

In particular, a subversive turn of the capitalist paradigm of adaptable "lean production" can be seen in the specific form of production and distribution of the newspaper. Printed and published by *A.N.Y.P.* itself, the newspaper circulated in places that were often directly related to the project or the covered topics. Beyond art institutions, this included bars, occupied houses and info shops. This placing-oneself-in-relation to various institutions and projects opened a transversal field of practice that was illustrated in *A.N.Y.P.* This field of practice was produced by moving through various institutions, projects, fields, disciplines, subjectivations and economies.

The physical presence of the newspaper was capable of forging a connection between separate worlds, a kind of transitional zone between political activism, vernissage

302 See Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Interview with Stevphen Shukaitis," in *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe et al.: Minor Compositions, 2013), 106–107.

and seminar. From the beginning, the artistic practice of *A.N.Y.P.* was not only one of undoing boundaries; it was also a practice of facilitating experiences of boundaries. *A.N.Y.P.* made evident both political groups' difficulties with the concept of contemporary art,³⁰³ as well as the limits of thematic engagement within the framework of art. The latter could be seen, for example, in the tendency towards failure of the editors' attempts to launch a debate about bioengineering and genetic technologies in the art field: the problem was above all the new separation between those who wanted to have a discussion about bioengineering, and those who wanted to talk about what it meant in art to talk about bioengineering.³⁰⁴ The specific logic of the art field privileges certain forms of speaking and makes others impossible. From the perspective of *A.N.Y.P.*'s editors, the productive engagement between artistic and political positions made possible by a number of politically and artistically interesting projects at the beginning of the 1990s proved incapable of further expansion and development.

This example also highlights a certain form of the valorization of knowledge in the art field. Valuable knowledge is considered to be that which makes an innovative contribution to the art field, as, for example, the opening of a new field of practice and the participation in its establishment. Everything else – in this case, the discussion about

303 See conversation with the Cologne and Bonn Info Shops, Dierdrich Diederichsen, Stephan Geene and BüroBert, in: BüroBert (ed.), *Copysbop. Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit* (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1993), 31–53.

304 “The art people say, what you’re doing is interesting, but I don’t actually know if you are right. I don’t know what I think about bioengineering. I am not an agent in that area. This is when the divide begins.” Stephan Geene in conversation with the author, October 12, 2014.

bioengineering – is seen as superfluous and is promptly excluded from the art field. It is precisely this superfluous production, however, that held the potential of *A.N.Y.P.* – a potential that should be built on. The project positioned itself in the art field and worked on its expansion. This expansion was not driven in a predetermined direction. The positioning in the art field occurred in a way that was neither clearly against nor clearly for it. They are “in but not of,” as Harney and Moten formulate the strategy of the subversive intellectual in the university.³⁰⁵

New Guards

On February 1, 2017, I received a newsletter from e-flux with the invitation to register for a “.art” domain.³⁰⁶ Officially, the domain would not be available until May, but e-flux promised exclusive access to its subscribers. “.ART domain will instantly identify you as a member of the art world and position you as a key player in the international arts community,” wrote the London company UK Creative Ideas, Ltd., which manages the domain. The domain was intended to be the universal sign for artists, art professionals and art institutions online. A digital art community would be created through new information and communications technologies. At the same time, the space of the production and circulation of art was divided, fenced in and privatized.³⁰⁷ Ten groups had applied

305 See Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 26.

306 e-flux, “Your art address,” <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/94423/your-art-address/>.

307 See Antonella Corsani, “Gibt es einen kognitiven Kapitalismus? Elemente eines Bruchs,” in *Kognitiver Kapitalismus*, eds. Isabell Lorey and Klaus Neundlinger (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2012), 130.

to manage the domain in 2012, including e-flux.³⁰⁸ Using the hashtag #savedotart, e-flux started an attempt for the art community to manage the domain, conceiving of its project as the art community's voice. If this action is to be understood as art, then the application for the new domain highlights the ambivalent role of the commons in cognitive capitalism, which is promoted as a resource but simultaneously becomes more and more subject to measuring and the logic of scarcity.

If the action had been successful, e-flux's systematically driven blurring of the commons and the particular, personal and commercial interests of the project's participants would have reached a new level. e-flux's application, however, was rejected by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). This entity uses the Community Priority Evaluation to examine whether an applicant applying for a domain not as an enterprise but as a community, as was the case with e-flux, actually meets the defined guidelines of a community.³⁰⁹ ICANN's report reveals that the Evaluation Panel identified e-flux as a community of interest that displayed no "cohesion" and therefore could not be counted as a community according to its definition. In addition, the report suggests, parties identified by e-flux as members did not necessarily see themselves as part of the postulated community.³¹⁰

As shown not only by *e-flux journal's* contribution to

308 See ICANN, "Application Details," <https://gtldresult.icann.org/applicationstatus/applicationdetails/540/>.

309 ICANN, "Applicant Guidebook," <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf>.

310 ICANN, "New gTLD Program. Community Priority Evaluation Report," September 10, 2014, <https://www.icann.org/en/sites/default/files/tlds/art/art-cpe-1-1675-51302-en.pdf>.

the Venice Biennale, e-flux has more to do with the staging of community as a proprietary community defined by a company than with the expression of some commonality. This becomes especially clear with respect to e-flux's use of the term Supercommunity, which referred equally to its readers and clients.³¹¹ With view to the question of publicity under conditions of digitalization, e-flux's attempt to launch an experimental discussion forum is significant. The potential of a discussion forum lies in the multiplication of knowledge, its common use and reflection on how it can be organized.

However, the example of *e-flux conversations* sheds light on the deep transformation of the conditions and operating modes of (counter)publicity. Compared to attempts by *The Fox* and *A.N.Y.P.* to facilitate a discussion and present it via the medium of the journal, e-flux's notion of participation appears limited. The community is granted one role; participation is strictly limited to the delineated frame that, as such, is subject to e-flux's control as proprietor that, in turn, is in no way liable to act accountably vis-à-vis the community. The call for a new sociality linked to the forum must be considered against the backdrop of a broadly observable integration of this sociality into processes of capitalist valorization. But it must also be seen as cynical advertising language.³¹²

311 See e-flux, "e-flux journal at the 56th Venice Biennale," *e-flux announcements* (April 23, 2015), <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/29645/e-flux-journal-at-the-56th-venice-biennale/>.

312 One could also argue, however, that the will to control and steer discourse that is observable at e-flux results in a process of value creation that is not sustainable. This is also expressed in the way that not all participants of *e-flux conversations* have the same access the channels in which collectively produced knowledge circulates. With respect to the open source movement, Enzo Rullani illustrates possibilities for

e-flux neither creates commonality nor does it remove itself from contemporary mechanisms of valorization and discipline. On the contrary, the project promotes the aestheticization and commodification of discourse on all levels. e-flux is, to reformulate Harney and Moten, “in the art field and also of it.”

A Double Movement

In their introductory text the editors of e-flux journal refer to the tradition of progressive, self-organized practices of artists who extended their competencies by working their way into fields while more or less lacking academic education, and who in this way came to see themselves as “producers of theory.” Simultaneously, they affirm the model of a subject perfectly adapted to the conditions of cognitive capitalism, which taps into new markets in autonomous and innovative ways. This has less to do with the realization of autonomy, as Vidokle would have it, and much more with the voluntary effectuation of a necessity that is given according to the logic of cognitive capitalism. The subjects who act in line with this logic

sustainable policies in software development. These are distinguished by the fair use of knowledge protected by intellectual property rights, resistance against the extension of patents and the creation of channels for the common use of knowledge. According to Rullani, all of these measures would create social ties and mutual trust. “These kinds of forms organize multiplicity, the common use and reflexivity of modes that in turn can fit together with the criterion of the sustainability of investment in learning processes.” In this sense, a sustainability policy for e-flux would need to not only include its participants in the absorption of the value of that which is commonly produced, but also organize resistance against the economization of the field of publishing and for a fair way of dealing with intellectual property rights. See Rullani, “Wie wird durch Wissen Wert geschaffen?,” 144.

undo and dissolve boundaries. In so doing, they (help to) create a new field of practice, in which they submit to attempts to discipline and normalize them that have been perfected over the course of this field's creation.

It is a double movement, as e-flux journal author Marion von Osten indicated at the first *Former West* Congress.³¹³ By undoing boundaries, a field is created for new deterritorialized forms of subjectivity, which are quickly reterritorialized. Alongside Douglas Gordon, Marion von Osten was the only artist who spoke at said congress. She described the success of being able to speak for herself as an artist in this kind of context, of conceiving of herself, too, as a discursive actor and having the opportunity to engage accordingly.³¹⁴

The context in which von Osten appears as a speaker, however, also points to the possibility of instituting artistic knowledge production otherwise, as Maria Hlavajova puts it.³¹⁵ The project *Former West* was started in 2008 by the curators Maria Hlavajova and Charles Esche. It is symptomatic of a further distinguishing moment of the art field, namely, of the emergence of an experimental field in and out of the fields we know as art, theory and politics.

313 1st Former West Congress, Utrecht: BAK, November 5–7, 2011.

314 “And I think somehow in relation to my practice: I made it. Because this was the whole concept behind expanding the field of artistic practice. To speak for oneself. To not be spoken about, not to be spoken in brackets as an artist by others, not being selected by others, but to kind of take the matters in your own hand.” Conversation between Marion von Osten and Kerstin Stakemeier, November 6, 2011, <https://vimeo.com/83745367/>.

315 Maria Hlavajova in conversation with Tom Holert and Marion von Osten, in: Maria Hlavajova and Tom Holert (eds.), *Marion von Osten. Once We Were Artists* (A BACK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice) (Utrecht, Amsterdam: BAK, Valiz, 2017), 12.

A further aspect that deserves attention in this context is how the field of practice has become more academic through new programs of study, especially those labeled “artistic research.” The PhD in Practice program at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, co-founded by *A.N.Y.P.* author Renate Lorenz, is exemplary of this shift. According to the published curriculum, the program addresses “artists as well as other cultural producers who engage in arts-based research,” and it “makes use of a long tradition of research-based artistic practices developed in dialogue with activist, sub- and pop-cultural as well as academic fields.”³¹⁶ Artistic practices developed in the program of study that “traverse and reconfigure established disciplines of knowledge,” it continues, are fostered, as are capacities to compose analytic-theoretical texts and to conceptualize independent artistic research projects and implement these in practice. In a language adapted to the rules of academic promotional prose, the program promises to qualify graduates “to research, produce and communicate independently in the context of a dynamic, trans-disciplinary space.”³¹⁷

The expansion of the new field of practice in the university should be welcomed – less because this institution is a place of refuge than above all because in cognitive capitalism the university has become a tension-ridden point of conflict around the control and

316 Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, “Curriculum for the Study Program PhD in Practice (Doctor of Philosophy in Practice),” 2013, http://blogs.akbild.ac.at/phdinpractice/files/2014/01/Curriculum-PhD_English_2013.pdf.

317 Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, “Curriculum.”

valorization of intellectual work.³¹⁸ It can be hoped that the mentioned professionalization of the new field of practice produces an excess of knowledge that can flow into a development of these conflicts that aims at overcoming them. In this sense, Harney and Moten's point about the necessity of escaping the figure of the critical academic is relevant – a figure whose critique affirms the very exclusions of an alternative history of thinking that she attempts to engage. The aim must be create access to an alternative history of thinking in the university, or, as Adrian Piper puts it, “retreating into the external world.”³¹⁹

What is an adequate reaction to the current developmental stage of capitalist socialization, as it is shaped, primarily, by technopolitical developments and the possibilities of digitalization? Can the strategies of *The Fox* or *A.N.Y.P.* be updated to meet fundamentally transformed conditions? I think certain practices of Art & Language and minimal club are still relevant today. Other aspects cannot be updated; they were linked to a specific historical situation.

If we consider the question of organization, for example, Art & Language, with its tendency to sectarianism, may appear somewhat frightening. It used a large part of its energy to differentiate itself from other groups and to

318 “As was the factory, so now is the university. Where once the factory was a paradigmatic site of struggle between workers and capitalists, so now the university is a key space of conflict, where the ownership of knowledge, the reproduction of the labour force, and the creation of social and cultural stratifications are all at stake.” George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, “Notes on the edu-factory and Cognitive Capitalism,” *transversal*, no. 05 (2007), <https://transversal.at/transversal/0809/caffentziszfederici/en>.

319 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 38.

claim a superior theoretical position in relation to these others. This practice can only be understood in the context of movements of the left following 1968. In contrast, the concept of community practice presented in *The Fox* still seems relevant today, understood as the necessity of continuous reflection on the interactions between ideas and the dynamics of a group that co-produces these ideas and is at the same time defined by them. While for *The Fox*, this took place with respect to, or in the language of, a revolutionary perspective, *A.N.Y.P.* was in turn more concerned with micropolitical forms of organization that simultaneously allowed for the production of commonality and escape from valorization and discipline.

Both projects were characterized by the attention they gave to the conditions of production when examining questions seemingly related to other contents. This attentiveness not only remains relevant under conditions of digitalization: the spatial and social fragmentation accompanying digital developments and the economization of knowledge and social relationships have also assumed a new urgency. I am interested in how forms of knowledge production can be found in collaborative practice that direct their study towards the conception and design of their respective conditions of production. The creation of contexts, work on the framing – this is what makes common intellectual activity possible in the art field and beyond. It takes place in art criticism and theory, but it is not of either. This new field of practice is not isolated from those other fields and their actors. It positions itself as deviation and excess. It is about study, not critique.

CREDITS

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Many thanks!

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and experiences of those most in need rather
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Struggles for Living Learning
Lina Dokuzović

Lina Dokuzović

**Struggles for Living Learning:
Within Emergent Knowledge
Economies and the Cognitivation
of Capital and Movement**

Numerous knowledge-based struggles emerged between 2008–2011 which questioned the changes taking place in universities, on the one hand, and the potentiality of the university as a space for translocally contesting those global transformations, on the other. Through the expansion of those struggles, their contention shifted to how self-education and struggle beyond the university could intervene or create counter-perspectives for change. This book presents the demands, practices, and perspectives developed within those struggles against the backdrop of commodifying transformations in the field of knowledge production – (primarily higher) education, research, and lifelong learning. These examples ultimately debunk major global knowledge-based policy perspectives, primarily those driven by the EU, and their objectives of crisis resolution and sustainable development. As an alternative, this book follows and further develops grassroots practices and perspectives of “living learning” from knowledge-based struggles, presenting socially just and equitable challenges to the transformations in the field of knowledge.

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