continent.

# Letter from the Editors

*continent.* 2.3 (2012): 159

Since we last checked-in with you, dear readers, there has been a tremendous amount of activity among the *continent.* crew. In September, we joined the Editors of *Speculations* at the University of Basel to discuss the aesthetics of para-academic publishing during the *Aesthetics in the 21st Century* conference. Just the following weekend, we were on the campus of Northeastern University in Boston, to discuss similar matters during the Biennial Meeting of the Babel Working Group. An inspiring set of discussions, and some meetings with friends we'd only theretofore encountered through somewhat less fleshy networks and communiques.

Also, and only a few weeks after Basel and Boston, we found ourselves in Stockholm, at the invitation of Publish and Be Damned, for an alternative publishing book fair hosted by the Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation. Although *continent.* is, emphatically, an online publication, it is also concerned with its own material—digital or otherwise. The opportunity to engage with such an excellent group of 'zine and book creators was a thrilling opportunity for us.

Given all the conversations we've been having with some of you at these events, we have been coming back to our dispersed HQ with lists of exciting ideas and pernicious questions. This issue reflects many such conversations, and this reflection helps us underline, at least in part, what makes continent. *continent.* That is, a landscape of encounters, openings and traveling vessels of thinking. This summer, we will also be working with our friends to publish an exciting continent. alternative platform called "*drift*," actualizing this traversal of thought. You can read about "*drift*" in this issue.

Where will these conversations take us in 2013, and beyond? We are planning to publish another issue of *continent.* in December, while we also put the finishing touches on a volume of selections and contributions from our first year. Thanks to the wonderful folks at punctum books, we will be exploring another medium through which thinking is broadcast: our first book. We are also planning our first conference, to be held in Tirana, Albania in June, 2013. Our call for papers is currently open, see the conference site www.continentconference.wordpress.com. Thanks to you, as ever, for your support, consideration, and for traveling with us to this, our autumnal seventh issue of *continent.*!

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# The End Times of Philosophy

*François Laruelle*

*continent.* 2.3 (2012): 160-166

Translated by Drew S. Burk and Anthony Paul Smith.
From *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2012.

The phrase "end times of philosophy" is not a new version of the "end of philosophy" or the "end of history," themes which have become quite vulgar and nourish all hopes of revenge and powerlessness. Moreover, philosophy itself does not stop proclaiming its own death, admitting itself to be half dead and doing nothing but providing ammunition for its adversaries. With our sights set on clearing up this nuance, we differentiate philosophy as an institutional entity, and the philosophizability of the World and History, of "thought-world," which universalizes the narrow concept of philosophy and that of "capital." We also give an eschatological and apocalyptical cause to this end, of "times" or "ages" rather than those of philosophical practice. Last but not least, it is the Future itself in the performativity of its ultimatum that determines this end times, reversing these times from the Identity the Future accorded to it, withdrawing the thought-world from the lie of its death.

Why this style of axioms and oracles, these more or less subtle distinctions, old and debased, with an appeal to the *ultimata*, to end times and last words? We fight to give, parallel to the concept of Hell, its new theoretical position, for its philosophical return and its non-philosophical transformation. No more so than any other word, Hell is not a metaphor here, just the Principle of Sufficient World. Every man, no doubt, has his "hell" readily available, connivance, control, conformism, domestication, schooling, alienation, extermination, exploitation, oppression, anxiety, etc. We have our little list that the Contemporaries established in the previous century in the same way one used to construct lists of virtues and vices or honors and wealth. They invented it for us without knowing it, for us-the-Futures who have as our responsibility to invent its use.

In the Christian and Gnostic tradition, the struggle of the End Times takes place "on earth." The most sophisticated of believers have it taking place in Heaven as well, above all in Heaven. The various kinds of gnosis imagine infinite falls and vertiginous highs, the vertigo of salvation. On Earth as in Heaven, a hell is available. The Marxists have the law of profit and the control of production, the class struggle Capital imposes on man. The Nietzscheans, the dull grumble of the struggle in the foundations of World and History, the domestication of man, the society of control. The phenomenologists, the capture of being, the most superficial amongst them, the age of suspicion.

But all of these "hells" are taken from World, History, Society, and Religion. What we call Hell is no longer of the order of these specific and total intra-worldly generalities, it is both more singular and more universal, no longer being at all of the same order, it is the determinant Identity of these small hells strung out through history but unified

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here in the name of the last Humaneity. It is even found within the French idiom for hell [*enfer*], en-fer literally means "in-irons." We are as much "in-irons" as we are "alive" [*en-Vie*]. We believe in Hell but as non-philosophers and it is even because we are non-philosophers that we can believe in it outside of any sort of religion. Hell is less mythological than ideological, it combines philosophizability with universal capital. Under what form? A single term could work for them without being a metaphor or something they would participate in by analogy, a more innovative and conjectural term than control, more universal than profit. It would denote the growing and permanent extortion of a surplus-value of communication, of speed and of urgency in change, in productivity and in work, in the pressure of images and slogans. It would be worse than solicitation, more tenacious than capture, more active and persecutory than control, softer and more insidious than a frontal attack, just as perverse as questioning and accusation, less brutal and offensive than extermination, less ritualized than inquisition, it would be soft and dispersed, instantaneous and vicious, it would be a crime without declared violence. Collusion and conformism, it would be afraid to show itself. Related to rumor, from which it borrows its infinite and tortuous ways. It is harassment. As a modernized form of Hell, perhaps harassment has a long future in front of it, of innocent torture, slow assassination, in short the fall, but radical with no way of recovering and which tolerates only salvation.

**The Philosophical Past of Non-Philosophy**

Non-philosophy is thus Man as the utopian identity of the philosophical form of the World, a utopia destined to transform it. We still have to understand these equations, in particular that of the being-uni-versed from Man, and this book adheres to this by re-exposing non-philosophy in a different way via one of its new possibilities. It uses this opportunity to once again take up formulations that lead to objections answering certain external critics, as well as revisiting diverging interpretations specific to non-philosophers. A portion of this book is devoted to going through these theories via a strict or "lengthy" presentation of non-philosophy, and its defense against more expeditious solutions. This work of rectification is the occasion, merely the occasion, for refocusing non-philosophy on Man (the "Man-in-person," "Humaneity"), and in a more innovative manner, on its utopian vocation established since the book *Future Christ*. As for this "occasion," it is quite obvious. A school of posture, not to say a school of thought, supposes a minimum of closure from the most liberating of knowledge, a heritage, its utilization, and its no less certain dispersal. Within its development, a variety of interpretations will no doubt appear, deviations that are as much normalizations, and a struggle against this multiplication of divergent tendencies. These are perhaps not inevitable evils, especially here, merely a normal development according to the twisting paths of history. But the problem is made worse by the fact that this school of non-philosophers is that of utopia. Not the former attempts devoted to commenting on the worst authoritarian and criminal forms of the past and the present, but utopia as the determinant principle for human life, or to put it another way, of the Future as an irreducible presupposition of (for) thinking the World and History. Non-philosophers are engaged in an aleatory navigation between the respect for the most rigorous utopia, whose rules are not that of the reproductive imagination but those from the Future determining imagination itself, as well as the temptations, diversions, and remorse of history. Little by little, we will begin to understand that the Future as we understand it no longer has any temporal consistency or positive content, without being an empty form or a nothingness, but that it is foreclosed to past and present History, just as it is foreclosed to the place of places, the World, and that it is the only method for establishing the practice of thinking in a non-imaginary instance. Because it is the World and History that are imaginary and have a terrible materiality, it is not necessarily utopia. We will overlap two objectives here: the defense of non-philosophy against the (non-) philosophers that we are, only occasionally, and the introduction of philosophy to a rigorous future.

Together they set out to definitively render, without any possible return to philosophical conformism or towards the facilities of the past and present, the non-philosophical enterprise understood as utopia or uchronia. Imagination and speculation, left to themselves and thus undistinguished, are quite good for participating in the grand game of History but have little value or worse for the Future which is unimaginable and unintelligible and must be maintained as such.

**Man-in-Person as Suspension of the Philosophical *Chora***

The point where philosophical resistance is concentrated is without a doubt the invention of the Name-of-Man, first name, oracular as much as axiomatic, of the determining cause for the non-philosophical posture. And that which concentrates the differends is the style of non-philosophy as identity that possesses the dual aspect, of discipline and of the oeuvre, of the theorem and of the oracle. But the real difficulty in understanding the simplicity of non-philosophy is profoundly hidden in the depths of philosophy itself. Because philosophy, from Parmenides to Derrida, even Levinas, continues to be a divided gesture, without a veritable immanence, transforming its thematic contents of transcendence in also forgetting to transform the operative transcendence in the element from which the ontology of surface is established which we will call, in memory of Plato, the *chorismos*. The general effect of the *chora literally gives place* to philosophy, demanding binding and sutures to which we will once and for all "oppose" the Man-in-person, his power of cloning, and his future being. All philosophy contains a hinter-philosophy in which it deploys its operations and weaves its tradition like an understudy of a topographical nature and in the best of cases being itself topological. Philosophy as well consists of two levels, its pre-ontological operative conditions on the one hand, and its superficial theme on the other, it too has its presupposed, but is not aware of it or erases it within the unity of appearance named Logos. Rightly, the Logos, and its flash or lightning nature, possesses a "dark precursor," the *chora*, which is as much a virtual image, and philosophy, dazzled by its own lightning flash, seems to completely forget about it at the same time it sets itself up within it. Non-philosophy risks taking this same path, of confusing what it believes to be the real with its phantom double, contenting itself to working on the thematic level of philosophy, not its surface objects and its idle chatter (we stopped talking about this a long time ago and in any case they are merely simple materials for inducing a work of transformation), but the transcendence-form of its objects. In the end it risks, through precipitation, taking back up the heritage of philosophy, a heritage of a misunderstood presupposed, even more profound than the play of transcendences. This is what the imperative of the radicality of immanence meant, to treat immanence in an immanent manner, not to make a new object out of it. And from here we get *non-* (philosophy) and its refusal of the Platonic chorismos, symbol of all abstraction, and thus all transcendental appearance.

There are no illusions. The message will leave a heritage in tattered pieces and interpretations. But it was difficult not to dispute the differend to its core. There will be complete confusion of the multiple, possible, and necessary effectuations of non-philosophy with its interpretations. The non-philosophical or human freedom of philosophical effectuation and the philosophical freedom of interpretation. Effectuations demand non-philosophy to return to zero from the point of view of its philosophical material *and thus also but within these limits the formulation of its axioms*, but in no way providing from the outset divergent interpretations of the aforementioned axioms. They are divergent because they do not take into account the material from which these axioms are derived within non-philosophy, and because they do not see themselves as symptoms of another vision of the World. The utterances of non-philosophy are not mathematical theorems and pure axioms, they merely have a mathematical *aspect*.

They are, by their extraction or origin, mathematical *and* transcendental. And by their determined function in-Real, within non-philosophy, they are *identically in-the-last-Humaneity* entities which have an aspect of an axiom and an aspect of interpretation (or an oracular aspect as we say) that attempts (sometimes it is ourselves who provide the occasion) to isolate and transform, in complete freedom of interpretation. There will be an opportunity to complain about the complex character of the language of non-philosophy, an idiom saturated with classical references, sophisticated in a contemporary way. Its freedom of decision up against the whole of philosophy demands these effects of "complication" and "privatization," as the saying goes. But it also demands fighting against the drift [*dérive*] of the pedagogical-all and the mediatic-all that leads philosophy into the shallow depths of opinion, which is the site of its impossible death. The noble idealism of "pop-philosophy" has been consumed into a "philo-reality;" against this we propose philo-fiction.

Parricide, which is at the bottom of these interpretations and which we can judge as being quite fertile, although it has informed tradition, only takes place once or within one lone meaning. In regards to Parmenides, it was possible; Plato introduced the Other as non-being and language, bringing into existence the philosophical system of the World, but is it possible to repeat it again with the same fecundity in regards to non-philosophy, this time in introducing (non) religion or (non) art, still mixing them without taking into account this mixture, alternatively as a philosophical or religious resentment? If philosophy begins via a crime, it is no doubt obliged to continue down similar pathways, to the effect that the crimes of philosophy, once the founding crime has been committed, are a reaction of self-defense. It is undoubtedly from this that we get Marx's declaration that history begins by tragedy and repeats itself or ends in farce.

The preservation of rigor and fecundity is, in every respect, a psychologically difficult task within a theory such as non-philosophy. Having posited an essential objective of liberation in regards to philosophy and its services, one has often understood this objective as an authorization of providing particular *interpretations* of its axioms and ends up obliterating their scope. This ends up confusing, on one hand, two kinds of freedoms in regards to non-philosophy, the freedom of its interpretations and the freedom of its effectuations. On the other hand, any defense of "principles" against precipitated interpretations is immediately taxed with a will to orthodoxy, a prohibitive objection when we are dealing with, as is the case here, a heretical theory of thought. Nevertheless, it is time to stop confusing heresy as the cause of thought with an ideology of heresies, which is certainly not at all our object, but rather a form of normalization. As for the "disciplinary" aspect, which is not the only aspect, it demands something other than philosophical "answers to objections," a precision in the definition and use of its procedures in the formation of utterances, since non-philosophy is neither a supplementary doctrine interior to philosophy nor a vision of the world but one whose priority is a "vision of Man," or rather Man as "vision" that implies a theory and a practice of philosophy. In the end, struggle is only one aspect of non-philosophy, not its whole or *telos*, struggle coming only from its materiality. In particular, if the discipline of non-philosophy is inseparable from struggle, it is not a question of reducing the monomaniacal obsession of its "marching orders." This would reduce its complexity and kill its indivisibility, deploying it in a "long march" and a form of Maoization whose philosophical presuppositions no longer have any pertinence here, a case of the One and the Two, which are now cloned and no longer tied together. More generally, non-philosophy is *a complex thought composed of a multitude of aspects, which is to say, unilateral interpretations, of a philosophical origin but reduced by their determination in-the-last-instance*. The "liberalism" of non-philosophy is merely one of the aspects of which it is capable, not an essence.

Similarly, it is only capable of having a "Maoist" aspect.

Let us generalize. The weakness of non-philosophy is due to a specific cause, the determination-in-the-last-Humaneity of a subject for the World. Everything that has a right to the philosophical city can be said about it in turn and in a retaliatory mode since Man contributes nothing of himself that Man takes from the World. We can consider non-philosophy as being pretentious, absurd, idealistic, empty, materialistic, formalistic, contradictory, modern, post-modern, Zen, Buddhist, Marxist; it endures or tolerates, perhaps "appeals" to, or at least renders possible, sarcasms, ironies, and insults without even talking about the misunderstandings, partly for the same reason as psychoanalysis. All of this goes beyond simple "deviations." They are its aspects, which is to say, its "unilateral" philosophical interpretations in both senses of the word, being either sufficient coming from the mouth of philosophers, or reduced to their absolute dimension of sufficiency and totality in the mouths of non-philosophers, and both times due to the weakness and strength of Man-in-person as their determination only in-the-last-instance. The non-philosopher is certainly not a Saint Paul fantasizing about a new Church. The non-philosopher is either a (Saint) Sebastian whose flesh is pierced with as many arrows as there are Churches, or a Christ persecuted by a Saint Paul.

What is engaged in here is the practice of retaliation. A negative rule of the non-philosophical ethics of outlawed discussion by way of argumentation (the sufficient is you, the orthodox one is always you, you are the fashionable one, and when a master you are someone else) that is founded on the confusion of effectuations of non-philosophy and of its overall interpretations. Retaliation is the law but as with any too-human law, it must acquire a dimension that displaces it, or rather emplaces it and takes away its authority but not all of its effectiveness. If the non-philosopher is only authorized by himself, which is to say by philosophy but limited by the Real-of-the-last-instance, its critique of other non-philosophers can merely be retaliatory under the same conditions, only by the Real limited in-the last-instance.

**The Tree of Philosophical Saintliness**

The thematic horizon or material of these debates is in the relationships between philosophy, religion as gnosis, and non-philosophy. It is inevitable, regarding non-philosophers in general (whether they are non-philosophers by name or simply its neighbors) that we often end up evoking Marx's Holy Family and imagining, arranged on the neighboring branches of the tree of philosophy and annexed, sometimes abusively, to non-philosophy, authors who would quite evidently and quite rightly refuse this label. So it is that we find, for example, a Saint Michel, a Saint Alain, a Saint Gilles[1] without even mentioning the youngest who aspire as well to the freedom of "saintliness" and who make their muted voices heard here. If there is a Holy Family of non-philosophers, it extends completely beyond these three, provided that the sectarian spirit can save us.

1) We will recognize allusions, and sometimes references, to closely related or distant themes, but which are related, in the work of Michel Henry, Alain Badiou and via the representative of "non-religious" gnosis of a Platonic origin, in Gilles Grelet. It goes without saying that these discussions are current and local, neither concerning the ensemble of doctrines nor prejudging the eventual evolution of certain amongst them. This concerns defining certain proximities with non-philosophy (rather than adversaries which in some sense they are) and typological and emblematic differends (rather than conflicts with a certain author).

This book is organized in the following manner: To begin, in order to recall the essential part of the problematic, we have organized a *Summary of Non-Philosophy*, a *vade-mecum* of notions and basic problems, in a classical style. Secondly, there is *Clarifications On the Three Axioms of Non-Philosophy*, designed to posit their proper use as much as to elucidate their meaning. Thirdly, an analysis of *Philosophizability and Practicity*, both being extreme constituents of philosophical material or the contents of the third axiom. Fourthly, the heart of this work: *Let us Make a Tabula Rasa of the Future or of Utopia as Method*. Fifthly, we have a theoretical outline of a non-institutional utopia, *The International Organization of Non-Philosophy, L'Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale, (ONPHI)* already created in practice but under the conditions of possibility and functioning from which here we put into question "de jure," thus not without a perplexity concerning "facts," in any case, without the capability of "getting to the bottom of things." Sixthly, an essay characterizing *The Right and the Left of Non-Philosophy*, a brief topology of several philosophizing and normalizing positions of proponents or tenants of this problematic. Seventhly, *Rebel in the Soul: A Theory of Future Struggle*, a systematic discussion starting from a confrontation of non-philosophical gnosis and non-religious gnosis to the extent that they pose, posed or perhaps still will pose themselves as rivals to non-philosophy in a mixture of fidelity and infidelity. Despite the fact that it can also be read as putting non-philosophy into perspective: it pits against a standard Platonism two contemporary appropriations of Gnosticism.

On the basis of the paradigm of Man who never ceases to come as the Future-in-person, each one of these moments strives to reestablish not the "true" non-philosophy and its orthodoxy, but the minimal conditions to respect in order to allow for its maximum fecundity. And in order to bring about one of the last possibilities of its development, making explicit Humaneity as a utopia-for-the-World. In introducing these considerations in the form of a "testament" and "ultimatum," we want to indicate two things: First, that this is the last time we will intervene in order to caution non-philosophers against the temptation of returning and looking backwards towards philosophy. Only a disillusioned nostalgia for the former World and its traditions barely remain permissible to us.… Secondly, that non-philosophy is also a sort of ultimatum for considering one's life and transforming one's thought from the perspective of a uni-version rather than a conversion. Man as future is this ultimatum in action, not an impatient self-proclaimed genius, and philosophy is his testament. It is obviously the ultimatum that determines this testament as "old" with a view towards a life that is, itself, non-testamentary. In and of itself, the "old" can never bear a veritable eschaton. Thus, this book intersects according to the logic of this paradigm, under the sign of the ultimate or "last" as future, philosophy as testament and cautionary note for maintaining the non-philosophical oeuvre as "future" or "utopian." We will see that between these two dimensions it cradles a theory of struggle.

In the end, this book envisions non-philosophers in multiple ways. It inevitably sees them as subjects of knowledge, most often academics insofar as life in the world demands, but above all as close relatives of three great human types. The analyst and political militant are quite obvious, for non-philosophy is close to psychoanalysis and Marxism insofar as it transforms the subject in transforming philosophy. Here again, one must have a sense not of certain nuances but of aspects (of the interpretations, albeit unilateralized) and not in order to construct a simple proletarization or militarization of thought as theory. To be rigorous, rather than authoritarian or spiteful, is its task. And lastly, non-philosophy is a close relative of the spiritual but definitely not the spiritualist. Those who are spiritual are not at all spiritualists, for the spiritual oscillate between fury and tranquil rage, they are great destroyers of the forces of Philosophy and the State, which are united under the name of Conformism. They

haunt the margins of philosophy, gnosis, mysticism, science fiction and even religions. Spiritual types are not only abstract mystics and quietists; they are heretics for the World. The task is to bring their heresy to the capacity of utopia, and their utopia to the capacity of the paradigm.

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# Deep Time Contagion
# A Project by Andy Weir
## *Introduction by Jamie Allen*

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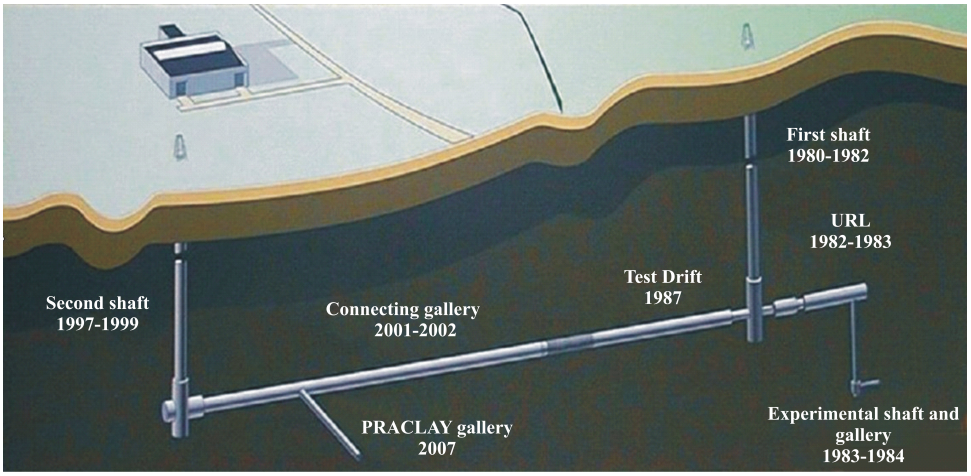
Yucca Mountain in southern Nevada

*Time, of all the dimensions readily presented to experience, seems to do so most readily through things. Stuff, in supposed counter-valence to the negentropic resilience of living things, appears to us as that which degrades through time, and demarcates a more technical chronometry of sequential events. Situated outside the rotting of fruit and the ticking of clocks, a "deep time" persists. Like the ultra-hearing of the bat, and the infra-vision of the boa-constrictor, there exist living and non-living agents and entities capable of revealing the fixity and finitude of our own perceptual frames for thinking and understanding.*

*The recordings presented here consist of four extracts of documents made in deep geological repository sites (for the storage of nuclear waste). Here re-presented are the Yucca Mountain Repository; HADES, in Mol, Belgium; Gorleben in Germany and a further recording from Forsmark in Sweden (pretty much inaudible behind a loop of a pop song). These recordings are imagined acoustic amplifications of deep time, just as the astronomer's telescope is (thought of a certain way), also a time machine. Stars and nuclear waste are unapparent objects of temporal thought.*

*Andy Weir (*andyweir.info*) is an artist from London researching effects of deprioritised subjectivity and contemporary art. This project draws on work developing sonic fictions, stealthy earworms, and micropolitical agencies. Prompted for further thoughts about the recordings presented here, he offered up the interspersed discussion included.*

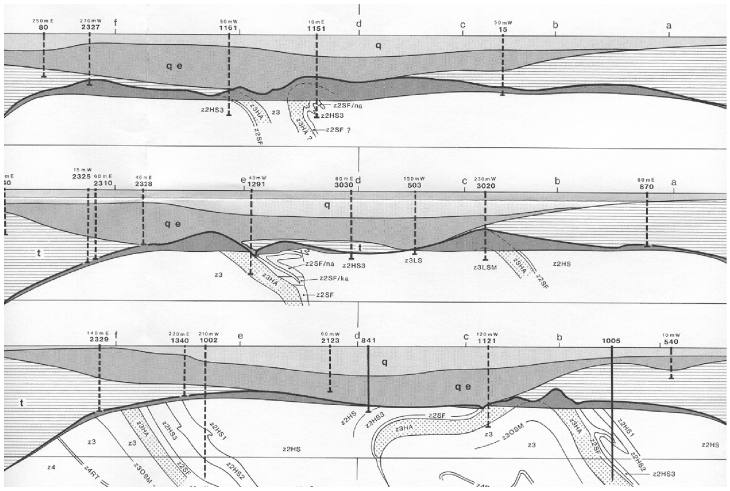
*—JA*




The HADES (Belgium) underground laboratory for experimental research on the deep geological disposal of radioactive waste. HADES is situated in Boom clay at a depth of 224 meters.

I became interested in these sites originally as spaces that allude to a time outside of the human ('deep time') as they are designed to store waste 'without future maintenance'. The very fact of thinking about these spaces or working on them—engineering etc.. (as I'm particularly interested them in a kind of practice rather than just an object of thought), in other words, forces a confrontation with thought of the extinction of humanity. I was interested in this as a production of affect at odds with the expected 'ironic, can be whatever you like' interpretive condition of contemporary art (art under the condition of neoliberalism, say, where the individual subject is prioritised as a free autonomous producer of the meaning of the work)

When I thought about this a bit though it ran into paradoxes—yes, I could allude to deep time, but in doing so I just allude to its un-representability, drawing attention to the limits of representation and so reaffirming it—I was stuck in a representation/non-representational



The evolution of the salt dome at Gorleben

negative dialectic. In trying to somehow create a figure for deep time I was either reducing it to my description of it, or presenting it as irreducible.

I don't think I've escaped this in the work but my response to it was to create a sonic-fiction. This was based on the idea of a viral transmission of the affect of deep time (this is the 'pyroclastic-soaked chrono-dread') through receiving apparatuses, transforming the screen into an intercessor or mediating lure for the outside, a site of exposure multiplying virulently through its dissemination, invoking as much as trying to represent these spaces, the sounds as durations of exposure to contagious materials, and fictions as a way of ex-cavating the strangeness of a world opaque to subjective reconfiguration... Testing out I suppose ways that art could start thinking about figuring the reality of ecological crisis.

While everything remains at the level of fiction I think the work is problematic. It doesn't really model anything, giving too much authority to either romantic abandonment or the recuperation of romantic abandonment under its description by theory/philosophy, all contained and controlled by me within a fairly limited condition of what art can do.

*Deep Time Contagion* is precisely a materialisation of and transmission of this paradox (i.e. with screen-media can only present deep time as unrepresentable or draw attention to an inability to present it) taking the comfort/panic induced by this paradox as its material. I'm working now on some new projects that take this as a point of departure.

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# The Method of In-between in the Grotesque and the Works of Leif Lage

***Henrik Lübker***

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"Artworks are not being but a process of becoming"

Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

In the everyday use of the concept, saying that something is grotesque rarely implies anything other than saying that something is a bit outside of the normal structure of language or meaning – that something is a peculiarity. But in its historical use the concept has often had more far reaching connotations. In different phases of history the grotesque has manifested its forms as a means of subversive resistance against society's prevailing notions of form and power. What aids this impact and distinguishes two of its basic stylistic features is the grotesque's dissolution of form and its hyperbole. Such grotesqueries, however, soon solidify into new forms, new structures of meaning, hierarchy and practice, and in this sense the history of the grotesque is, on one hand, a continual opposition and transgression of the prevailing notions of art as well as of God and humanity, while on the other hand it offers continual resistance to its own solidifying process. As such the grotesque will not and cannot be contained in form without it losing the very thing that makes it grotesque.

Even though it is somewhat easy to point out certain stylistic features of the grotesque, the sum of those features tell us very little about what is at play within it. Definitions concerned with the grotesque's content rather than its form faces similar difficulties. Throughout history, expressions relating to the grotesque have been used in defense of a whole host of different social and cultural discourse including, for instance, Catholicism (See Erhard Schön's *Der Teufel mit der Sackpfeife*, 1536), Protestantism (See Lucas Cranach's *Der Papstesel*, 1523), a material folk culture (see Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*, 1984) and an idealistic romantic structure of meaning (see Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, 1957). Thus though the grotesque cannot be reduced to the expression of certain forms or meanings, in order to examine what the grotesque is about one has to try to see how it's relationship to flow and process and how, by maintaining this relationship, it attempts to avoid solidifying into form and meaning.

The process of the grotesque alluded to here revolves around a play between periphery and center, the marginalized and the dominant. Most often this is expressed as a direct negation of the center of power. In the medieval grotesque tradition of the carnival, for example, it is expressed by its emphasis on the nether regions of the body as the center of creation of meaning. Spirit does not come from above, but from the belly, buttocks and genitals, and there is, expressed in this manner, a mockery of the predominant Christian notion of truth and meaning. Such inversions of the sites of meaning most often explicitly express an increased interest in materiality instead of ideal content which comes to the fore through the play between periphery and center. Even in early grotesque Renaissance art (for example in the works of Raphael) the depiction of the mythological or ideal reveals an exploration of the possibilities of the material. The works of art thus explore their own boundaries rather than act as vessels of the divine and in this way the grotesque explores the limits of form and materiality. This in turn brings to the fore a metaphysical dimension in the workings of the grotesque: It is an immanent exploration of its own

boundaries. Materiality and metaphysics are joined together, because it is through the awareness of itself as a structuring (dis)order that it places itself in opposition to the prevailing notions of form and power. This way the grotesque expresses an awareness of the division of sign and reality and a search for this reality. It implicitly expresses the awareness that meaning is not something God-given and static, but fluctuating and man-made.

In modern explorations of the history of the grotesque it is commonly seen as a form of realism that manifests a shift from the ideal towards the material, freeing art from representing some hidden higher order and instead making the work of art the very site of creation and meaning. Going even further, the grotesque actively opposes the notions of the ideal by marking a shift from an ahistorical view of the world towards the historical. However, this also makes clear why the grotesque has a tendency to solidify into new static forms of meaning, for by establishing itself as a subversive counterforce there is an idea of transgression and emancipation. That is why the grotesque often historicizes and relativizes only to repeat the mistakes of that which it negates: putting itself in the king's chair. The exploration of the material seems to create new forms and notions of the ideal. The representation of an otherness outside the prevailing notions of meaning and truth becomes a positive manifestation of this otherness as truth itself.

Thus the historical "truths" of the grotesque are superseded by history itself. When the expressions of the grotesque solidify into static form and meaning, they become mere objects like anything else in the world. Instead of being this elusive thing of process and flow, it becomes tangible to the existing hierarchy of power as well as history itself. In this way the grotesque can be expunged, included or simply revealed as yet another false notion of truth, which is precisely what has happened with the grotesque throughout the course of history. If from the beginning the expression of the grotesque has not already been in the service of some structure of meaning and truth, it has quickly been included or has quickly included itself in such a structure. But by doing so it rejects its own basis: the tension between periphery and center is replaced by the attempt to create a new center, a new structure of meaning and truth. The doubleness, ambiguity and flow of the grotesque are then rejected by the grotesque itself.

**The non-form of form**

In the critical thinking of Theodor W. Adorno (1903-69) the problem of art, caught between a reductive and prevalent notion of truth and meaning and a peripheral and alienated otherness, is reexamined and reformulated. For Adorno, the instrumental rationality of Enlightenment itself reverts into a new form of mythology which is every bit as static and exclusive as the hierarchies of religion it supersedes. All is excluded that is non-identical to the instrumental mastery of the objects of the world, "For the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion; modern positivism consigns it to poetry."[1] As such the non-identical has been banished from the realm of thought and action, and banished specifically to the realm of art. But the realm of art is not able to provide a decent home for it because even modern art is not something entirely autonomous. While it is excluded from the notions of truth and meaning provided by instrumental rationality, it still originates from society. Just like instrumental rationality art is about mastery, structuring and exclusion. Therefore, the problem for art is that it cannot directly provide a space for the non-identical because its mode of operation is similar to that of instrumental rationality. Even worse, art has very few possibilities to free itself from this. If it becomes *l'art pour l'art* it is at the same time reduced to the very thing instrumental rationality claims it to be: a subjective judgment of taste. Abstract expressionism also stands as an example of this. Conversely, art cannot work within the framework of the identity-thinking of society, because any notion of freedom or emancipation

1) Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 4-5.

would reproduce the exclusive practices of instrumental rationality. For example: Explicit socialist literature may establish itself in opposition to instrumental rationality while at the same time reproducing it. Its language may seem different, but in reality it merely provides a different set of reductive schematics for human life and experience.

The problem for the art of the grotesque was, as I mentioned earlier, that far too often it was merely a symbolic manifestation of a notion of otherness—not otherness itself. Because of this the subversive character of the grotesque ends up shaping and containing otherness instead of providing a space for it. According to Adorno the only way to avoid this is to radicalize the grotesque. In order to avoid solidifying into form the work of art has to be an object which cannot be contained in thought or form—a non-form of form. The work of art has to work in a way that it strives for autonomy but without entirely leaving a discernible reality. In other words, it has to pull in two directions at once. Thus the work of art is a paradox. It is autonomous in the sense that it closes itself off from everything outside of the work of art, trying to shy away from the contaminating influence of the identity thinking of instrumental rationality. At the same time though the work of art is heteronomous in the sense that it originates from a specific historical context and is bound to be what society is not. Autonomy and heteronomy are inseparably intertwined. Unable to display otherness itself, but still trying to be a refuge for it, there is only one option for art: It has to turn against itself and destroy its own logic of form, thereby demonstrating how any representation of otherness is impossible. Art becomes a lamentation of the victims of the identity thinking of instrumental rationality and shows the traces of the otherness that is unable to appear.

Adorno's pessimistic theory of art and history stages art as a negative dialectical process where the work of art closes itself off and rejects everything outside, while the individual elements in the work of art destroys its very own logic of form from within:

> Artworks synthetize ununifiable, nonidentical elements that grind away at each other; they truly seek the identity of the identical and nonidentical processually because even their unity is only an element and not the magical formula of the whole […]. The resistance to them of otherness, on which they are nevertheless dependent compels them to articulate their own formal language, to leave not the smallest unformed particle as remnant. This reciprocity constitutes art's dynamic; it is an irresolvable antithesis that is never brought to rest in the state of being.[2]

Relative to a traditional understanding of the grotesque, Adorno radicalizes the tension between center and periphery, autonomy and heteronomy. In the traditional understanding of the grotesque, as we find it for example in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, the grotesque establishes the display of otherness as a new center of meaning and truth. However Adorno rejects such notions and argues instead for a modernism of the grotesque in which both center and periphery are included in a negative dialectical process and continually synthesizing and destabilizing each other's positions. A modernism of the grotesque works on the inside of the sign or the artwork, continually outlining and questioning the boundaries between materiality and form. This moves the focus away from the relation between the sign or work of art as a conceptual manifestation on one side and the object it refers to on the other side. Instead it implicitly points to the amorphous mass from which the signs and thereby meaning have been carved, the remnants that have been left behind. Modernism of the grotesque does not imply that it is emancipatory or that it reconciles man with nature, and does not represent a new position or a new ideology. It merely remembers and insists on the double nature of man and art: to write or paint yourself or an artwork whole by inscribing meaning in life or by applying form on a canvas is at the same time both creation and destruction. The very signs we use to center meaning in our lives carry its own alienation in them. Meaning surfaces only when

2) Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London & New York, 2002): 176.

process and flow comes to a halt—solidifying, but at the same time excluding parts that do not fit into that particular structure of meaning.

**Nothing done and nothing undone**

It has always been difficult for art historians to find a suitable category for the works of the Danish artist Leif Lage (b. 1933). In his paintings the sensitive figuration seems so fragile that it is on the verge of turning into abstraction. Or conversely: the figurative emerges cautiously and hesitantly out of abstraction. As an art critic once wrote, he can almost paint things away.[3] Working in some undefinable space between abstraction and figuration, the Lage's works shy away from the realm of words, and as a result few critics have been able to write anything meaningful about his works. In fact even fewer have been able to write more than one or two pages. The Danish author and art critic Leif Hjernøe is one of those few, but even he starts off by saying how impossible it is to write about Lage, confessing that his works exist both as process and in a field of in-between which words cannot reach. He writes:

> Always you find yourself in a place where nothing is done and nothing left undone, and where the elements of the work of art rest in a continuous motion. Always there is the open wound, where infection rather than surgical intervention is considered as an opportunity. And the conflict between matter and antimatter makes all diagnoses uncertain and allows conditions of uncertainty to spread in a place of raw presence.[4]

The art works against the diagnosis and the certainty. Words are being eaten up by what is outside the realm of words: tension, process and doubleness.

An approach to an understanding of the work of Lage could be to follow his connection to Samuel Beckett (1906-89). One can note, therefore, that Lage has illustrated several of the Danish translations of Beckett's works. Though one is an author and the other a painter both seek a place where figuration, where the word, erodes. For both this entails an attempt to question and examine and so move in behind the façade of the surface in an exploration of that something or nothing that may be behind representation. At the same time even in the vanishing point of figuration or words, the meaningless words or the disjointed lines still stand as signs of human activity—signs of movement in emptiness.

With very few exceptions Lage's artworks revolve around one motif: Man—most often "en face." But unlike traditional portraitures Lage's people are found within. The artworks do not sense the reality of appearances, but rather the existential dimensions within man. As a seismograph they are sensitive to the utmost subjectivity in order to display an objective, sensuous depiction of the very problem of subjectivity. Instead of a static façade of a man, Lage's "en face" shows the process-character of man. The people in Lage's paintings are always in process—in the midst of becoming or dissolving. I will take a closer look in the following at the ways in which Lage establishes this sense of being in constant process, of being in-between modes or categories.

**The doubleness of the stroke**

Lage's etchings attract attention in particular for the tension conveyed there between the material and the form. The material physically opposes the violence of the needle. But instead of embracing the violence of the needle and the victory over matter—instead of making the artistic creation and figuration express a heroic mastery of the

3) Carsten Bach-Nielsen, "Mere glæde end gru," *Kristeligt Dagblad*, September 24, 2002.

4) Leif Hjernøe, "Den yderliggående inderlighed," *LEIF LAGE—Retrospektiv udstilling 1983*, (Copenhagen: Brøndum, 1983), 18.

background it is made out of—Lage uses the stroke to express the very tension between stroke and material, figuration and background. In the drypoint etching *Untitled* from 1983, which illustrated the Danish translation of Beckett's *Ill Seen, Ill Said*, the needle tears up the material in long rough lines: Together, the primarily horizontal and vertical lines form a face. Thus the force needed to etch a line in the metal-plate draws attention to itself: It is there in the absence of curves and nuances. Man emerges on the metal-plate after great exertion and in a very simplistic form. This way Lage enhances the nature of the material, as the material's resistance is not something to overcome. On the contrary the figuration is smitten by its very resistance and as such expresses the violence of its own becoming. Even more pronounced is the fact that the lines do not just show the violence of creation—it actively erases figuration in the same process that creates it. For example the mouth consists of 8-10 horizontal

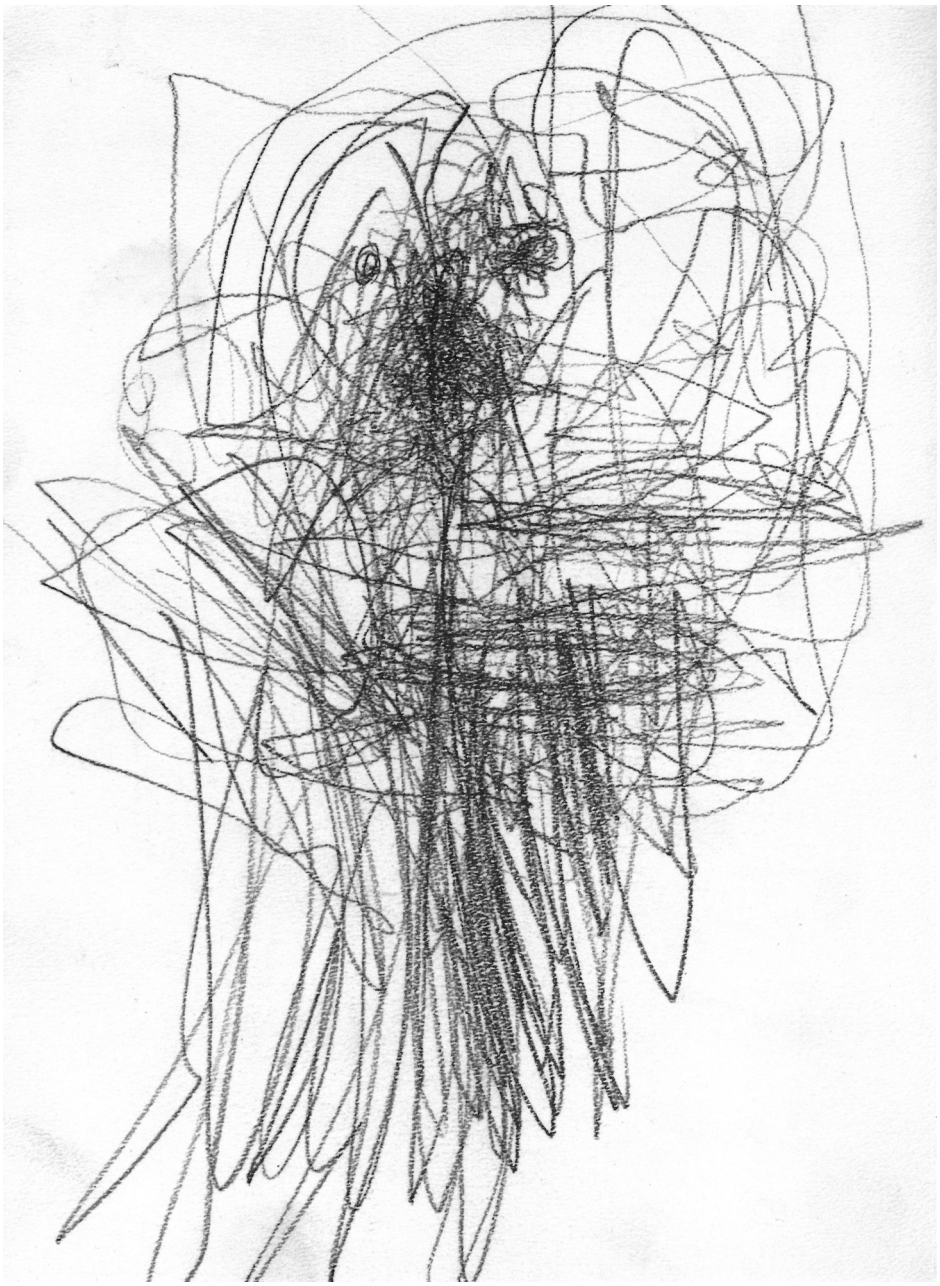
**Picture 1.**
Leif Lage, *Untitled*,
1983 (etching)

strokes, of which some seem to be connected to each other as if the mouth has been quickly scratched out. The mouth speaks of the inability to speak. In the same way, the eyes are black holes due to a large amount of criss-cross cuts, which together form a dark middle. Those lines, at the same time, form the eyes of the figuration and scratch out the eyes of the figuration. The extroverted aspects of the face—connected to speech and sight—are portrayed as introverted as well. Just as the etchings down into the metal-plate makes something appear. The figuration of the etching is connected to creation. It expresses that something is wrought into existence out of nothing by sheer artistic force. However, this force is at the same time presented as a violence of creation, which makes it impossible for form to truly emerge. Herein lies one of the basic principles of Lage's art, namely that art cannot be that nothing or something behind the realm of words or signs. Without form, art would lose its ability to

express anything at all. Form is a necessity if art is to avoid becoming as devoid of expression as the reality is that we cannot reach behind the appearance of things. On the other hand, art cannot raise itself above its own material in joyous celebration of the beauty of form. This would use the material in the manner of an instrument and thus would suppress the otherness it attempts to rescue. When art becomes mere form, any traces of otherness will have dissolved. Then art would be a question of technique, in no way different from the instrumental rationality of society. Therefore art works in a particular space between form and non-form. As Hjernøe says of the works of Lage, it is in the center of the event, in the in-between where things neither are nor are not, "And everything takes place just before it changes character. As the blood just before it coagulates, as the milk just before it separates, as fried egg just before it turns white [….]"[5] The precise emphasis on the in-between of Lage's art points in particular to the work of art as both outside of and in time. The work of art is a singular point in time, but at the same time it is continually in process. In the borderland between form and non-form, between creation and destruction, it shimmers like a *fata morgana*. The work is done but at the same time undone. It is only there as a cry in response to the inability to come into being.

Akin to the etching is the drawing, but while both, of course, use the stroke or line as their main instrument, the paper does not resist the line in the same sense as the metal-plate of the etching. As a result in Lage's drawings the stroke frolics in a space with almost no tension at all. There is nothing there to keep the pencil stroke at bay, but at the same time this means that there is nothing there to keep it together. One of the more expressive examples of this is found in an untitled drawing from *Tegninger og Text* (*Drawings and Text*) from 1999. The drawing consists of one unbroken pencil stroke. It is as if the stroke is confused—it darts around on the paper making doodles on the way or gathers itself in more straight lines in the center of the paper. It is in this manner that the semblance of a body is established. A couple of small circles serve as eyes and are the reason that the rest can be read as both face and body instead of pure abstraction. In fact the unbroken stroke serves as both abstraction and figuration as on the one hand it is the stroke that seemingly outlines the shape of a figure, while on the other hand the unbroken stroke dissolves any truly recognizable figuration by continuously, without end or aim, overflowing the boundaries of the figure. Seen again here is a doubleness to the stroke and the act of creation. In the etching it was all about the tension between the resistance of the material which created the doubleness. Here it is the opposite. It is the lack of tension. The stroke is free to do anything, but has no aim: without some kind of resistance, there is nothing to hold figuration together. It threatens to dissolve into nothingness. Conversely, the drawing can also be seen as a process of becoming. Like a form of automatic writing, the pencil darts around until it finds a point of densification. But even in such an interpretation of the drawing, the figuration appears artificial—it points to itself as the result of the artistic act of creation. The stroke is primarily stroke and only secondarily figuration. With its wild movement it calls attention to itself as stroke. Thus the figuration never becomes something in its own right. It points to the basic principle of creation: Someone has drawn me, I am the result of artistic endeavors, and therefore I am not for myself but always overflowing the boundaries that contain me. It is the stroke that in the very same movement creates figuration and dissolves it.

5) Ibid.



**Picture 2.**

Leif Lage, *Untitled*, 1999 (drawing)

**The lightness of color, the density of paper**

Often the watercolor is used as a precursor for larger paintings, because it has an immediacy in which one can quickly paint the main lines of a composition. However, Lage's watercolors are not temporary points in a process leading to another final painting. They are not sketches, later to be filled with details in another material. For him watercolor is an end in itself. This also implies that he doesn't try to work against the paper's absorption of the water color and its tendency to absorb detail. On the contrary, he examines the possibilities inherent in this blurring of the line and absorption of color.

As in the previous examples, there are of course recognizable shapes in Lage's water colors. But these shapes are rarely separable from color, line or even paper. In other words: the figurative and the abstract more or less become one. One of the reasons for this is that Lage often works on wetted paper which means that the paper hungrily absorbs color into its fabric instead of it being on top of the paper. The paper becomes line because it is the absorption of the color which, together with the brush stroke itself, separates the colors from each other. The line is also color and the color is also line, because there is no separation between the different colors other than the colors themselves. At times this results in almost complete abstraction. In such cases Lage add lines with a pencil as if he wants to hold some sort of figuration together. At other times it is the other way around: the strokes of the pencil are a being dissolved by the water color blurring out the figuration.

*Untitled 1* from 1999 displays various tones of green. The contour of the colors appears unusually rough. Most of all it is reminiscent of a shoreline which has found its form through the work of thousands of years between water and land. Pockets of resistance surface as islands not yet drowned in color—as paper or color not yet consumed by the dominant color. The shape of the colors does not seem created by the hand of the artist, but rather by the inner workings of the watercolor: color against color over time has resulted in this very image, as if it is all a part of a natural process of change and decay. Despite the fact that there are no strong differences in color there seems to be a struggle taking place in the watercolor. For example, inexplicable holes in the dark color, which cover most of the right side of the watercolor, appear as if the underlying color is eating away the dark color, or that the dark color is in the process of covering up the underlying color. The small pockets of resistance demonstrate a process and development that, almost as a happy accident, evokes a couple of small eyes and a large mouth. Behind the colors a few slanted lines can be discerned, but the hand of the artist has long ago disappeared behind the life of the colors. Thus the watercolor seems to be held at precisely the point in time where figuration randomly appears. The small eyes and wide mouth seemingly express the realization of the figuration's temporality. It is just a moment in time, soon to be consumed again in the life of the colors. The nature, the background it stems from and is part of, moves on undeterred, continuing its everlasting process of creation and decay. In this sense, the watercolor provides an experience of how neither artist nor man is able to transcend the materiality they consist of. The colors of man, the materials man consists of are "becoming" and "progress" but also "decay" and "disappearance." The artist's pencil strokes have been eaten up long ago, and the figuration is living on borrowed time. Human or artistic activity is about creating form, transcending mere matter by shaping and applying meaning to it. But *Untitled 1* shows the doubleness of such creation: the transience and fragility of human life. Should the figuration come into being, should it rise and transcend the material, which binds it to its temporal existence, it would become nothing because its very existence is conditioned by the life and work of the colors. In the same sense man cannot escape his own temporality. He too, for better or worse, must accept a life in the volatility of sensation.

In most of Lage's watercolors there seem to be a stronger artistic control than in *Untitled 1*. Most often both the arrangement of colors and the technique in which they are painted express the hand of the artist. An example of this is *Untitled 2* from 1999. While figuration in *Untitled 1* seemed to appear as a happy accident, the figuration is much more "created" in *Untitled 2*. Here the most important parts of the figuration, the eyes, the mouth and part of the skull, are colored black and painted on top of the background's play of colors. The background primarily consists of blue and yellow tones. Only parts of the paper are covered in color, however, which yet again stresses the act of painting: There is a surface which is being filled by color by an artist. The blue tones are concentrated in the figuration, while the yellow tones surround it. All this means that the figuration stands out more clearly in this watercolor. This is also underlined by the fact that the blue and dark tones cover part of the yellow tones as spots here and there. Thus it is not a background which is in the process of consuming figuration, but rather the emerging figuration which blots out the background. Such an understanding is even suggested by how the mouth and eyes are placed in the larger blue color field. The eyes and mouth are in the center of the watercolor, while the blue color field is placed from center out towards the left side. This gives the impression of a face turned slightly to the right and slightly upwards, which again makes the mouth appear to emerge from the paper. It also helps that the mouth cuts the center axis of the watercolor. In other words, the arrangement of the blue and black colors create some depth and perspective which gives the illusion of a figuration, seen partially in profile, emerging from the background. Seen in profile, the eyes and mouth seem extroverted—they almost seem as if they are put on top of the face. But at the same time they are painted as black holes, sucking in the gaze of the onlooker. The watercolor is even more challenging if one follows what may be the faint outline of the skull, which, on the right side of the watercolor, no longer works together with the blue color, but rather alone postulates the outline of the skull. If not the blue color field, but this line, is the outline of the skull, then all of a sudden the face is not in profile but "en face"—staring directly towards the onlooker. Outline and color seemingly work against each other and establish two different expressions. Without the slightly upward tilted expression of the profile, the eyes and mouth do not seem to emerge from the paper. On the contrary, seen "en face," the eyes and mouth are really gaping pits of darkness. In this sense *Untitled 2* is at the same time surface and depth of perspective. The line gives form but at the same time it dissolves the form created by the colors, and vice versa.

As the last example of Lage's artistic method, I have chosen another untitled work (as indeed nearly all of Lage's artworks are)—this time from 2000. This is perhaps one of the most figurative watercolors Lage has created, though that doesn't tell us too much. The painting depicts a human face in blue and green tones on a yellow toned background. The colors create a clear demarcation between the figure and the background, which compensate for the watercolor's lack of outline. Beneath the face darker tones imply the beginning of the torso, and nuances of color even hint at something which could be a collar. The hair is in even darker tones and its structure is emphasized using pencil strokes on top of the water color. One eye is marked by a brown spot with a darker spot in the middle, while the other eye is added by pencil. The mouth is a round, red dot. In *Untitled* from 2000 the work between abstraction and figuration is much less pronounced than in the previous examples cited here. Nonetheless the watercolor has a delicacy to it which almost makes the figuration disappear, even as it appears. This has something to do with the fact that all the individual brush strokes have dissolved. The only outlines are those created by the clash of colors. Even the red mouth seems to be more paint than mouth—unable to be formed truly as anything other than a speck of color with some small semblance to a mouth. In contrast to the other watercolors, there is no movement, no progress or decay, just a vibrating standstill. The figure is not

emerging or disappearing but embedded in and as surface, and as such it makes the figure seem stuck in its condition rather than freed by the act of giving form: mouth open as a wound. Pencil strokes add detail and life to the hair as an attempt to help the figure emerge. But all this does is create two levels in the watercolor: The pencil strokes are put on top of the figuration rather than being part of it. Thus they end up highlighting the endless distance between the movement and form-giving of the pencil strokes and the static and stuck figure behind these strokes.

**Picture 3.**

Leif Lage, *Untitled 1*, 1999

(watercolor)

**Picture 4.**

Leif Lage, *Untitled* 2, 1999

(watercolor)

**Man and the view of the onlooker**

Lage's works seem at the same time to be an examination of tensions between form and material in art and a display of an image of man full of the same tensions. This is because the people who are emerging in Lage's images are not just in his works, They *are* his works. This means that man is not something emerging from a background but is part of this background and vice versa. The art of Lage inscribes man in its surroundings and background. Man is not the ruler of nature. Man does not rise above matter; there is no truly transcendent position for man to occupy in the art of Lage. Instead man is a part of the very matter, it, at the same time, tries to distance itself from in order to distinguish itself from its surroundings. Man emerges in an attempt not to be line, stroke, color. In an attempt to free itself of matter. Should it succeed in this, however, it would turn into nothing. On the other hand, if man fully accepted itself as mere matter it would disappear in it—in instincts, urges and lack of reflection. The appearance of man is thus subject to a state of being in-between. Only in the tension between material and its negation can the outlines of man be traced. However this also means that in the art of Lage man is never something in itself but always in process—on the way to its freedom and its loss.

However, Lage's art is not just about showing the tensions inherent in man but also about showing such tension on the verge of breaking point. In the moment before everything is done, or when nothing yet has been done, the delicate tension between form and material has been stretched to its utmost in such a way that man's character of process emerges and is contained on the paper or canvas. Therefore, Lage's art contain traces of human life. Not only is it an autonomous unity of tensions where man is stretched out between its singularity and the surroundings it is a part of. It is also this pulsation between figuration and material which brings about the traces of human endeavor and activity. Even when man almost seems to have disappeared into the material, strokes and lines are still there as a reminder of human activity and potential creative power—as a reminder that hope is still possible and that man is still there.

The view of the onlooker seeks out forms and meaning. It seeks outlines and edges. But first and foremost it is the eyes in Lage's works of art that allow the onlooker to decode the figuration at play. This creates a distinctive relationship between the onlooker and the artwork. The onlooker tries to wrest the enigma from the artwork, tries to reduce it to solid, meaningful form. But the very same moment that hints at such a possibility sees the view of the onlooker confronted with a gaze of its own. The eyes of the figure in the work of art are most often dark pits, as if they were an illustration of the violence committed against the eyes of the onlookers and their search for meaning. Or as if they were a dark reflection of the onlooker's failed attempts to delineate the traces of life in the artwork to a solid meaningful form. Therefore, the gaze of the figuration speaks not only of its own powerlessness but also of the powerlessness of the onlooker.

When the view or sight has trouble finding solid meaningful forms, it has something to do with the fact that the precondition for sight, light, no longer stems from something transcendent. In Lage's art there is nothing outside the works of art, nothing outside of human life, and as such nothing to shed light on the works of art or human life and reveal solid meaningful forms. All light comes from within.

In a western context, light as a medium for sight is central to the understanding of meaning. People speak of the clarity of thought, while knowledge is tied together with enlightenment, and so forth. But the light no longer originates from a divine point of view. It originates from man, who has created himself in the image of God. The problem with this is that light always covers up its own base. Light illuminates something but at the same time it hides itself.[6] While it was previously God who was unknowable, now it is man. It is also problematic that sight and

6) Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 162-163.

**Picture 5.**
Leif Lage, *Untitled*, 2000
(watercolor)

the medium of sight stem from the same place. Following this thought one can posit two final problems. Firstly, the immediacy and presence established by light by making forms and objects accessible to sight is fake. Light is not some independent entity which present things in a neutral manner for the onlooker. It is inextricably tied together with the gaze's desire after meaning. In other words: Light perverts the appearance of things because it doesn't originate from some objective entity which allows them to appear as they are. Instead light is based upon and originates from the subject and its conquering gaze, seeking out meaning and form constantly. Secondly, the joining of sight and light makes introspection within human life impossible. Everything can be illuminated by its use value for the subject but only as long as it is separated from the subject, as long as it is an object. But the subject itself cannot be illuminated.

Lage's art tears down such a dividing line between subject and matter, but it does so without reestablishing a divine position from where the light emanates. Therefore, the light in Lage's art may not illuminate very well. It may not have the certainty presented by modern science or the religions of yesterday. But it does show what such light tries to hide, namely, the subject as it is in its material reality—inscribed in time and death, which are the basic conditions of materiality, but at the same time also full of life in its joy and will to create. For the onlooker the meeting of the gaze in Lage's works of art is thus also a destruction of the view of the onlooker. The ability to see is challenged in a radical way. Those outlines will not solidify into static form, as if the light was too dim to see. Just as in Lage's figurations, the view of the onlooker turns to black: turns towards the onlooker in recognition and becoming—or disappearance.

continent.

# Introducing *drift*, a Special Issue of *continent.*

*continent.* 2.3 (2012) 182-185

Two continents. Three countries. Mountains, archipelago, a little red dot & more to come.

**Berit Soli-Holt (Editor)**: When I think of introductory material, I think of that Derrida documentary when he is asked about what he would like to know about other philosophers. He simply states: their love life.

**April Vannini (Editor)**: And as far as introductions go, I think Derrida brought forth a fruitful discussion on philosophy and thinking with this statement. First, he allows philosophy to open up the personal and second, the ability to conjure the notion of thinking in relation. After all, love lives are spawned from relations, and such are philosophical encounters—the co-emergence of thought and affect. This brings us to discuss the concept of the special issue of *continent.* called *drift*.

From the Statement of Intent:

> The discussion that has become *drift*, a special issue of *continent.* began in the glow of a bonfire beside a lake near the Thousand Islands of Ontario when co-founders April and Berit came across a conception of a journal that would decline to follow traditional models of invitation and editorship, instead following a generated discourse through relational means. Shedding preemptive articulation of expected outcome and cohesion, we hope to light a fuse of chain interactions with each contributor active in authorial, editorial, and curatorial roles. *drift* seeks to allow the framing mechanism to choose itself, to find where something can flow or emerge in relation to a series of participants. By setting out a thread of thought to work its own way through writers and artists of various locations, *drift* operates through links, breaks, pauses, new directions, unintended consequences, twists, holes, bridges. We are attempting to give the scene for an emergence and what can become conceivable when given the opportunity to create chains of thought—linking, welding, fusing, looping, stitching. We hope to explore what is attainable when scholarly/artistic relationships transverse on their own terms instead of articulated by an institutional environment.

**Jeremy Fernando (Guest Editor)**: I think he was actually more interested in their sex lives. Though at the same time completely refusing to discuss, disclose, his own: I found it rather touching that he blushes whenever speaking of his life with Marguerite. So perhaps in this sense it is very apt to speak of it in terms of love; and the secret that is in each love: that even though it is a relationality between, there are parts of it that remain hidden, not just from everyone else, but even those in that relation itself.

> What the editors intend to ^do^ to impart this conceptualization is to provide a framework through the choice of a theme and by minimal standardization of form and content guidelines. As initial instigator, each editor will send their contribution to the issue to a fellow colleague, thinker, artist, friend with the invitation to send (via post) the accruing materials to another possible contributor. In this, we hope to engage with many individuals on ideas surrounding a specific theme determined but not limited by the editors of *the drift*. The end result will take the form of whatever is at hand (as materials can only stay with each contributor for two weeks) and whomever is at hand (the availability of interested and capable parties) through a course of five months. We are curious. What are the ways in which thought can emerge between individuals and places? What occurs when our fundamental mode of inquiry is between each other? How are ethical, social, spacious, political, aesthetic practices created between a chain of contributors.

**BSH**: To introduce what to look forward to in June with the publication of drift isn't quite poss-ible yet. It is in the stages of preparation, barely started, but already begun. I have been thinking about drift as an insect that goes through life cycles, chrysalises, pupas, larva. Each moment of the production and publication of this issue of *continent.* is its own life. A bug under a pin is not as interesting as one in flight or crawling up your leg.

**JF**: Though the one crawling up your leg is also more likely to bite you. There is always already a danger in letting be, thinking …. Then again, there is also a potential rupture in attempting to seize, pin down, capture.

**BSH**: I think a word we haven't thought about enough yet is capture. I think we are perhaps trying to capture something, or to allow for the moments of this capture along the way, the re-sulting material being the ripples left in the sand when the water waves away.

**AV**: This question comes to mind when speaking about captures, waves, ripples: How can we activate a ripple? What I find interesting about a wave is the difference in frequencies, movements, forms, style that are activated in between intervals. What is interesting about a wave is that it is activated in relation to what came before. What remains in the sand is a ripple that forms in relation between multiple intervals of stylistic waves. As Deleuze and

Parnet have taught us, "We were only two, but what was important for us was less our working together than this strange fact of working between the two of us. We stopped being 'author'. And these 'between-the-twos' referred back to other people, who were different on one side from the other. The desert expanded, but in so doing became more populous."[1] Drift is activation for thinking-with and possibly much more—who knows?

> There is the intent to subvert the relational qualities between people in journal publishing, but also important to the editors is the subversion of materials. The editors do not shy away from use of contemporary technology and, in fact, have relied and will continue to rely on the wonders of internet connectivity to midwife *the drift*. The connective infrastructure chosen to relay the developing issue is simply one of bodies, of postal workers and the varying postal systems. Some may find it to be merely be a call of an already dying form, but the editors believe that the conversation exchanged from hand to hand is of explicit difference in quality of engagement due to the complexity of peripheral information transported by physical matter. Different hospitalities and responsibilities are at play in keeping hold of one-of-a-kind materials for a time and entrusting various postal systems to bear the message forward. To have work physically transported through space and time through this kind of infrastructure that is reliant on individuals to literally carry a message is crucial in incorporating traces of bodily presence.

**AV**: Thought is contingent and emergent process that folds, twists, pulls, shifts in multiple directions and we are interested in these multiple directions.

**JF**: And even as thought is contingent on, hinged around, its place, time, venue—on its continents, as it were (we still tend to speak of gestures of thinking as Continental, British, American, European, Asian, etc.)—we might also attempt to respond to the landscape within each thought: its folds, unfoldings, rolls, manoeuvres, geography.

**BSH**: How different is this than Morelli's screw that Julio Cortazar or Horacio Oliveira recounts in Hopscotch? The fable recalls a man who regarded a screw everyday on his stoop. When he perishes, the screw disappears, perhaps into a fellow neighbor's pocket for secret contemplation. Whoever is writing the passage remarks that "Morelli thought that the screw must have been something else, a god or something like that. Too easy a solution. Perhaps the error was in accepting the fact that the object was a screw simply because it was shaped like a screw."

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Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 17.

**JF**: Perhaps even more intriguing is the notion that we do not quite know who is inscribing these remarks on Morelli. That even as someone says that it is a screw, perhaps because it is shaped like a screw, the one who names it "screw"—the one whom we are in a relation with in relation to the screw—remains veiled from us. But even as this is so, the notion of the object as "screw" is marked, etched, onto us.

**BSH**: A periodical, marking a period of time, but where? An issue, a magazine, a storehouse of information. To show the remainders of thinkers connecting and surfing.

> With all this stated, we, as editors of *the drift* are aware of the active fault, quaking potential, and ethical catastrophe of such a proposed project—the inheritance or the gifting of a project without consent. We are certain that there may be possible oversight on the process of such a project. If such is the case, we hope that oversight and misdirection will not leave this project dormant but rather open up promising new directions, questions, and potential considerations. We are very excited about the accidental propositions that can occur in between. In sum, we'll see what happens.

**JF**: Perhaps, all we can know of the screw is that we are screwed...

continent.

# There's no place like home
# Le 1%, c'est moi

*Andrea Fraser*

*continent.*2.3 (2012) 186-201

**Editor's Foreword**

Andrea Fraser's art practice has consistently and rigorously engaged in institutional critique aimed at the very institutions supporting her. Her most noted works include posing as a museum tour guide, stripping as part of a welcome speech at an art foundation, and taking a disputed amount of money from a collector to allow him to participate in making an artwork, a video of them having sex together. In response to the invitation to participate in the Whitney Biennial in 2012, Fraser submitted the essay "There's no place like home," outlining her continual withdrawal from the art world, another ongoing critical engagement. It was printed in the exhibition catalogue and made available as a pdf download. It was a companion piece to her essay "L'1% C'est Moi", which originally ran in the magazine *Texte zur Kunst*, and *continent.* is pleased to present both works together for your consideration of the broader context of the influence of wealth and power on cultural practice. These texts reprinted with permission of the artist, the Whitney Museum of American Art and *Texte zur Kunst*.

*Frantiska and Tim Gilman-Ševčík*

**There's no place like home***

It is difficult for me to imagine that I have much to contribute to this exhibition or its catalogue, with their aim of offering a survey of art of the past two years. I have not been looking at art in galleries or museums much for a number of years now, or reading much in art publications. I can draw on my previous years of studying the art world as an "institutional critic," as well as my ongoing work with young artists in academic contexts, but I can't help but doubt the relevance of my increasingly removed perspective for an audience of more actively engaged participants. I can rationalize this remove as stemming from my alienation from the art world and its hypocrisies, which I have made a career out of attempting to expose. I have ascribed to institutional critique the role of judging the institution of art against the critical claims of its legitimizing discourses, its self-representation as a site of contestation and its narratives of radicality and revolution. The glaring, persistent, and seemingly ever-growing disjunction between those legitimizing discourses—above all in their critical and political claims—and the social conditions of art generally, as well as of my own work specifically, has appeared to me as profoundly and painfully contradictory, even as fraudulent. Increasingly, I have turned to sociology, psychoanalysis, and economic research, rather than to art and cultural theory, to understand and work through these contradictions. Nevertheless, it has gotten to the point that most forms of engagement with the art world have become so fraught with conflict for me that they are almost unbearable, even as I struggle to find ways to continue to participate.

* This essay is a reworking of, and an attempt at integrating, themes from a few previous essays. These include: "L'1% C'est Moi," *Texte zur Kunst* 83 (September 2011), 114–27; "'I am going to tell you what I am not; pay attention, this is exactly what I am,'" in Sophie Byrne, ed., *Museum 21: Institution, Idea, Practice* (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2011) 82–103; and "Speaking of the social world...," *Texte zur Kunst* 81 (March 2011), 153–58. Thanks to Rhea Anastas, Thyrza Goodeve, and Simon Leung for their support and comments on this essay, and especially to Jason Best for his thoughtful, engaged, and expert editorial assistance

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Writing this essay and the prospect of contributing to the 2012 Whitney Biennial are no exception. As I begin working on this text, the Occupy Wall Street movement is spreading across the United States and beyond. Along with many of what is most certainly an overwhelming majority of artists, curators, art critics, and historians who profess a progressive if not radically left political orientation, I have been looking for ways to support and participate in this movement and believe it represents a long overdue expression of collective revulsion over the excesses of the financial industry, the corruption of our political process, and the economic policies that have produced levels of inequality in the United States not seen since the 1920s. Indeed, the Occupy movement seems to be taking the art world by storm, especially in New York, with dozens of symposia, lectures, and teach-ins as well as Occupy-themed or inspired artists groups and protests at art-related sites. Who knows where this movement will be four months from now when this essay is published. I find myself asking, however, where was it four months ago? Why did it take an art world that prides itself on criticality and vanguardism so long to confront its direct complicity in economic conditions that have been evident for more than a decade now?

A few days ago, there was a march through the streets of Manhattan's Upper East Side, with stops in front of the residences of various billionaires. I was visiting New York from Los Angeles but tied up with Whitney-related meetings, so I didn't join in.

Did protestors stop in front of the homes of any of the Whitney Museum's patrons or trustees? I consider a few of the Whitney's patrons to be friends, even family, and feel deeply and personally indebted to their support of some of the Museum's programs. One of these programs in particular, the Whitney Independent Study Program, has been a home for me since I was in my teens—one of the few homes I feel that I have ever had. It is unlikely that the particular Whitney patrons whom I know personally would appear on the radar of social justice activists (being only millionaires and not billionaires), although there are certainly other museum trustees and contemporary art collectors who have. But this does not make the situation any less fraught for me: the direct and intimate conflict I feel between my personal and professional allegiance with the Museum and some of its patrons and staff, and the political, intellectual, and artistic commitments that drive my "institutional critique," have contributed significantly to my difficulty in writing this essay.

It is widely known that private equity managers and other financial industry executives emerged as major collectors of contemporary art early in the last decade and now make up a large percentage of the top collectors worldwide. They also emerged as a major presence on museum boards. Many of these collectors and trustees from the financial world were directly involved in the sub-prime mortgage crisis—a few are now under federal investigation. Many others have been vocal opponents of financial reform as well as any increase in taxation or public spending in response to the recession they precipitated, and have pursued these positions through contributions to politicians and political groups, with some giving generously to both parties.[1]

More broadly, it is clear that the contemporary art world has been a direct beneficiary of the inequality of which the outsized rewards of Wall Street are only the most visible example. A quick look at the Gini Index, which tracks inequality worldwide, reveals that the locations of the biggest art booms of the last decade have also seen the steepest rise in inequality: the United States, Britain, China, and, most recently, India. Recent economic research has linked the steep increase in art prices over the past decades directly to this growing inequality, indicating that "a one percentage point increase in the share of total income earned by the top 0.1% triggers an increase in art prices of about 14 percent."[2]

1 I periodically look up the political contributions made by trustees of major museums. This information is readily available at websites such as CampaignMoney.com. For a brief survey of some of the financial and political activities of top collectors, see my essay "L'1% C'est Moi."

2 William N. Goetzmann, Luc Renneboog, and Christophe Spaenjers, "Art and Money," Yale School of Management Working Paper No. 09-26, Yale School of Management, April 28, 2010.

And we can assume that this hyperinflation in art prices, typical of how luxury goods and services respond to increases in concentrations of wealth, has also catapulted an unprecedented number of art dealers, consultants, and artists themselves into the ranks of the top 1, 0.1, and even 0.01 percent of earners, with the reported prices of many artworks well above $344,000, the 2009 threshold for 1 percent status.[3]

Indeed, the art world itself has developed into a prime example of a winner-take-all market, one of the economic models that emerged to describe the extremes of compensation that have become endemic in the financial and corporate worlds and now also extend to major museums and other large nonprofit organizations in the United States, where compensation ratios can rival those of the for-profit sector.[4] At all levels of the art world, one finds extreme wealth breezing past grinding poverty, from the archetypal struggling artist to the often temporary and benefit- less studio and gallery assistants to the low-wage staffers at non- profit organizations. Museums plead poverty in negotiations with workers and leave curators to scramble for exhibition budgets and often-meager artist and author fees, while raising hundreds of millions for big-name acquisitions and expansions, which pro- ceed in many institutions despite the continuing recession.[5]

And it is not only big museums and the art market that have benefitted from the enormous concentrations of wealth that have risen with inequality in the past decades. Given the steady decline of public funding for the arts since the 1980s, it is clear that this private wealth also financed much of the boom of smaller nonprofits, artist-run and alternative spaces, as well as a still-growing number of art foundations, prizes, and residencies. Under the U.S. system of providing a tax deduction on contributions to organizations, this private support for cultural institutions has amounted to a substantial indirect public subsidy. The corresponding loss in tax revenues may be negligible compared to the losses from other deductions and loopholes that have contributed significantly both to inequality and the impoverishment of our public sector, but it is a loss nevertheless, and one that has grown apace with the market value of artworks donated to museums.[6]

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3 Damien Hirst, reported by London's *Sunday Times* to be worth £215 million in 2010, may top the list of wealthy artists. The *Wall Street Journal* has reported estimates that international art dealer Larry Gagosian sells more than $1 billion in art annually, making it very likely that most if not all of the seventy-seven artists he represents have incomes well above the $1.4 million threshold for 0.1 percent status. See Kelly Crow, "The Gagosian Effect," *Wall Street Journal*, April 1, 2011. (For calculations of income percentile thresholds, see the Tax Foundation, http://www.taxfoundation.org/ news/show/250.html#table7.)

4 According to *Newsweek*, the highest paid CEOs in the nonprofit sector in 2010 were leaders of cultural organizations, with Zarin Mehta of the New York Philharmonic (at $2.6 million in total annual compensation) and Glenn Lowry of the Museum of Modern Art (at $2.5 million) topping the list. Greg Bocquet, "15 Highest-Paid Charity CEOs," *Newsweek*, October 26, 2010. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the ratio of average CEO total direct compensation to average production worker compensation in the United States was 185 to 1 in 2009. http://www.stateofwork- ingamerica.org/charts/view/17

5 The Whitney Museum recently broke ground on a new building in Manhattan's Meatpacking District that is estimated to cost $680 million to complete. The Museum of Modern Art is beginning a fundraising campaign to expand into the former site of the American Folk Art Museum, which it purchased in August 2011 for $31.2 million. MoMA sought major concessions from unions while raising $858 million for its last expansion, completed in 2004, resulting in a prolonged strike.

6 According to former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, the charitable deduction amounted to a total of $40 billion in lost tax revenues in 2007—which, he pointed out at the time, was equal to the total federal allocation to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. (See Robert B. Reich, "Is Harvard Really a Charity?" *Los Angeles Times*, October 1, 2007.) Cultural philanthropy is reported to have averaged about five to six percent of total charitable donations in recent years. This does not, however, include foundation support and corporate philanthropy. Of course, if the nonprofit art sector exploded in the past decades while the public sector has been under constant budgetary pressure to contract, it is not the result of a direct transfer. However, these phenomena are structurally and historically linked. Historically, the nonprofit sector in the United States developed not, primarily, as an alternative to the private sector, but as an alternative to the public sector. The U.S. model of privately governed cultural institutions has its origins in the gilded age of the late nineteenth century, when Andrew Carnegie and others spread the "gospel of wealth," advocating for private philanthropy instead of public provision and arguing that wealth is most productively administered by the wealthy and that private initiatives are better suited than the public sector to provide for social needs. The charitable deduction was introduced with a wartime tax increase in 1917 but extended by Treasury Secretary (and National Gallery of Art founder) Andrew Mellon in the 1920s. Mellon slashed top tax rates from 73 percent to 24 percent, arguing that lower taxes would increase tax revenues, spur economic growth—and also encourage philanthropy. The frenzy of financial speculation resulting from Mellon's economic policies came to an abrupt end with the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. Mellon's economic theories returned as the supply-side economics that have driven U.S. economic policy since the 1980s and have led to our most recent gilded age, museum boom—and recession.

However, it has been during this same period of inequality-fueled art world expansion that we have also seen a growing number of artists, curators, and critics take up the cause of social justice—often within organizations funded by corporate sponsor-ship and private wealth. We have seen a proliferation of degree programs focusing on social, political, critical, and community-based art practices—based mostly in private nonprofit and even for-profit art schools that charge among the highest tuitions of any masters-level degree programs. We have seen art magazines take up apparently radical political theory and even a critique of the art market—while weighted down with advertising for commercial galleries, art fairs, auction houses, and luxury goods. We have seen museums embrace the discourse and even functions of public service—while the charitable deduction from which they benefit reduces public coffers, while they attract private donors away from social-service charities,[7] and while many of their patrons actively lobby for a shrinking public sector. We have seen artworks identified with social and even economic critique sell for hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars. And we have seen critical, social, and political claims for what art is and does proliferate, becoming central to art's dominant legitimizing discourse.

We also have seen a proliferation of theories and practices that aim to account for these contradictions, or to confront them from within, or to escape them by proposing or creating alternatives. I myself have long argued that the critical and political potential of art lies in its very embeddedness in a deeply conflictual social field, which can only be confronted effectively *in situ*. From this perspective it would seem that the apparent contradictions between the critical and political claims of art and its economic conditions are not contradictions at all but rather attest to the vitality of the art world as a site of critique and contestation, as these practices develop in scope and complexity to confront the challenges of globalization, neoliberalism, post-Fordism, new regimes of spectacle, the debt crisis, right-wing populism, and now historic levels of inequality. And if some or even most of these practices prove ineffectual, or readily absorbed, with their truly radical elements marginalized or quickly outmoded, new theories and strategies immediately emerge in their place—in an ongoing process that now seems to serve as one of the art world's primary motors of content production.

With each passing year, however, rather than diminishing the art world's contradictions, these theories and practices only seem to expand along with them.

The diversity and complexity brought about by art-world expansion itself makes it perilous to generalize about such efforts. While I believe that we still can speak of "the art world" as a singular field, this expansion has led to the growth and coalescence of increasingly distinct artistic subfields, each defined by particular economies as well as configurations of practices, institutions, and values. There are the art worlds that revolve around commercial art galleries, art fairs, and auctions; the art worlds that revolve around curated exhibitions and projects in public and nonprofit organizations; the art worlds that revolve around academic institutions and discourses; and there are the community-based, activist, and DIY art worlds that aspire to exist outside of all these organized sites of activity, and, in some cases, even outside of the art world itself. At their extremes, participants in these subfields may indeed escape some of the art world's contradictions, although certainly not those of the world at large: there are those who feel at home with wealth and privilege, for whom art is a luxury business or an investment opportunity and perhaps not much more, as well as those who see art as a purely aesthetic domain in which the political and economic should play no part. And there are those who see art as social activism and who have nothing to do with commercial galleries and art fairs, society openings, gala benefits, and privately funded museums. Most of us, however, and most of the art world, exist uncomfortably and often painfully in between these extremes, embodying and performing the contradictions between them and the economic and political conflicts those contradictions reflect, unable to resolve them within our work or within ourselves, much less within our field.

7 According to Charity Navigator, donations to cultural charities increased 5.6 percent in 2010, while donations to health charities went up only 1.3 percent and donations to human service charities did not increase at all. See, http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=42.

Art discourse—which includes not only what critics, curators, artists, and art historians write about art, but what we say about what we do in the art field, in all its forms—seems to play a double role in this expanded and increasingly fragmented art world. As a critical discourse, it often proposes to describe these conditions and contradictions, account for them, and even to provide the tools to resolve them. At the same time, however, it remains largely and broadly shared, often traversing the most diverse art institutions, economies, and communities without any significant alteration in artistic, critical, and political claims or theoretical frame of reference. In this way, art discourse serves to maintain links among artistic subfields and to create a continuum between practices that may be completely incommensurable in terms of their economic conditions and social as well as artistic values. This may make art discourse one of the most consequential—and problematic—institutions in the art world today, along with mega-museums that aim to be all things to all people and survey exhibitions (like the Whitney Biennial) that offer up incomparable practices for comparison.

It is not only the immaterial character of art discourse that predisposes it to this function and mode of operation. Rather, it is the consistent tendency of art discourse to segregate the social and economic conditions of art from what it articulates as constitutive of the meaning, significance, and experience of artworks, as well as what it articulates as the motivations of artists, curators, and critics, even when it asserts that art is acting on these very conditions. While this is not surprising in the perspectives of those who view art as a purely aesthetic domain—and who even may make political arguments for art's autonomy as such— it seems increasingly symptomatic in an art world ever more intently focused on producing effects in the "real world" and on seeing art as an agent of social critique, if not of social change. The result has been an ever-widening gap between the material conditions of art and its symbolic systems: between what the vast majority of artworks *are* today (socially and economically) and what artists, curators, critics, and historians say that artworks— especially their own work or work they support—*do* and *mean*.

It now seems that the primary site of barriers between "art" and "life," between the aesthetic and epistemic forms that constitute art's symbolic systems and the practical and economic relations that constitute its social conditions, are not the physical spaces of art objects, as critics of the museum have often suggested, but the discursive spaces of art history and criticism, artists statements, and curatorial texts. Formal, procedural, and iconographic investigation and performative experimentation are elaborated as figures of radical social and even economic critique, while the social and economic conditions of the works themselves and of their production and reception are completely ignored or recognized only in the most euphemized ways. Even when these conditions are specifically conceptualized by artists as the subject matter and material of their work, they tend to be reduced in art discourse to elements of a symbolic rather than practical system, interpreted as representative of a particular artistic position, to be evaluated in contrast to other artistic positions, usually according to a theoretical framework which itself is being proposed in contrast to some other theoretical framework.[8]

Indeed, much of what is written about art now seems to me to be almost delusional in the grandiosity of its claims for social impact and critique, particularly given its often total disregard of the reality of art's social conditions. The broad and often unquestioned claims that art in some way critiques, negates, questions, challenges, confronts, contests, subverts, or transgresses norms, conventions, hierarchies, relations of power and domination, or other social structures—usually by reproducing them in an exaggerated, displaced, or otherwise distanced, alienated, or estranged way—seem to have developed into little more than a rationale for some of the most cynical forms of collaboration with some of the most corrupt and exploitative forces in our society.[9] Even more perniciously, perhaps, we also often reproduce in art discourse the dissociation of power and domination from material conditions of existence that has become endemic to our national political discourse and has contributed to the marginalization of labor and class-based struggles. With this, we may also collude in the enormously successful culture war that, for a wide swath of the U.S. population, has effectively identified class privilege and hierarchy with cultural and educational rather than economic capital, and which has facilitated the success of right-wing populists in convincing this population to vote for its own dispossession and impoverishment.

8 I examined the critical and art-historical reception of Michael Asher's work as an example of this tendency in my essay, "Procedural Matters: The Art of Michael Asher," *Artforum* 46, no. 10 (Summer 2008): 374–81.

9 Certainly, my own work has not escaped this condition.

Many years ago, I turned to the work of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for an account of art's social conditions, and found an account of their particular relationship with its symbolic systems as well. As Bourdieu asks in the opening pages of *The Rules of Art*:

What indeed is this discourse which speaks of the social or psychological world *as if it did not speak of it*; which *cannot speak* of this world except on condition that it only speak of it as if it did not speak of it, that is, in a *form* which performs, for the author and the reader, a *denegation* (in the Freudian sense of *Verneinung*) of what it expresses?[10]

Among the aims of Bourdieu's work on cultural fields was to develop an alternative to purely internal and external readings of art—to those who take art as an autonomous phenomenon whose meaning derives only from immanent structures, and those who see art only as a manifestation of social, economic, or psychological forces. Here and elsewhere, however, Bourdieu suggests that the "denial of the social world" in cultural discourse is not just a matter of attending to the genuine logic of art or of avoiding the trap of a reductive or schematic social determinism. Rather, he suggests that this negation (*dénégation* in French) of the social and its determination is central to art and its discourse and even may be the genuine logic of artistic phenomena itself—and thus, any "external" reading that simply reduces art to social conditions, without taking into account its specific negation of those conditions, would fail to understand anything about art at all.

With regard to art as a social field, Bourdieu evokes negation in connection with a "bad faith... denial of the economy," which, he argues, is a correlate to one of the conditions of art as a relatively autonomous field: that is, its capacity to exclude or invert what he calls the dominant principle of hierarchization (which, under capitalism, is economic value).[11] More broadly, he describes the aesthetic disposition—the modes of perception and appreciation capable of both recognizing and constituting objects and practices as works of art—as a "generalized capacity to neutralize ordinary urgencies and to bracket off practical ends." He argues that this artistic tendency to distance and "exclude any 'naïve' reaction—horror at the horrible, desire for the desirable, pious reverence for the sacred—along with all purely ethical responses, in order to concentrate solely upon the mode of representation, the style, perceived and appreciated by comparison to other styles, is one dimension of a total relation to the world and to others, a life-style, in which the effects of particular conditions of existence are expressed in a 'misrecognizable' form."[12]

In Bourdieu's analysis, those conditions of existence "are characterized by the suspension and removal of economic necessity." What this distancing thus performs is an "affirmation of power over a dominated necessity"—over need that may be a consequence of economic domination or impoverishment, but which also itself exists as a form of domination in that it may determine our actions and thus limits our freedom and autonomy. While this aesthetic neutralization of urgencies and ends may appear as a radical rejection of economic rationality and domination, historically achieved by artists through sacrifice and struggle, it also corresponds to the freedom from need afforded by economic privilege. And it is this dimension of the aesthetic that Bourdieu finds the specifically artistic principle underlying the objective collusion, manifest in the art market and in private nonprofit museums, between apparently radical artistic positions and those of economic elites.

In some respects, this is one of those aspects of Bourdieu's work that may appear woefully out of date. Art and art discourse have become increasingly focused on social and psychological functions and effects, as more and more artists, curators, and critics endeavor to escape the boundaries of the

10 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford, CA: University of Stanford Press, 1996), 3.

11 See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," p. 50, and "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," pp. 74–76, both in Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). This analysis is often misunderstood as an assertion that art is autonomous or that this inversion of economic criteria defines art. Rather, Bourdieu argues that art's autonomy in this sense is only ever relative to its capacity to invert and exclude external criteria, and that this capacity only developed and can be sustained under specific social and historical conditions.

12 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 54.

artistic and aesthetic and to reintegrate art and life, to serve social needs, to produce authentic emotional relationships, to embrace performativity, to liberate the spectator, to act in and on urban space, and to trans- form all manner of social, economic, and interpersonal structures. Art discourse no longer speaks of the social and psychological world *as if it did not speak of it*. It speaks of that world incessantly, especially in its economic aspects: financial and affective. And yet, it seems to me, to a very large extent, it speaks of that world *so as not to speak of it*, still, again, in forms that *perform* a negation in a Freudian sense quite specifically—and not only of the economic.

I was always struck that Bourdieu, apparently no fan of psychoanalysis, turned to Freud when it came to accounting for literary and artistic fields and especially their discourse. With his reference to negation "in the Freudian sense," he invites us to consider the operations of the aesthetic disposition, as well as the conditions of the artistic field and our investments in it, in terms of subjective as well as social structures. Freud describes negation as a procedure through which "the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness," even resulting in "full intellectual acceptance"; and yet, repression remains in place because this "intellectual function is separated from the affective process."[13] As such, negation functions as a mechanism of defense that produces a contradiction on the level of discourse that manifests but also aims to contain a conflict—between opposing impulses or affects; between a wish and a countervailing imperative; or between a wish and a prohibition that negation itself may represent. In addition to functioning as a mechanism of defense, Freud describes negation as central to the development of judgment, not only of good and bad qualities, but also of whether something that is thought exists in reality. Because what is bad, what is alien, and what is external are "to begin with, identical," negation is a derivative of expulsion.[14] Thus, one can say that what negation performs is a splitting off, externalization, or projection of some part of the self (or, perhaps, any relatively autonomous field) experienced as bad, alien, or external— distancing, above all, our active and affective link with it.

And so, we speak *of* our interests in social, economic, political, and psychological theory and structures, and in artistic practices that engage these interests as well, or even attempt to engage materially the conditions those theories describe. And yet, those interests—social, psychological, political, economic—generally appear only as what Bourdieu once called "specific, highly sublimated and euphemized interests,"[15] framed as objects of inquiry or experimentation; of intellectual or artistic investments that are carefully segregated from the very material economic and emotional investments we have in what we do, and from the very real structures and relationships we produce or (more often) reproduce in our activities, be these economic in the political or psychological sense, located in a social or corporal body; isolating the manifest interests of art from the immediate, intimate, and consequent interests that motivate participation in the field, organize investments of energy and resources, and that are linked to specific benefits and satisfactions, as well as to the constant specter of loss, privation, frustration, guilt, shame, and their associated anxiety.

If the artistic negation Bourdieu described indeed functions defensively, in a psychoanalytic sense, then the primary object of those defenses may in fact be the conflicts attendant to the economic conditions of art and our complicity in the economic domination—and spreading impoverishment—that the enormous wealth within the art world represents. Much of art discourse, like art itself today, seems to me to be driven by the struggle to manage and contain the poisonous combination of envy and guilt provoked by that complicity and by participation in the highly competitive, winner-take-all market the art field has become, as well as the shame of being valued as less-than in its precipitous hierarchies. To the extremes of symbolic as well as material rewards within the art field, there corresponds an art discourse that swings between the extremes of a cynicism that disavows guilt, and a critical or political position-taking that disavows competition, envy, and greed; or, between an aestheticism that disavows any interest in the satisfactions such material rewards might offer, and a utopianism that ascribes to itself the power of realizing them

13 Sigmund Freud, "Negation" [1925], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIX (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 235–36.

14 Ibid., 237.

15 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 240.

by other means; or, between an elitism that would tame envy and guilt by naturalizing entitlement, and a populism that would mollify them with often highly narcissistic and self-serving forms of generosity, from traditional philanthropy to proclamations that "everyone is an artist."

Increasingly it seems that these positions do not represent alternatives to each other but rather are only vicissitudes of a common structure. They are bound together by their common claim on art and their common contestation of the art world's enormous resources and rewards. Individually and together, they serve to distance and disown aspects of that world, our activities in it, and our investments in those activities that might otherwise render continued participation unbearable. Above all, perhaps, they save us from confronting the social conflicts we live, not only externally but also within ourselves, in our own relative privilege and relative privation, by splitting these positions into idealized and demonized oppositions, to be inhabited or expelled according to their defensive function and the loss, or threat of loss, with which they are associated.

Certainly it is less painful to resolve these conflicts symbolically, in artistic, intellectual, and even political gestures and position-takings, than to resolve them materially—to the marginal extent that it is within our power to do so in our own lives—with choices that would entail sacrifices and renunciations. Even these sacrifices may be preferable, for some, to the pain of wanting what we also hate, and hating what we also are and also love, from the guilt of hurting others with competition, greed, and destructiveness to the fear of envious and retaliatory aggression. And it may be that any form of agency, however ineffectual and illusory or self-denying, is preferable to the anxiety of individual helplessness in the face of overwhelming social as well as psychological forces.

The most prevalent and in some ways effective defenses against the conflicts of the art field, however, may be various forms of detachment and displacement, splitting and projection. We may simply locate those conflicts, or the bad parts of them, elsewhere, in social or physical locations or structures at a safe remove from the art world and our participation in it, which we can then attack or attempt to act upon without challenging our own activities or investments in the art world. This may be true of much of what is considered political and critical art that exists primarily in the art field, as distinct, for example, from activism that may take cultural forms but does not exist primarily in the art field. Conversely, we may locate what is good elsewhere, in a "real world" or "everyday life" imagined as less conflicted or ineffectual and where we also may try to relocate ourselves; or in a whole range of cultures and communities, practices and publics imagined as less fouled with hierarchies and relations of domination and from which art wrongly has been split off. This may be true of much of what is described as social and community-based practices that seek to redeem art vis-à-vis positive social functions. And then we go about the work of reintegration and reconciliation—of art and life, of the specialized and vernacular, of performer and spectator, of individual and collective, of the aesthetic and the social and political, of the self and the object. Ironically, however, we often reconstitute those divisions in the very process of attempting reparation, most obviously by locating these "real" structures and relationships outside of the artistic frame, such that they must be newly constituted and conceptualized as the material or subject matter of art, or reintegrated through practical innovations or theoretical elaborations. It often seems that the very process of the conceptualization of social and psychological structures in art, and above all in the art discourse in which these conceptualizations are articulated, has the consequence of distancing and derealizing them; of splitting them off from the social and psychological relations that we may be producing and reproducing in the very same activities of making and engaging with art.

In fact, however, all art and art institutions, including art discourse, invariably exist within, produce and reproduce, perform or enact structures and relationships that are inseparably formal and phenomenological, semiotic, social, economic, and psychological. All of these structures and relationships simply are always there, in what art is, in what we do and experience with art, in what motivates our engagement with art, just as they are in every other aspect of our lives. Some aspects of these structures and relationships may be conceptualized by artists as the material or content of their work and specifically worked upon, with an intention to reveal or transform them; others may be elaborated by critics, historians, and curators. Most, however, remain implicit, assumed, whether unconscious in the psychoanalytic sense of repressed or simply un-thought, even while they may be central to what art is and means socially, as well as to our own interests in and experiences of making or engaging with art as well as in other forms of participation in the art field.

As much as art discourse may reveal structures and relationships to us, it also serves to conceal, with direction and sometimes misdirection; with affirmations accompanied by implicit or explicit negations of other ways of seeing, experiencing, and understanding; with abstraction and formalization that distance and neutralize; or simply through a pervasive silence about aspects of art, our experience of it, and the relationships it performs that, once internalized, may even cause them effectively to disappear for us. Through these operations of art discourse, we not only banish entire regions of our own activities and experiences, investments, and motivations to insignificance, irrelevance, and unspeakability, we also consistently misrepresent what art is and what we do when we engage with art and participate in the art field.

The politics of artistic phenomena, then, may lie less in which structures and relations are reproduced and enacted or transformed in art than in which of these relations, and our investments in them, we are led to recognize and reflect on, and which we are led to ignore and efface, split off, externalize, or negate. From this perspective, the task of art and especially of art discourse is one of structuring a reflection on precisely those immediate, lived, and invested relations that have been split off and disowned.

Negation, for Freud, is not only a defensive maneuver. It is also a step in the direction of overcoming repression and reintegrating split-off ideas and affects; it is central to the development not only of judgment but also of thought. This may be what Bourdieu had in mind when, after evoking negation "in the Freudian sense," he goes on to ask "if work on form is not what makes possible the partial anamnesis of deep and repressed structures"; if artists and writers are not "driven to act as a medium of those structures (social and psychological), which then achieve objectification," passing through them and their work on "inductive words" and "conductive bodies" as well as "more or less opaque screens." And it may be that art's capacity to "reveal while veiling" and to "produce a derealizing 'reality effect'"[16] is not only what makes these structures available for recognition and reflection—and potentially for change—but also what makes this recognition tolerable, perhaps sometimes even pleasurable. In this sense then, the role of crafted, self-consciously and conceptually framed elaborations, objectifications, and enactments of these social and psychological structures is not that of producing an alienation effect or a disinvestment, as many traditions of artistic critique would have it, but rather to provide for just enough distance, just enough not me, just enough sense of agency, to be able to tolerate the raw shame of exposure, the fear or pain of loss, and the trauma of helplessness and subjection, and to be able to recognize and reintegrate the immediate, intimate, and material investments we have in what we do and that lead us to reproduce structures and relationships even while we claim to oppose them.

In order to achieve this recognition and reintegration, however, it finally may be necessary to free these operations of negation from those of negative judgment. Toward the end of his essay on negation, Freud famously writes that "in analysis we never discover a 'no' in the unconscious"[17]—there (as he put it elsewhere) "the category of contraries and contradictories... is simply disregarded."[18] The dreaming, imagining, thinking, saying, writing, representing, making, or performing of anything may be taken, first of all, as an affirmation that what is dreamt, imagined, thought, etc., is present within us as a memory, a fantasy, a wish, a representative of an affective state or force, an object that matters to us, or an intra- or intersubjective relationship in which we are, in one way or another, a participant. A negative judgment attached to that idea, object, or relationship is irrelevant with regard to this fundamental fact and indicates only that we feel compelled to distance ourselves from it and to disown it.

Artistic critique and critical discourse have often focused on the conflicts and contradictions of culture and society, including the art world itself. While negations performed as judgments, expressed or implied in various forms of distancing and objectification, might elaborate on such contradictions and take the form of critique, what they signify as negations in a psychoanalytic sense are not conflicts in culture and society but rather conflicts in our selves, which are then manifest as contradictions in our own positions

16 Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 3–4.

17 Freud, "Negation," 239.

18 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. IV, 318.

and practices. It may well be the critical agency within our selves that plays the greatest role in maintaining this internal conflict and, thus, in reducing cultural critique to a defensive and reproductive function. By interpreting negations as critique, by responding to judgments of attribution with judgments of attribution, by aggressively attempting to expose conflicts and to strip away defenses in critiques of critiques and negations of negations, critical practices and discourses may often collude in the distancing of affect and the dissimulation of our immediate and active investments in our field.

Instead, perhaps, we should be more like the analysts that Freud describes in the opening paragraph of his essay: "In our interpretation," he writes, "we take the liberty of disregarding the negation and of picking out the subject-matter alone of the association."[19] Far from judging negation and the manifest contradictions it may produce as a kind of hypocrisy, fraud, or bad faith, the analyst nods and lets the analysand move on, making note of the forces of repression at work and leaving open the way for further associations that might lead to the relinking of intellectual process and affective investment— and, eventually, to meaningful change. Indeed, it may be that the way out of the seemingly irresolvable contradictions of the art world lies directly within our grasp, not in the next artistic innovation— not, first of all, in what we do—but in what we say about what we do: in art discourse. While a transformation in art discourse would not, of course, resolve any of the enormous conflicts in the social world or even within ourselves, it might at least allow us to engage them more honestly and effectively.

19 Freud, "Negation," 235.

## L'1%, C'EST MOI

How do the world's leading collectors earn their money? How do their philanthropic activities relate to their economic operations? And what does collecting art mean to them and how does it affect the art world? If we look at the incomes of this class, it is conspicuous that their profits are based on the growth of income inequality all over the world.

This redistribution of capital in turn has a direct influence on the art market: the greater the discrepancy between the rich and the poor, the higher prices in this market rise. The situation, it would seem, urgently calls for the development of alternatives to the existing system.

Who are the collectors of contemporary art today? The *ARTnews* 200 Top Collectors list is an obvious place to start. Near the top of the alphabetical list is Roman Abramovich, estimated by *Forbes* to be worth $13.4 billion, who admitted paying billions in bribes for control of Russian oil and aluminum assets.[1] Bernard Arnault, listed by *Forbes* as the fourth richest man in the world with $41 billion, controls LVMH which, despite the debt crisis, reported a sales growth of 13 percent in the first half of 2011.[2] Hedge fund manager John Arnold, who got his start at Enron—where he received an $8 million bonus just before it collapsed—recently gave $150,000 to an organization seeking to limit public pensions.[3] MoMA, MoCA and LACMA trustee Eli Broad is worth $5.8 billion and was a board member and major shareholder of AIG. Steven A. Cohen, estimated to be worth $8 billion, is the founder of SAC Capital Advisors, which is under investigation for insider trading.[4] Guggenheim trustee Dimitris Daskalopoulos, who is also chairman of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, recently called for "modern private initiative" to save the failing Greek economy from a "bloated and parasitic [….] patronage-ridden state."[5] Frank J. and Lorenzo Fertitta were the third and fourth highest paid men in the US in 2007, according to *Forbes*. Guggenheim trustee David Ganek recently shut down his $4 billion Level Global hedge fund after an F.B.I raid.[6] Noam Gottesman and former partner Pierre Lagrange (also on the *ARTnews* list), earned £400 million each on the sale of their hedge fund GLG in 2007 making them "among the world's biggest winners from the credit crunch," according to the *The Sunday Times*. Hedge fund manager Kenneth C. Griffin supported Obama in 2008 but recently gave $500,000 to a political action committee created by former Bush adviser Karl Rove and was also seen at a meeting of the right-wing-populist Koch Network.[7] Andrew Hill's $100 million in compensation in 2009 led Citigroup to sell its Philbro division, where he was the top trader, after pressures from regulators to curtail his pay on the heels of Citigroup's receipt of $45 billion in US federal bailout funds (he subsequently moved the company offshore).[8] J. Thomilson Hill is one of a number of principles of the Blackstone Group investment firm who were listed among the 25 highest-paid men in the US by *Forbes* in 2007, with $46.3 million in compensation that year. Fellow Blackstone cofounder and Frick Collection and Asia Society trustee Steven Schwarzman recently compared Obama's effort to raise the tax rate paid by private-equity managers on their profit shares, currently taxed as capital gains at 15 percent, to Hitler's invasion of Poland.[9] And there is Damien Hirst, estimated by *The Sunday Times* to be worth £215 million. Peter Kraus collected $25 million for just three months' work when his exit package was triggered by Merrill Lynch's sale to Bank of America with the help of US federal funds.[10] Henry Kravis' income in 2007

1 Dominic Kennedy, "Chelsea owner admits he paid out billions in bribes," *Irish Independent*, July 5, 2008.

2 Stephanie Clifford, "Even Marked Up, Luxury Goods Fly Off Shelves," *New York Times*, August 3, 2011.

3 Will Evans, "CA pension overhaul group gets grant from Texans," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 12, 2011.

4 Azam Ahmed, "DealBook: SAC Capital Said to Face Insider Trading Inquiry," *New York Times*, June 1, 2011.

5 "Annual General Meeting of SEV Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, adress [sic] by SEV Chairman Mr. Dimitris Daskalopoulos, May 24, 2011." http://www.sev.org.gr/ online/viewNews.aspx?id=1918&mid=&lang=en.

6 Azam Ahmed, "Dealbook: For Level Global, F.B.I. Raid is a Final Blow," *New York Times*, March 4, 2011.

7 "Chicago Billionaire Leads Hedge Fund Shift Away from Obama," *abcnews.go.com*, December 7, 2010; Kate Zernike, "Secretive Republican Donors Are Planning Ahead," *New York Times*, October 19, 2010.

8 Dealbook, "Ex-Citi Trader, Hall, Raises $1 billion," *New York Times*, June 21, 2010.

9 Mark DeCambre, "Blackstone Chief Schwarzman likens Obama to Hitler over tax rises," *The Telegraph*, August 16, 2010.

10 Heidi N. Moore, "Deal Journal: Merrill Lynch's Peter Kraus Collects $25 Million, Then Resigns," *Wall Street Journal Blogs*, December 22, 2008.

was reported to be $1.3 million a day.[11] His wife, economist Marie-Josée Kravis, who is MoMA's president and a fellow at the neoconservative Hudson Institute, recently defended "Anglo-Saxon capitalism" against "Europe's 'social capitalist politics'" in Forbes.com. Daniel S. Loeb, a MoCA trustee and founder of the $7.8 billion hedge fund Third Point, sent a letter to investors in the midst of recent federal budget negotiations that led the US to the brink of default, attacking Obama for "insisting that the only solution to the nation's problems... lies in the redistribution of wealth" (the negotiations concluded with drastic cuts and no tax increases).[12] Dimitri Mavrommatis, the "Swiss-based" Greek asset manager, paid £18 million for a Picasso at Christie's on June 21, 2011, when Greeks were rioting against austerity measures. And of course, there is Charles Saatchi, who helped elect Margaret Thatcher. Peter Simon, the founder of one of the UK's biggest retail chains, was paid a £16.4 million dividend this year by his company, which is based in the British Virgin Islands, where there is no capital gains or corporate tax and the income tax is zero. The firm of MoMA chairman Jerry Speyer defaulted on a major real estate investment in 2010, losing $500 million for the California State Pension Fund and up to $2 billion in debt secured by US federal agencies.[13] And there is Reinhold Würth, worth $5.7 billion, who has been fined for tax evasion in Germany and compared taxation to torture.[14] He recently acquired "Virgin of Mercy" by Hans Holbein the Younger, paying the highest price ever for an artwork in Germany and outbidding the Städelsche Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt/M.,[15] where the painting had been on display since 2003.

Until about ten years ago, one of the most widely cited texts by an economist about the art market was a paper called "Unnatural Value: or Art Investment as a Floating Crap Game," written in 1986 by William J. Baumol. Baumol analyzed "several centuries of price data" and came to the conclusion that the real rate of return on art investments was basically zero—hardly an encouragement for art collectors.[16] In 2002, two New York University-based economists, Jiangping Mei and Michael Moses, claimed to prove him wrong[17] and began publishing an analysis of art auction results that showed art outperforming many other investments. This was the beginning of the Mei Moses Art Index (as well as their art consulting business, Beautiful Asset Advisors, Figure 1), which quickly began to appear on art investment websites and in publications like *Forbes*, playing a significant role in the development of the art investment industry.

Finally, a couple of years ago, a group of economists began to look at these comparative indexes not simply for evidence of art's investment value, but for an explanation of its price structure. William N. Goetzmann, Luc Renneboog, and Christophe Spaenjers suspected that equity market returns actually have a direct impact on art prices by increasing the buying power of the wealthy. So they compared art prices to income measures. As they report in their paper "Art and Money," their analysis did not find a relationship between art returns and "overall income variables (such as GDP or total personal income)" but only with income inequality: art prices do not go up as a society as a whole becomes wealthier, but only when income inequality increases. Their analysis suggests that "a one percentage point increase in the share of total income earned by the top 0.1 percent triggers an increase in art prices of about 14 percent." They conclude: "It is indeed the money of the wealthy that drives art prices. This implies that we can expect art booms whenever income inequality rises quickly. This seems exactly what we witnessed during the last period of strong art price appreciation, 2002–2007."[18]

11 Dealbook, "Henry Kravis in Focus as Buyout Backlash Spreads," *New York Times*, December 6, 2007.

12 Azam Ahmed, "Dealbook: Writing Again, Third Point's Loeb Takes Swipe at Obama," *New York Times*, July 24, 2011.

13 Charles V. Bagli and Christine Haughney, "Wide Fallout in Failed Deal for Stuyvesant Town," *New York Times*, January 25, 2011.

14 Melanie Ahlemeier, "Die Rache des Schraubenkönigs," *Süddeutsche.de*, December 18, 2008.

15 Rose-Maria Gropp, "Deutschlands teuerstes Kunstwerk," *faz.net*, July 14, 2011.

16 *The American Economic Review* 76, no. 2, 1989: 10–14.

17 "Art as an Investment and the Underperformance of Masterpieces," New York University Finance Working Paper, no. 01–12 (2002).

18 "Art and Money," Yale School of Management Working Paper, No. 09–26, Yale School of Management (2010).

A quick look the Gini index (Figure 2), which tracks income disparity worldwide, shows that the countries with the most significant art booms of the past two decades have also experi- enced the greatest rise in inequality: the United States, Britain, China and, home to the most recent boom, India. In the US, at least, the steep increase in inequality has been reported widely for years, with economists like Paul Krugman and fellow Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz sounding alarms in the mainstream press. Even *The Economist* has shown concern. Recent articles have focused on new data showing that the top 1 percent now take 25 percent of the income and control 40 percent of the wealth in the US, up from 12 and 33 percent 25 years ago, while the income of the bottom 99 percent has not risen since 1993. This brings inequality in the US back to 1929 levels and close to the current level of Mexico.[19]

With regard to the art market, however, focusing on the 1 percent is misleading. The threshold for 1 percent status in the US in 2008 was an annual gross income of $380,354—hardly the makings of a significant collector. It is only at the 1 percent threshold of $1,803,585 that we begin to encounter our patron class. As Goetzmann et al. note, art prices, like real estate prices in desirable cities, rise with income inequality as the wealthy outbid each other for rarefied properties. Steeply increasing top incomes set off an equally steep inflation in the goods and services associated with affluence[20] resulting in a downclassing of formerly affluent income levels. In the art world, this has effectively priced professionals and other traditionally art-supporting groups out of the market. More broadly, it produces a distortion in the perception of wealth, as members of the top 20, 10, and even 1 percent may no longer perceive themselves as affluent.

The art market boom of the past decade has been associated widely with the rise of HNWIs (high net worth individuals, Figure 3) or ultra-HNWIs (people worth over $1 million or $30 million respectively), terms popularized by the World Wealth Reports that Merrill Lynch and CapGemini began releasing in 1997. These reports show the total wealth of HNWIs exploding from $19.1 trillion in 1997 to $42.7 trillion in 2010. *Art+Auction* recently celebrated trends documented in the 2011 report: the number of HNWIs world-wide, which almost doubled between 1997 and 2007 from 5.9 to more than 10.9 million, has recovered from its 2008 dip to pre-crisis levels; best of all, HNWI demand for "investments of passion"—including cars, boats, jets (29 percent), jewelry, gems, watches (22 percent) and art (22 percent)—has also rebounded![21]

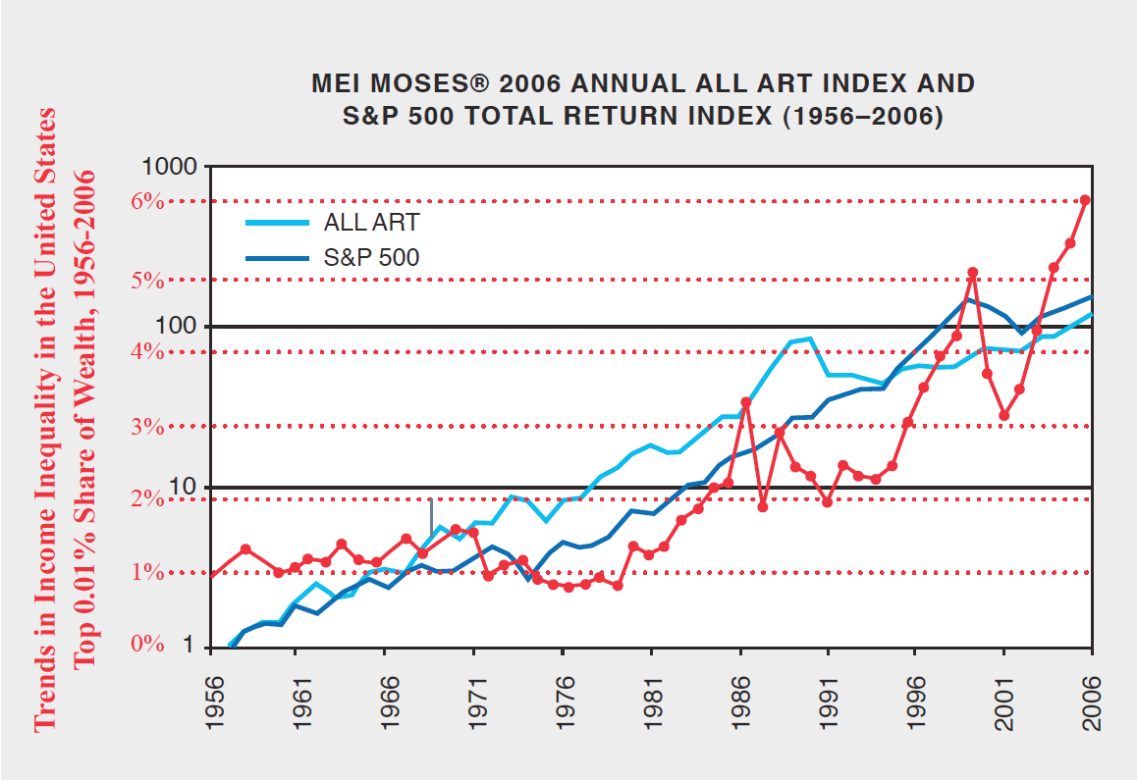
But it is not only the market-based sector of the art world that has benefited from the rise of HNWIs. Since public arts funding has mostly declined in Europe and North America since the 1980s, it must be assumed that, directly and indirectly, this increasingly concentrated private wealth has also fueled the enormous expansion in the past few decades of museums, biennial exhibitions, studio art and art related degree programs, art publications, art residencies and awards, etc.

In the US at least, the causes of rising inequality are relatively clear: anti-tax and anti-government politics that reversed progressive taxation and led to corporate and financial deregulation; political and legal assaults on organized labor that led to falling wages and, together with deregulation, removed any checks on skyrocketing executive compensation. These politics have been supported by a hugely successful culture war that has effectively identified class hierarchy and privilege with educational and cultural capital, rather than economic capital, for much of the US population outside of urban centers. It is also clear that financial deregulation played a major role in the subprime crisis, as did the cheap credit that propped up consumer spending and the real estate market as real wages declined. And it is also clear that the sovereign debt crisis that has followed the subprime crisis will only further increase inequality as austerity measures are implemented to protect banks and bondholders. The pain of cuts to cultural budgets is hard to compare to the impoverishment inflicted on millions by mass foreclosures and job loss; the bankruptcy of pension plans; cuts in public sector wages, in health care, in support for the unemployed, for students;

19 "Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%" *Vanity Fair*, May 2011.

20 "Economics: Free Exchange: The Cost of Living Extremely Well," *Economist.com*, http://www. economist.com/blogs/freeexchange/2007/09/ the_cost_of_living_extremely_w.

21 Roman Kraeussl, "Following their Passions," in: *Art+Auction*, Summer 2011.



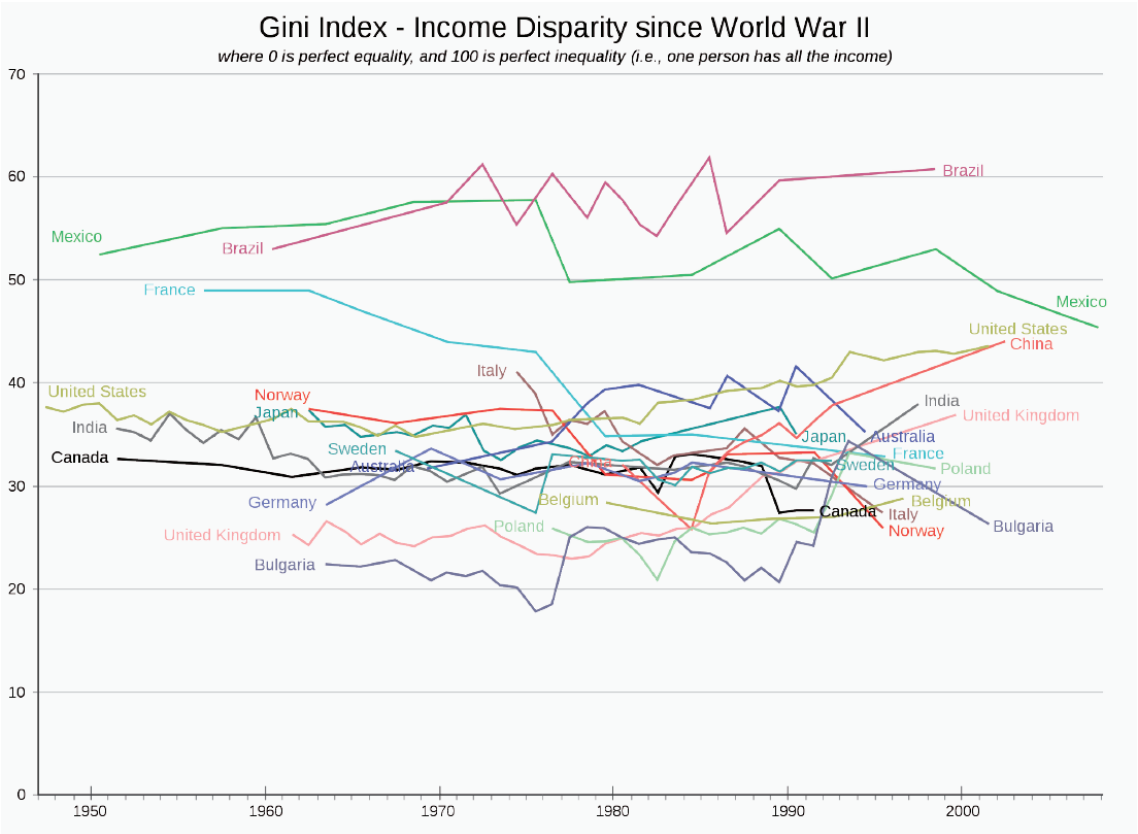




Figure 1-2: Andrea Fraser,"Index", published anonymously in Artforum, Summer 2011, p. 431.
Produced for "24 Advertisements", a project by Jacob Fabricus,
with design assistance by Santiago Pérez Gomes-de Silva, Studio Manuel Raeder.

with steep increases in the cost of education, etc. Anyway, we can always turn to HNWIs, who continue to privatize profits at pre-crisis rates. And as our survey of Top Collectors shows, many of our patrons are actively working to preserve the political and financial system that will keep their wealth, and inequality, growing for decades to come.

Except to stalwart adherents of trickle-down theory, it must be abundantly clear by now that what has been good for the art world has been disastrous for the rest of the world.

How can we continue to rationalize our participation in this economy? In the United States, it is difficult to imagine any arts organization or practice that can escape it. The private nonprofit model—which almost all US museums as well as alternative art organizations exist within—is dependent on wealthy donors and has its nineteenth century origins in the same anti-tax and anti-government ideology that led to the current situation: the principle that private initiatives are better suited to fulfill social needs than the public sector and that wealth is most productively administered by the wealthy. Even outside of institutions, artists engaged in community-based and social practices that aim to provide public benefit in the context of budget cuts may be just what George H. W. Bush called for when he envisioned volunteers and community organizations spreading like "a thousand points of lights" in the wake of his rollback in public spending.[22]

If our only choice is to participate in this economy or abandon the art field entirely, at least we can stop rationalizing that participation in the name of critical or political art practices or—adding insult to injury—social justice. Any claim that we represent a progressive social force while our activities are directly subsidized by the engines of inequality can only contribute to the justification of that inequality—the (not so) new legitimation function of art museums. The only "alternative" today is to recognize our participation in that economy and confront it in a direct and immediate way in all of our institutions, including museums, and galleries, and publications. Despite the radical political rhetoric that abounds in the art world, censorship and self-censorship reign when it comes to confronting its economic conditions, except in marginalized (often self-marginalized) arenas where there is nothing to lose—and little to gain—in speaking truth to power.[23]

In the US, the duplicity of progressive claims in art may also contribute to the success of culture warriors and right-wing populists in convincing economically and culturally marginal popula- tions outside of urban centers that progressive politics is just a ruse of cultural and educational elites to preserve their privilege. In our case, they may be right. It increasingly seems to me that politics in the art world is largely a politics of envy and guilt, or of self-interest generalized in the name of a narrowly conceived and privileged form of autonomy, and that critique most often serves negation in a Freudian rather than a Marxian sense, distancing, above all, these economic conditions and our investment in them.[24] As such, it is a politics that functions to defend against the contradictions that might otherwise make our continued participation in the art field, and access to its considerable rewards—which have ensconced many of us comfortably among the 10 percent, if not the 1 percent or even the .1 percent—unbearable.

22 George H. W. Bush, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1989.

23 I began much of this research in the spring of 2010, when *Artforum* asked me to contribute to their summer issue on museums. *Artforum* declined to publish the text I submitted, which detailed the involvement of MoMA trustees in the subprime crisis. That research developed into an initiative called Artigarchy, an interactive web-based data platform that would track the political and economic affiliations of top collectors and trustees. I have yet to find an art organization willing to take it on.

24 See Andrea Fraser, "Speaking of the Social World..." *Texte zur Kunst* 21, no. 81 (2011): 153–156.

In Europe, however, there may be more choices as long as direct public subsidy exists. The debt crisis is pushing more and more of the European art field toward the US model. The British Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, recently called for an "American-style culture of philanthropy" to save the arts in Britain from a 30 percent cut in the Arts Council and a 15 percent cut in funding for museums.[25] Don't do it! Let this tale of inequality and crisis in the US be a cautionary one. Rather than turning to collectors to subsidize the acquisition of art works at grotesquely inflated prices, European museums should turn away from the art market and the art and artists valorized in it. If this means that public museums contract and collectors create their own privately controlled institutions, so be it. Let these private institutions be the treasure vaults and theme-park spectacles and economic freak shows that many already are. Let curators and critics and art historians as well as artists withdraw their cultural capital from this market. At the very least, we must begin to evaluate whether artworks fulfill, or fail to fulfill, political or critical claims on the level of their social and economic conditions. We must insist that what art works are economically centrally determines what they *mean* socially and also artistically. I believe that a broad-based shift in art discourse can help bring about a long overdue splitting off of the market-dominated sub-field of galleries, auction houses, and art fairs. Let this sub-field become the luxury goods business it already basically is, with what circulates there having as little to do with art as yachts, jets, and watches. European museums have the potential to be the birthplace of a new art field that could emerge from this split, where new forms of autonomy can develop: not as secessionist "alternatives" that exist only in the grandiose enactments and magical thinking artists and theorists, but as fully institutionalized structures, which, with the "properly social magic of institutions,"[26] will be able to produce, reproduce, and reward specific and, let's hope, more equitably derived and distributed forms of capital.*

*Thanks to Thanks to Sven Lütticken for his valuable comments on drafts of this text. First published in: *Texte zur Kunst* 83, September 2011, pp. 114–127.

25 Quoted in Chartlotte Higgins, "Will philanthropists save the arts?" *The Guardian*, October 21, 2010.

26 Pierre Bourdieu/Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1992), 117.

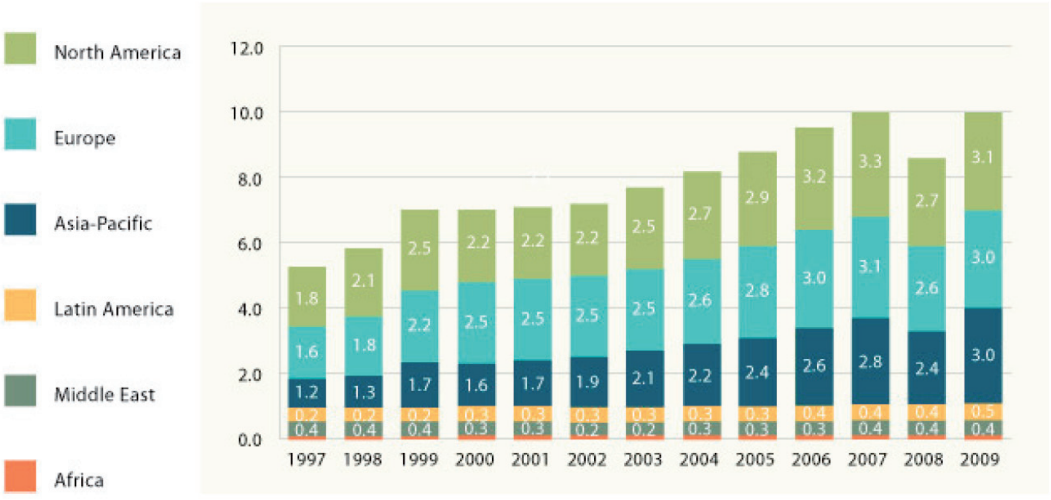



Figure 3: Number of HNWIs per region (in millions) / Anzahl der HNWIs nach Region (in Millionen)

continent.

# An Excerpt from Euripides' *Hippolytus*

*Sean Gurd*

*continent.* 2.3 (2012): 202-207

*Sean Gurd's translation of Euripides'* Hippolytus *has been published with Uitgeverij.*

Though he was judged "most tragic" in the generation after his death, though more copies and fragments of his plays have survived than of any other tragedian, and though his *Orestes* became the most widely performed tragedy in Greco-Roman Antiquity, during his lifetime his success was only moderate, and to him his career may have felt more like a failure. He was regularly selected to have his plays performed in the annual festival of Dionysus at Athens. But the plays were performed in a competition, and in the competitions he lost and lost, winning first place only five times in a career that spanned more than forty years. His corpus reads like the remains of a life spent trying to get a few things right and never being quite satisfied: scenes and schematized combinations of elements recur again and again, each time slightly changed. *Hippolytus* itself is an example: it contains two scenes in which a sick or dying character lies on a couch or a stretcher and is surroundedby silence and grief; he had experimented with such scenes in *Alcestis*, and would work with them again in *Herakles* and *Orestes*. Nor, judging from appearances, was he immune to the desire to score a hit, or to satisfy the audiences and the judges at the competition. *Hippolytus* is a rewrite of another *Hippolytus*, performed several years earlier, which scandalized the audience and certainly did not take first place.

In that earlier *Hippolytus* (called by later writers *Hippolytus Veiled*), Euripides fashioned a Phaedra who was neither ashamed of loving her stepson nor incapable of taking steps to satisfy her desire. The forwardnessof her approach to Hippolytus so outraged him that he covered his head with a robe (hence the play's later title). Euripides liked to write energetic and self-confident women like this. He staged his *Medea* in 431, just three years before he revised *Hippolytus*, and in it the jilted title character murders her children in revenge for Jason's new marriage to a more politically advantageous wife. Another flop: the play came in third of three. Evidently the judges did not like their women showing agency, especially when the consequences were transgressive. "The ornament of women," wrote another great Athenian a little earlier, "is silence."[1] Euripides' Medea and his first Phaedra had other decorations.

So three years after *Medea* crashed and burned and some time after the first *Hippolytus* suffered the same fate, he produced another *Hippolytus* play with a different setting and story. How could this one not have been a reaction to the failure of the first? "Second thoughts are always better," he has one of his characters say, as though he were offering an apology for his first thoughts on the same story. In this new version, Phaedra is suicidally ashamed of her love, choosing to die rather than have it discovered, and willing to bring down her beloved Hippolytus in the service of the same end. Now it is Phaedra herself who covers her head in shock and horror at

1) Sophocles, *Ajax* 293. The sentiment was common.

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her desire. Only an intermediary, a slave of the house and an old crone with her fingers in all sorts of illicit pots, communicates Phaedra's secret—against orders—and in consequence brings about the demise of two resolutely moral figures.

It worked. For his tale of two well-born nobles with an unswerving commitment to moral action, destroyed by the meddling of a slave (and by the hostility of some particularly uncaring divinities), the judges crowned Euripides winner. It was the first time he had won, after almost thirty years of work.

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What Hippolytus wants more than anything else, as he protests with outrage just before leaving Trozen for the last time, is the benefit of due process—oaths, witnesses, an investigation that would reveal who really lusted after whom. Ironic, given that in the first *Hippolytus*, as far as we can make out, he *did* get a trial—but too late, and Theseus' successful processing of Hippolytus failed to prevent his death. I cannot help hearing in the second *Hippolytus*' complaints the anger of his authorial *semblable* who lost year after year by a process of judging that might have seemed brutal to him. Judges took no cognizance of how he worked, how long or hard or why; they just voted, and Euripides lost. But then I hear, in the fate of the first *Hippolytus*, an even grimmer commentary. Processed or not, we lose. We run aground. At the very least, this might cast a darker shadow on the business of watching or reading a play: in that twilight, things move too fast to make a fair assessment and, in any case, the reasonably high definition of what you see and hear belies the truth of indistinction, the multiplicities just below the surface.

Watching is a constrained activity, a form of captivity, but reading is plastic. This translation was begun to supply the script for an audio version of the play, recorded in the spring of 2012, and here and there it sacrifices literalness for sayability and the voices and passions of the actors on that occasion. But it was finished to be read, and engineered to create a reading caught between the poles of specificity and non-specificity that the play itself conjures and relies on at its generative core. Thus two texts: the one clear, perhaps overprecise, respectably modern in its presentation, and the other ancient, a reasonable approximation of the classical reading process, and indistinct in vital ways.

Like early modern dramatic texts, the exact provenance and original function of the scripts that have made it down to us are unknown. We do know that the ultimate survival of *Hippolytus* was thanks to its wide-spread use as a school text. But its relation to the first performance in 428 BCE is a matter only of speculation. Euripides presumably had a fair copy before production began; it was probably modified during rehearsals. The actors may have had copies, too (probably the young men who served in the chorus did not). The *chorêgos*, a wealthy Athenian who paid for the production, might have been presented with or just made sure to get his hands on a high-quality text, to commemorate the play's success. Fans might have been able to buy copies. Any one of these sources might have provided the ultimate progenitor of our text. Several of them might have, in fact, if later editors compared and conflated traditions.

The plays toured extensively in the Greek-speaking world, and were restaged as repertoire for centuries afterwards. In the process they were subjected to enough modifications by producers and actors that in the later fourth century the Athenian statesman Lycurgus had a law passed prohibiting performances at Athens from deviating from the official "city" text of the tragedies (which he had commissioned). It is unlikely that the city text was the last word; but it marks an important moment in Athens' role in their dissemination, since after this the major sites of textual curatorship moved overseas, to Alexandria, Pergamum, Rome, Antioch, Constantinople.

Any single text of any single play is thus no more than a moment of clarity and stability, crossed and subtended by multiple vectors of change, including that of textual flux (from Euripides' first drafts to the latest printed text) and that of Euripides' life work as a writer, in the light of which the *Hippolytus* is just one attempt to produce something exactly right, to win the prize or finally satisfy himself or prove to himself that all this longing for perfection was a waste of time. I am intrigued by the possibility that a single text might somehow serve as a lens onto this wider zone of indistinction, representing a small region clearly but nonetheless containing a blurred image of the whole, like a Leibnizian monad. After all, no text is a witness: it is, rather, a perception and a performance, and what every *Hippolytus* must perform is the awkward overlay of singular and plural, social practise and subliminal drive, that structures the tragedy. Modern critical editions can do this by juxtaposing a (relatively) clean and simple text with a textual apparatus reporting variants and theorizing the relationship between textual instantiations. A translation lacks the resolution to catch the fine variations which feed into the construction of an apparatus. But there are other means to hand.

Guessing at the exact words of the original text is always just that—guessing—though *Hippolytus* is less problematic than plays like *Iphigenia at Aulis*. But we can make a pretty secure guess at what such a text looked like. Texts read by fifth-century readers were fundamentally different from what is presented in the best medieval MSS and printed in modern publications. The texts of Euripides' time and for many centuries afterwards did not indicate word division with spaces (or by any other means) and were extremely sparingin punctuation, often avoiding it altogether. There was only one "case" of letters – what we call "capitals." Musical sections were inscribed as though they were prose, without line endings to reflect their rhythm or their rhetorical structure. There was no indication of the speakers within a dramatic text, either. The earliest surviving dramatic texts, which come from over a century after Euripides' death and a time which was much more elaborate and precise in its textual culture, indicated speaker-change with a little line or *paragraphos* below the line and a double-point [:] at its end. This convention almost certainly does not date back to Euripides' own time; it may not even date to Lycurgus. In any case, such indications were understood to be readers' marks: they did not have the same authority as the text and they were subject to readers' revisions. At least ideationally, if not in concrete and distinguishable fact, a dramatic text was understood as containing no indication of speaker-change (and certainly none of who was saying what). The reader had to figurethat out for him-/herself. The clear, legible, easy texts we are accustomed to reading are the fabrications of medieval and modern reading cultures.

The first text, then, presents the translation as the text would have been in the mid-fourth century, perhaps decades after Euripides' death. The second text processes Hippolytus, makes sense of it and makes it "readable." That is: too distinct, dangerously so. It gets in your way, conjures fantoms, tries to make you see. Fragments of the *Hippolytus Veiled*, otherwise almost entirely lost, are juxtaposed with similar passages in the text—not to suggest a reconstruction, but a dialogue and a complex set of reassessments. I have not tried to represent the full variety of textual variants, but I have signalled where, for one reason or another, the text is soft and different editions propose excisions or changes. The two texts must be read together: you, reader, form the bridge between the distinctly seen and the indistinct invisible. You, in the end, will be its mask.

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**Scene 1**

*Enter Phaedra and the Nurse; the former is recumbent on a couch while the latter bustles about her with gestures that might be those of a caregiver or a guard.*

NURSE
Ills and hated diseases!
What can I do for you?
What should I not do?
Here is the light, and the bright air;
your sick bed is now outside the house.
Your every word was to come here,
but you will rush back to your bedroom again.
You fade quickly. You delight in nothing.
You dislike what you have. You love what you don't. It's better to be sick than tend the sick –
the first is simple. To the second

attaches heart's pain and hand's work.
Every human life is painful.
There is no end to toil.
Darkness hides behind cloudswhatever is dearer than life.
We prove unhappy loversof what shines here
for lack of knowledge of another life.
There is no proof for things beneath the earth.
Only stories sustain us.

PHAEDRA
Lift my body, straighten my head:
the bonds of my limbs are loosened.
Take my hands and my pale arms.
This hat is too heavy for my head to wear.
Take it off, spread my hair over my shoulders.

NURSE
Courage, child; don't toss and turn so violently.
You will bear your sickness more easily
with peace and a noble mind.
All mortals suffer.

PHAEDRA
Aiai.
I want to drink pure water
from a dewy spring.
I want to lie back and rest
under the trees in some grassy meadow.

NURSE
Child, why cry?
Don't say these things near the crowd,
hurling words mounted on madness.

PHAEDRA
Send me to the mountain. I will go
to the forest where beast-killing dogs press the spotted deer. Gods! I long to shout to the dogs,
to shoot the Thessalian javelin past my blond hair,
to hold the barbed dart in my hand.

NURSE
Why this anxiety, child?
What do you care about hunting?
Why do you lust for flowing springs?

There's a hill with water just next to the tower;
we can get you a drink there.

PHAEDRA
Artemis, mistress of the salt lake
and the course thundering with horse's hooves:
I wish I were on your plains breaking studs!

NURSE
Why throw these frenzied words about?
Just now you were setting out for the mountain
to hunt – and now you long for horses
on the waveless sand.
These things need an oracle
to tell which god reins you in
and drives you from your senses,child.

PHAEDRA
What have I done?
How far have I been driven from good thoughts?
I was crazy, I was cursed by some power.
Pheu pheu. Alas.
Nurse, cover my head again.
I'm ashamed of what I've said.
Cover me – a tear moves down from my eye
and it embarrasses me.
It hurts to straighten your mind
and it is terrible to be insane. Best
to die before you become lucid again.

NURSE
I'll cover you. But when will death cover me?
I'm old; I've learned a lot.
Mortals should drink of friendship moderately,
not from the deepest marrow of the soul.
A mind's love-charms should be easy to undo,
or thrust away, or tie more tightly.
It is a very difficult weight for one soul
to labor over two people, as I
am wracked by pain for her.
Too much discipline causes more harm than pleasure
and wars with health.
I praise "too much" less
than "nothing in excess,"and the wise agree with me.

continent.

# In Between States:
# Field notes and speculations on postwar landscapes

*Paul Amitai*

*continent.* 2.3 (2012) 208-217

**Introduction**
**Paul Boshears**

*The following excerpt from Paul Amitai's* In Between States: Field notes and speculations on postwar landscapes *(2012) confounds its reader. Presenting an alternate history of the State of Israel as a space station orbiting Earth, the excitement of possibilities crackles across the texts and images. Like Chris Marker's* La Jeteé*, the accompanying static images distort the viewer's temporality: are these archaeological items, images from a past, or a future? Why isn't this our future?* In Between States *can also be seen as complementing Larissa Sansour's provocative science fiction works,* Space Exodus *(2009) which "documents" the Palestinian space program, and her* Nation Estate *(2012), in which Palestine is relocated into a skyscraper. Amitai's vision opens onto an intergalactic diaspora, wherein the refugees of World War II are given the stars as Western Europe continues to fight over terrestial colonies.*

—PFB
(Atlanta)

Learn more about In Between States at the author's website:
www.paulamitai.com/In-Between-States

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Auditorium, Hoechst AG headquarters, Industriepark-Höchst, 2011.

In 1941 an investigation by the US Justice Department exposed a marriage cartel between John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil (now ExxonMobil) and I.G. Farben. The two corporations had formed a joint operation in 1927 called Standard IG Farben. It was revealed that the two had shared patents in order to control prices and markets in their respective regions. Standard was accused of hiding patents from the US Navy and supplying fuel to German submarines, which lead to charges of criminal conspiracy. The Pentagon intervened, requesting that President Roosevelt stop the investigation in order to protect war production and oil supply. Roosevelt agreed, and the Senate committee investigating the matter, headed by Senator Harry Truman, was halted. Standard Oil paid a fine of $5000 and promised to stop supplying fuel to the enemies.[1]

1) "A Short Curriculum Vitae of IG Farben," 2010. http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/sociopol_igfarben08.htm

Auditorium, Hoechst AG headquarters, Industriepark-Höchst, 2011.

Furious at the decision to terminate the investigation of acts he considered treason, Truman initiated a new inquiry into Standard Oil's war-time practices after succeeding Roosevelt as president in 1945. With the chief executives of I.G Farben simultaneously on trial at Nuremburg, Truman brokered a deal with the Allies that reduced or withdrew criminal charges leveled against both corporations in exchange for Standard Oil and I.G. Farben's sponsorship of one of Truman's most ambitious postwar projects – the relocation of the Jewish people.

Detail, Sanofi-Aventis advertisement, 2011.

The third critical player in this bold experiment was the nascent North Atlantic Space Agency. Formed by Allied forces using the seized assets and engineering expertise of Hitler's hitherto classified space program (conquer Earth, then the stars), the North Atlantic Space Agency was a pre-NATO foray into interstellar nation building, with orbital occupation as the first point of order. By 1947, NASA was nearly ready to deploy the first manned space station. Standard Oil and I.G. Farben's advanced fuel refinement capacities and deep, war-enriched financial resources allowed NASA to speed up their launch schedule significantly.

Detail, Sanofi-Aventis advertisement, 2011.

Diplomatic efforts to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine were failing to gain traction, while post-colonial England held its ground on immigration restrictions and bands of Jews and Arabs battled over territory on the ground. More immediate was the issue of temporarily housing Holocaust survivors and refugees across scorched Europe. Leaders of the continental nations demonstrated, at best, reluctance to accommodate the Jews, who in turn were, at the least, resistant to returning to the same bloody cocktail from which they had fled. Truman used the impasse to advance a plan for NASA's space station to be put to use as a temporary Jewish outpost, an orbital displaced persons camp, to be operated by the US Army.

Detail, Sanofi-Aventis advertisement, 2011.

Final preparations advanced rapidly. Viewing the orbital displaced persons (ODP) camp as a solution to their immigration problem both at home and abroad, England came on board as a willing partner. Spaceship Exodus was positioned for takeoff on German farmland 20 kilometers southwest of Frankfurt. On December 30, 1947, one month after the UN General Assembly voted down the separation plan for Palestine, Exodus rocketed into the atmosphere hauling the first module of barracks designed to house 1,500 refugees. Transport vehicles arrived shortly thereafter, loaded down with leftover wartime military rations and 3,000 Jews of Russian and Polish origin.

Detail, Sanofi-Aventis advertisement, 2011.

The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule.[2]

2) Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen,(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 96.

Detail, Sanofi-Aventis advertisement, 2011.

The ODP camp proved to be a longer-term solution than originally envisioned. Additional installations were positioned to form swollen clusters of interlocking units – sleeping quarters, schools, clinics, canteens. The UN was brought in to monitor the camp following two chaotic years of US Army control in which food shortages, pandemic diseases, and rampant black market trade had brought the camp to near total collapse. No less bureaucratic or ineffectual, the UN relief agency at least had prior experience facilitating contexts of a similar magnitude and could potentially predict outcomes.

Detail, Sanofi-Aventis advertisement, 2011.

What had been unexpected was the degree to which the camp would evolve into its own self-regulated, hive-like ecosystem where previously accepted rules of conduct were not applicable. The ODP camp was an exceptional space, a riverboat casino, an offshore research lab of social experimentation and entrepreneurial innovation. No longer Earth-bound, touching soil knotted by prescripts of Talmudic law, the camp residents were able to rationalize loopholes and detonate barriers standing in the way of absolute production. The Jewish archipelago was renamed Israel after the ancient homeland. If the temple couldn't be rebuilt in the motherland, a post-national rhizome would sprout up in its stead. Eyes everywhere, beyond all borders.

continent.

# The Prescience of the Untimely: A Review of *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*

*Sasha Ross*

*continent.* 2.3 (2012): 218-223

Vijay Prashad, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*, AK Press, 2012, 271pp, pbk. $14.95
ISBN-13: 978-1849351126.

Nearly a decade ago, I sat in a class entitled, quite simply, "Corporations," taught by Vijay Prashad at Trinity College. Over the course of the semester, I was amazed at the extent of Prashad's knowledge, and the complexity and erudition of his style. He has since authored a number of classic books that have gained recognition throughout the world. *The Darker Nations*, a peoples' history of the Third World, sent defibrillating shockwaves through an academic world that had almost forgotten the epic scope and historic dignity of the non-aligned movement and post-colonial struggles. In his recent, award-winning work, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*, Prashad delves into his capacious knowledge of the Third World to excavate the discourses and narratives surrounding the upheavals of 2011.

"Revolutions have no specific timetable," states Prashad in the opening line of this exciting and provocative look at contemporary events. Instantly, an atmosphere of suspense emerges. The reader is alerted to the problem of history. Does the making of history then involve a suspension of historical time, or is it a continuous narrative structure into which events must eventually be integrated? *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* shows that the answer to the question, "How is history made?" lies just as easily in the asking.

The first half of the book works through the events that transpired to bring about the explosive popular uprisings of Arab Spring: Tunisia and Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain. But the events are not put together in a cohesive, chronological fashion. Using an uncommonly gripping style more akin to the folk-story motif of the *djeli* than to traditionally Orientalist academia, Prashad suspends a given situation, points out its components, and traces back the characters and genealogies that define each link before resuming a narrative. Every moment is an end to itself, and an origin of something different. Thus, the making of history becomes the suspension of its own progress, it's catastrophic "'stability,'" in a process of differentiation through inclusion.

Empirically, one might suggest that history is a condition of time, and by extension, of the subject, but history is also an eminent producer of the Subject and her concept of time through memory and narrative. Hence, history is often overdetermined by a dominant narrative of the sovereign. The apparently chaotic composition of Prashad's historicity is, then, an interstitial morphology of resistance. It illustrates that the time to act for the

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revolutionary lies in the gaps within the dominant historical realities. It points out the sorties of signifiers constituting nothing in the obliterated ruins of history. Through such illuminations, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* breaks through "the surface of history" to elaborate revolution's snapping synapses, exploding interruptions and breaches, connecting flows.

**Messianic Politics**

It is tempting to think, 'History is either singular, or it is diffuse. It is either one coherent factual narrative, or it is comprised of the *aletheia* of the multitude.' Yet the reader finds Prashad examining the structure of history on multiple levels. For Prashad, world history is shaped by geographically defined political movements, such as communism or national liberation, with historical agents like the working class for the former and the nationalist militant for the latter. Religion, however, is another matter: "Religion has an unshakable eschatology which a post-utopian secular politics lacks." Within the *telos* of religion, there appears on the horizon the image of Benjamin's thoughts on messianic time—time as "a small fissure in the continuous catastrophe," a break with history, may contain an ultimate redemption of the human beyond the political power struggle. Succoring the split between geo-political and utopian-religious (messianic) time in the context of Arab Spring, Prashad indicates that the base of "the deep desire and commitment to some form of democracy" is forged by the affinity between eschatological Islamist politics with the People.

To think about the Subject of messianic time in the context of the lack of a "coherent timetable" for emancipatory politics, it is perhaps best to return to the modern tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., whose prefigurative blending of liberation theology and emancipatory politics became most important during his works of 1963, the climactic year of "The Letter from a Birmingham Jail," the March on Washington, and the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. In "The Letter," King states the point bluntly:

> Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

The timing of rebellious action must not be a part of history. It must *change* history. The kairos appears spontaneous and untimely in its convulsive, shocking presence, yet it is, deeper still, a path, a *longue durée*, forged through diligent and rigorous praxis.

King put a finer point on the path of historic liberation in his declaration in his 1963 speech at Western Michigan University: "[T]ime is neutral.... Somewhere along the way we must see that time will never solve the problem alone but that we must help time. Somewhere we must see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels on inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God. Without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the insurgent and primitive forces of irrational emotionalism and social stagnation. We must always help time and realize that the time is always right to do right." Time, then, exists in "the neutral," while action must turn to the *kairos*,

not only of taking time, but taking the right time. By turning our relation to time into *kairos*, we move time from its context within history to a duration between histories—the *longue durée* of Messianic time.

The implementation of neutrality in this context suggests a broad space of time to extend through the valley of positive and negative. In Roland Barthes's lectures from 1978, the neutral takes place in this minimal distance of non-conflict that exists outside of two extremes. It is, in the words of Maurice Blanchot, "the non-general, the non-generic, as well as the non-specific." For Blanchot, the neutrality of time permeates life as death, impassive and beyond control; such is the neutrality of messianic time, which permeates the charge of history, changing the "I" into the "one." The neutrality of time therefore implicates history in a case against extremism, showing that the work of the radical is not to tend to any particular side, but to have the time to navigate through the terrible terrain of history by altering its course, its patterns and rhythms of movement, connection, sociality. Hence, one does not simply "make history," one alters the course of history in accordance to "the right time." The historical path toward emerging power is transmitted as a gesture to the outside of history, against history; a gesture as simple as reaching out.

Thus a counterhistory, to use Foucault's term, is brought forward as the guide of time past a point of no return, a Rubicon, the point where the normal path of history falls to the past. The subject, who must be the only true agent of history, facilitates time through helpfulness, and both the Subject and her history become decentered in relation to one another. Yet history negates the neutrality of time. As Barthes discloses, although the neutral is the "thought and practice of the nonconflictual, it is nevertheless bound to assertion, to conflict, in order to make itself heard." Engaged with history, time is charged with a destiny, and becomes an opposition. As Prashad insists, "For Arab lands, the events of early 2011 were not the inauguration of a new history, but the continuation of an unfinished struggle that is a hundred years old." The emergence of the Subject during Arab Spring did not conceive of a new history, but changed the path of history toward a different destiny. "Historical grievances combined with inflationary pressures now met with the subjective sense that victory might be at hand—this was not simply a protest to scream into the wind, but a protest to actually remove autocrats from their positions of authority. The facts of resistance had given way to the expectation of revolutionary change." The negativity of this charge toward "revolutionary destiny" rendered control, as a positive force, seriously lacking.

The lack of control lies in the problem that the Subject is not totally detemporalized or timeless, but untimely in her presence. The Subject is untimely, because her work is visionary, and it is only through such visionary work that the Rubicon can be crossed. Still, the crossing of this border is haunted by anxiety over an impending disaster that lays in wait. It is only through the form of what Benjamin calls divine violence, captivated not with the justice of the means, but the ends—the transformation of history—that a revelation of history's traumatic foundations can be liberated, and patterns and rhythms of time developed throughout obscured traditions awakened. In this situation, the Subject appears to be outside of right, but setting the state to rights. Because her position is correct, in-so-far as the rebelling subject rebels due to a lack of recognition, her representation appears outside of the norm, which is mistaken as right. Therefore, such visionary work must be carried out through obscured traditions, underground, away from the surveillance of empire.

Explaining his method from the start along the lines of Marx's metaphor of the mole, Prashad insists, "It is the burrowing that is essential, not simply the emergence onto the surface of history." *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* is a book on uncharted networks of time, spread out over the 252 pages like an elaborate spider's web of passages intertwining with and overwhelming the machinery of the state. Although untimely, Arab Spring was not a flash in the pan, or a Facebook or Twitter revolution. Prashad notes that the government's suspension of these tools led to further radicalism by furthering communications through face-to-face encounters. In existential terms, Arab Spring might be thought of as a revolution of Being over *techne*, an uprising of the unchartable, infinite potential of the Other.

The name of this Other is found in Chance. The faith of the revolution lies in the proper decentering of the subject, its giving to the Other of time, for only with respect to time does history actually appear on the horizon of the subject, rather than as an imposition. This time of historical agency appears as a moment when anything can happen—a revolutionary truth event where everything comes into question while being realized in its Otherness as a community of the people begins anew in the streets amidst discourse, friendship, reconfigurations of hegemony, and a becoming of a constituent power.

Throwing a wrench into the gears of the "cobwebbed tradition" of Orientalism, the decentering of history in *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* is a defining quality of its impassioned revolutionary cry. But perhaps the most paradigmatic points of the book emerge from the unexpected voices. To make the connection between the particular manifestations of revolutionary demands to the general historic terms of revolution, Prashad quotes an anonymous young Egyptian in Tahrir Square, who reminds us, "[T]he French Revolution took a very long time so the people could eventually get their rights." Far from timelessness, the historicization of Arab Spring must exist precisely within the most uncanny appearance of time, as something that does not appear to come from the natural state of time as we know it, but in arriving has completely transformed the way that we understand time.

**Strange Monsters**

Revolution is never as simple as a revolt from below against a rusting structure of elites trying to remain in power. As with the French Revolution, Arab Spring consisted of complex familial ties, outside interests, and religious factions fighting alongside, often in awkward juxtaposition to, liberals, working class parties, farmers, and students. It is perhaps because of this historically difficult and incongruous composition that the Arabic word for revolution is *thawra*, referring to the image of the bull, or *thawr*, which has religious significance as a pagan deity for the Ancient Semitic tribes and Cartheginians. If Daniel Guérin was correct in saying, "Anarchism and Marxism drink from the same spring," then it is quite a different oasis that drove the thirsty beast of revolution through what Prashad calls, "the Libyan labyrinth."

Recalling Bataille's Acéphale, the intestinal labyrinth gains significance as the mode of metabolism and rumination in which, "(the Acephale) has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself as him, in other words, as a monster." Unraveling the discourse of the revolution, the flows of power and hegemony—from Qaddafi's nationalist coup in 1969 to the wars with Chad from 1978 to 1987, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s to, finally, the War on Terror—we find that the metabolic process of Libyan Winter ends in the production of oil. In a process of what Prashad calls "involution," Qaddafi's bellicose policies, along with his attempts to nationalize Islam

together with oil, mutated the source of his power, turning his house against itself. Already a divided nation, with its two major cities on opposite geographic sides of the country, Libya became split between two opposed political powers—liberal reformists and staunch nationalists—as Qaddafi's political disengagement manifested through what can only be described in psychoanalytic terms as a recursive *passage a l'acte* (mysteriously calling Wikipedia "Kleenex," declaring that opponents drank hallucinogens with their instant coffee, and so on).

Prashad declares, "The mercurial style that Qaddafi adopted was not about his personality alone, but also a leader's natural response to a system that relied upon power brokers whose own loyalty… did not have any ideological commitment to the system." As in the case of other nations during Arab Spring, the true expression of revolt was an outward exposition of what had inwardly been happening in microcosmic societies throughout the realm—from indigenous tribes to political parties, for a century, the people, partly motivated by (and in resistance to) economic impositions of development, had been changing the traditional social compositions and participating in what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls, "the relative autonomy of the movement from the leaders." It was this empowerment of political reconfigurations taking place under the context of new democratic assemblages that shocked the elites and evoked such a powerful response.

Unlike Qaddafi's awkward policy choices and rants, real acts of power from the West were clear and decisive. Prashad sets the stages of war and diplomacy, far removed from the deserts, mountains, and cities that forged the backdrop of popular politics. Taking place under the now-classic architecture of the "four pillars" of US interests—oil, the War on Terror, Israel, and the circumvention of Iranian hegemony—we find elites rubbing elbows in "Heliopolist cocktail parties and hushed conferences in Kasr al-Ittihadiya" as well as the Concorde-Lafayette hotel in Paris, which provides the setting for a meeting of anti-Qaddafi figures consolidating their power.

These scenes are buttressed with the careful portraiture of key historical actors. As Prashad brings the stage of history to life, we find the diplomats and liberals like Frank Wisner, whose career has brought him from Enron in the late 1990s to the Obama Administration, under the aegis of which he was meeting with Mubarak about military support during Arab Spring. We spy the provocateurs, for instance, *gauche cavalier*, Bernard Henri-Levy, who telephones Sarkozy from Benghazi about the need for more NATO air strikes. We follow the rebel military establishment as it suffers mysterious deaths and even more mysterious assents (like that of apparent CIA cohort, Khalifa Hifter). In each of these intriguing characters, we find different representations of the security state biopolitique: an oil-injected reification that drives Arab Spring from the resentment of rising food prices to the brink of implosion in Libyan Winter.

Reminiscent of the scenes of Cold War soirées represented in old Bond films, the aristocratic fight for oil against democracy that was Libyan Winter presents a harsh truth that the new global crisis is simply the continuation of the old history: the global exploitation of capitalism waged against the imagination of the people. As Benjamin laments, "The labyrinth is the right path for the person who always arrives early enough at his destination. This destination is the marketplace." Yet, "(t)he labyrinth is the habitat of… a humanity (a class) which does not want to know where its destiny is taking it." Thus, the labyrinth leads, like the desert, only further into itself. As Blanchot explains, "The desert is even less certain than the world; it is never anything but the approach to the desert." Only the visionary can take time out of the involution toward oblivion.

It is here, in this approach to and escape from history, that we find ourselves within Benjamin's Golgotha, Blanchot's desert: A space of indeterminate uncertainty where we become familiar only with our own exile. Blanchot writes, "For the moderated and moderate man, the room, the desert, and the world are strictly determined places. For the man of the desert and the labyrinth, devoted to the error of a journey necessarily a little longer than his life, the same space will be truly infinite, even if he knows that it is not, all the more so since he knows it." The desert, as allegory, provides an eschatology, a mortality in the destiny of Arab Spring. But any allegory of nature might lead to a labyrinthine eschatology (for example, in Bachelard, the forest presents "a limitless world"); the prescience of the untimely is always an uncanny acceptance of the infinite within the finite—the outside of what is understood. Transgenerational and occupied with the image of the future, the untimely makes otherness its home as it proceeds toward liberation.

In the work of helping time navigate this dangerous passage of history, Prashad illustrates that the more violent break with history may have occurred in the peaceable struggles of Tahrir Square, and not in the military clashes of Qaddafi with his former Generals who defected to the CIA and NATO countries. It might be possible to suggest, then, that in the case of Tunesia and Egypt, the historical subject of the people was drawn together in a Dionysian dance of different rhythms in the marvelous realm of the ancients, while we fear that the case of Libya suggests an Apollonian future where time, itself, may lay dying under the machinic hand of history. The properly Nietzschean inversion would follow: time is dead, for history has killed it.

Yet, if time is dead, struck down in Golgotha, exposed in the desert, mauled by the *thawra*, it is only in the present sense that it is rendered impossible outside of the context into which the untimely has thrown us. Thus, if history becomes an art of revolution, life as being-towards-death (death as the provocation of the neutrality of time) becomes what Benjamin calls "the allegory of resurrection" through the glorious ruins of history. Prashad ends his work with a rousing finale: "The time of the impossible has presented itself. In Egypt, where the appetite for the possibilities of the future are greatest, the people continue to assert themselves into Tahrir Square and other places, pushing to reinvigorate a Revolution that must not die… For them the slogan is simple: Down with the Present. Long live the Future. May it be so."

continent.

# Can an Art Show Like dOCUMENTA Be Dangerous?

## Thierry Geoffroy / Colonel

## Introduction by Jamie Allen

*continent.* 2.3 (2012) 224-228


*Thierry Goeffrey's conceptual, event- and environment-based art practice has generated over two-decades of definitional activity around what he terms "format art." The works re-galvanize the energies of a syndicatable, open and atmospheric arrangement, of varying specifics dependent on context, participants and environment. With formats like the Emergency Room, Biennalist and the Critical Run, Goeffrey endeavors to imbricate art and artist in the most exigent and current of social, political and mediatised spectacles. The result seems to land us in a synthesis or triangulation of configurations proposed by Alan Kaprow, Andrea Fraser and Alan Abel.*

*Goeffrey plays up a guileless innocence (at times sporting the "Naive Blue Helmet") as he interviews spect-actors at the 2012 dOCUMENTA13 exhibitions in Kassel, Germany. What results is a declamation of the appropriate, unenthusiastic, cool inclinations of the main-stream art festival, the profligate biennial (triennial, quadrennial, etc.) circuit and national and global ideological cultural-engines.*

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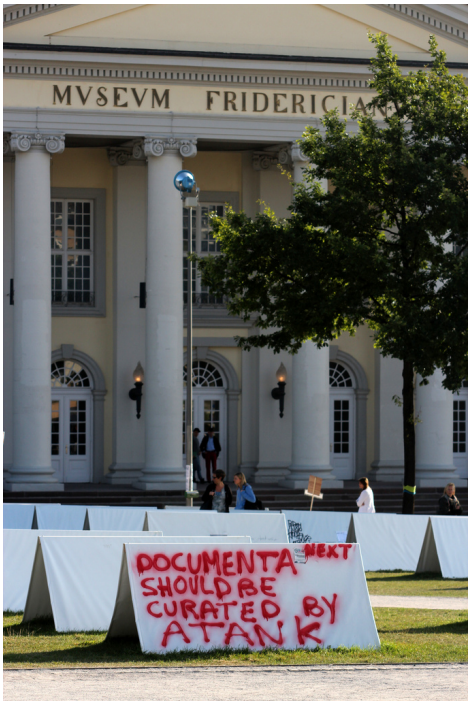
*In propositional artifacts, definitional articles and direct transmissions from Goeffrey's Emergency Room field office at dOCUMENTA13, the masking of an emergency is here questioned: Can an art show like dOCUMENTA be dangerous?*

—JA





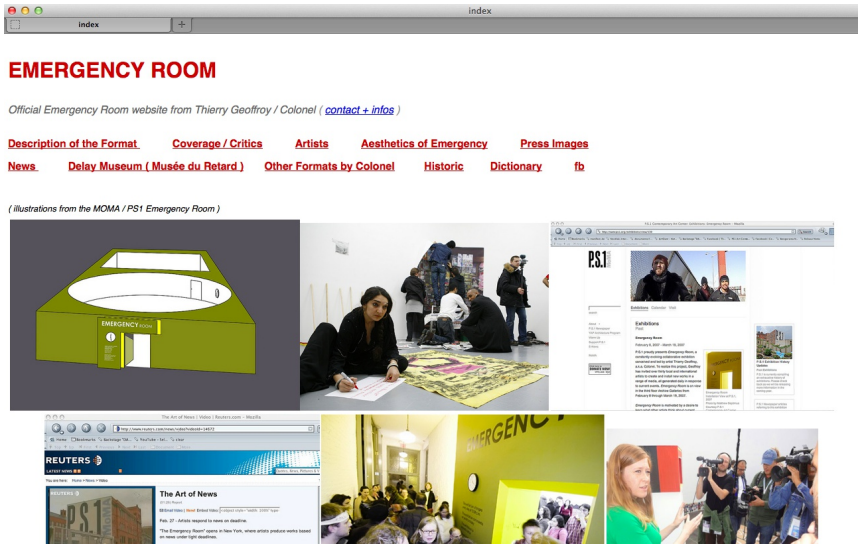
Is dOCUMENTA designed to make people cry on something and not make them  see something else?
Is the contemporary a distraction from the present?
Can art in delay have any impact with today?
Do we learn anything by seeing art shows reflecting on history?
Could 860,000 visitors have been intoxicated by an apathic gaze than keep them away from reacting?
Why is dOCUMENTA proud of having recieve no critic?
Why is proximity less important?
Why was dOCUMENTA in Kabul?
Can weapons designed to kill protesters sold to a repressing regime be contradictory to the support of the Arab Spring?
Is the contemporary like a flea market to avoid  to debating the important topics of today?
Can art be in advance of the broken arm, and avoid accident?
Is the goal of dOCUMENTA to create a revolution or to entertain?
Is dOCUMENTA betterly done than Disney Land?
Is it better to watch Fox News for two years or to go to dOCUMENTA for two days?

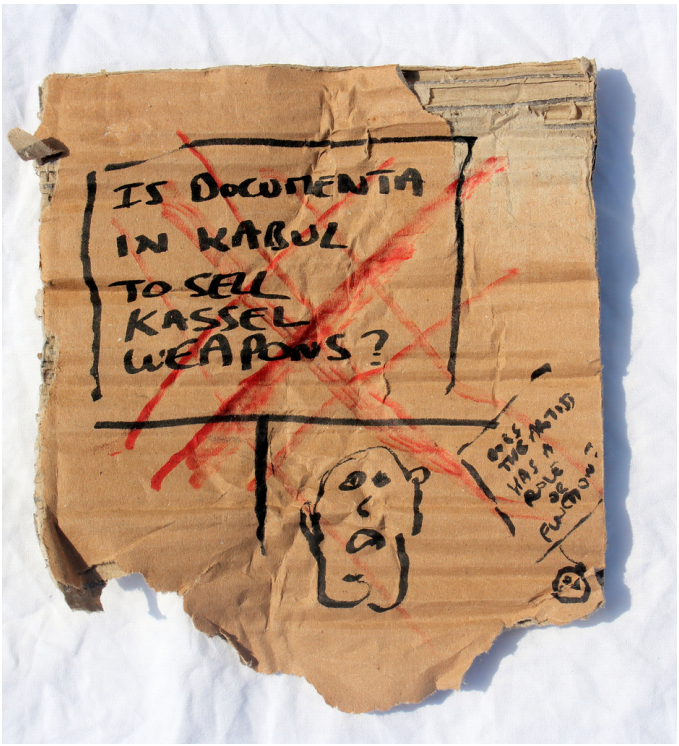
If a curator, curating a contemporary art show about war, forgets to debate about the weapons factories next door, should it be considered as a professional mistake?

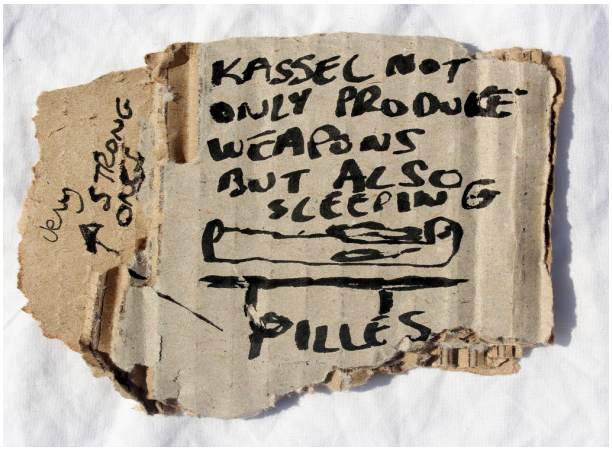
Is it OK to employ philosophers to promote vodka?

Is navigation a threat ?

Can an art show like dOCUMENTA be dangerous?






AWARENESS MUSCLE [*fr. muscle de la conscience*]

In the same sense memory can be trained,
an awareness muscle can be developed
by an effort.

To develop the awareness muscle,
the artist has to reduce his gesticulations.
When an artist is busy
the artist is not very aware
the artist is occupied.
A daily training is necessary
But how to train?
Scanning the news in a critical way
could be one exercise.
Daily debating politics with others
could be another.
Looking at other point of views
usually produces significant improvements.
Fighting prejudice is an excellent exercise.
Many other forms of training could also
produce beneficial effects for the awareness muscle.
Continuous and daily training is important.
For instance
rewinding and slow motioning
what has been absorbed
getting away the sugar from the propaganda
machines
talking to everyone
excercise comparatif
critical run.

If not daily trained
the awareness muscle can degrade into atrophy
To develop the awareness muscle requires will-power


NAIVE BLUE HELMET
IS DOCUMENTA IN KABUL TO SELL WEAPONS?
KABUL
KAIRO