

Martha Rosler

# Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I

01/14

## PART ONE: ART AND URBANISM

When Abstract Expressionists explored the terrain of the canvas and Pollock created something of a disorientation map by putting his unstretched canvases on the floor, few observers and doubtless fewer painters would have acknowledged a relationship between their concerns and real estate, let alone transnational capital flows.

Space, as many observers have noted, has displaced time as the operative dimension of advanced, globalizing (and post-industrial?) capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Time itself, under this economic regime, has been differentiated, spatialized, and divided into increasingly smaller units.<sup>2</sup> Even in virtual regimes, space entails visibility in one way or another. The connection between Renaissance perspective and the enclosures of late medieval Europe, together with the new idea of terrain as a real-world space to be negotiated, supplying crossing points for commerce, was only belatedly apparent. Similarly, the rise of photography has been traced to such phenomena as the encoding of earthly space and the enclosing of land in the interest of ground rent. For a long time now, art and commerce have not simply taken place side by side, but have actively set the terms for one another, creating and securing worlds and spaces in turn.



Jackson Pollock in his studio.

My task here is to explore the positioning of what urban business evangelist Richard Florida has branded the “creative class,” and its role, ascribed and anointed, in reshaping economies



Meeting of the Situationist International, Göteborg, 1961.



Paris, May '68.



in cities, regions, and societies. In pursuit of that aim, I will consider a number of theories – some of them conflicting – of the urban and of forms of subjectivity. In reviewing the history of postwar urban transformations, I consider the culture of the art world on the one hand, and, on the other, the ways in which the shape of experience and identity under the regime of the urban render chimerical the search for certain desirable attributes in the spaces we visit or inhabit. Considering the creative-class hypothesis of Richard Florida and others requires us first to tease apart and then rejoin the urbanist and the cultural strains of this argument. I would maintain, along with many observers, that in any understanding of postwar capitalism, the role of culture has become pivotal.

I open the discussion with the French philosopher and sometime Surrealist Henri Lefebvre, whose theorization of the creation and capitalization of types of space has been enormously productive. Lefebvre begins his book of 1970, *The Urban Revolution*, as follows:

I'll begin with the following hypothesis: Society has been completely urbanized. This hypothesis implies a definition: An *urban society* is a society that results from a process of complete urbanization. This urbanization is virtual today, but will become real in the future.<sup>3</sup>

Lefebvre's book helped usher in a modern version of political geography, influencing Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, and Manuel Castells, among other prominent writers and theorists of both culture and the urban (Harvey, in turn, is cited as an influence by Richard Florida). In his introduction to Lefebvre's book, geographer Neil Smith writes that Lefebvre "put the urban on the agenda as an explicit locus and target of political organizing."<sup>4</sup>

Succumbing to neither empiricism nor positivism, Lefebvre did not hesitate to describe the urban as a virtual state whose full instantiation in human societies still lay in the future. In Lefebvre's typology, the earliest cities were political, organized around institutions of governance. The political city was eventually supplanted in the Middle Ages by the mercantile city, organized around the marketplace, and then by the industrial city, finally entering a critical zone on the way to a full absorption of the agrarian by the urban. Even in less developed, agrarian societies that do not (yet) appear to be either industrialized or urban, agriculture is subject to the demands and constraints of industrialization. In other words, the urban paradigm has overtaken and subsumed all others, determining the social relations and the

conduct of daily life within them. (Indeed, the very concept of "daily life" is itself a product of industrialism and the urban.)

Lefebvre's emphasis on the city contradicted the orderliness of Le Corbusier, whom he charged with having failed to recognize that the street is the site of a living disorder, a place, in his words, to play and learn; it is a site of "the informative function, the symbolic function, the ludic function."<sup>5</sup> Lefebvre cites the observations of the foundational urban observer Jane Jacobs, and identifies the street itself, with its bustle and life, as the only security against violence and criminality. Finally, Lefebvre notes – soon after the events and discourses of May '68 in France – that revolution takes place in the street, creating a new order out of disorder.

The complexity of city life often appears, from a governmental standpoint, to be a troublesome Gordian knot to be disentangled or sliced through. A central task of modernity has been the amelioration and pacification of the cities of the industrializing metropolitan core; the need was already apparent by the middle of the nineteenth century, when the prime examples were those at the epicenter of industrialism, London and Manchester.<sup>6</sup> Control of these newly urbanizing populations also required raising them to subsistence level, which happened gradually over the succeeding decades, and not without tremendous struggles and upheaval. Industrialization also vastly increased the flow of people to cities, as it continues to do – even in poor countries with very low-income levels per capita – to the extent that Lefebvre's prediction regarding full urbanization is soon to come true; since 2005, there are more people living in cities than in the countryside.<sup>7</sup>

In the advanced industrial economies, twentieth-century urban planning encompassed not only the engineering of new transportation modalities but also the creation of new neighborhoods with improved housing for the working classes and the poor. For a few brief decades, the future seemed within the grasp of the modern. After the Second World War, bombed-out European cities provided something of a blank canvas, delighting the likes of W.G. Witteveen, a Rotterdam civil engineer and architect who exulted in the possibilities provided by the near-total destruction of that port city by Nazi bombing in May 1940. In many intact or nearly intact cities in the US and Western Europe, both urban renewal and postwar reconstruction followed a similar plan: clear out the old and narrow, divide or replace the dilapidated neighborhoods with better roads and public transport.<sup>8</sup> While small industrial production continued as the urban economic

backbone, many cities also invited the burgeoning corporate and financial services sectors to locate their headquarters there, sweetening their appeal through zoning adjustments and tax breaks. International Style commercial skyscrapers sprouted around the world as cities became concentrations, real and symbolic, of state and corporate administration.

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Paris.

The theoretical underpinning for a renovated cityscape came primarily from the earlier, utopian “millennial” and interwar designs of forward-looking, albeit totalizing, plans for remaking the built environment. It was not lost on the city poor that so-called urban renewal projects targeted their neighborhoods and the cultural traditions that enlivened them. Cities were being remade for the benefit of the middle and upper classes, and the destruction of the older neighborhoods – whether in the interest of commercial, civic, or other forces, such as enhanced mobility for trucks and private cars – extirpated the haunts of those beyond the reach of law and bourgeois proclivities, adversely affecting the lives and culture of the poorer residents.

One may trace the grounding of the mid-century European group the Situationist International in a recognition of the growing role of the visual – and its relation to spatiality – in modern capitalism, and thus the complicit role of art in systems of exploitation. The core French group of Situationists – Lefebvre’s sometime students (and, some might say, collaborators and certainly occasional adversaries) – attacked, as Lefebvre had done, the radiant-city visions of Le Corbusier (and by implication other utopian modernists) for designing a carceral city in which the poor are locked up and thrust into a strangely narrow utopia of light and space, but removed from a free social life in the streets. (Le Corbusier’s housing projects called “Unités d’Habitation,” the most famous of which is in Marseille, were elevated above their garden surrounds on pilotis. The floors were called *rues*, or streets, and one such “street” was to be devoted to shops; kindergartens and – at least in the one I visited, in Firminy, near St. Etienne – a low-powered radio station were also located

within the building, together suggesting the conditions of a walled city.)

We will leave Monsieur Le Corbusier’s style to him, a style suitable for factories and hospitals, and no doubt eventually for prisons. (Doesn’t he already build churches?) Some sort of psychological repression dominates this individual – whose face is as ugly as his conceptions of the world – such that he wants to squash people under ignoble masses of reinforced concrete, a noble material that should rather be used to enable an aerial articulation of space that could surpass the flamboyant Gothic style. His cretinizing influence is immense. A Le Corbusier model is the only image that arouses in me the idea of immediate suicide. He is destroying the last remnants of joy. And of love, passion, freedom.

– Ivan Chetchevlov<sup>9</sup>



Paul Gavarni, *Le Flâneur*, 1842.

Perhaps it is the primacy of the spatial register, with its emphasis on visuality, but also its turn to



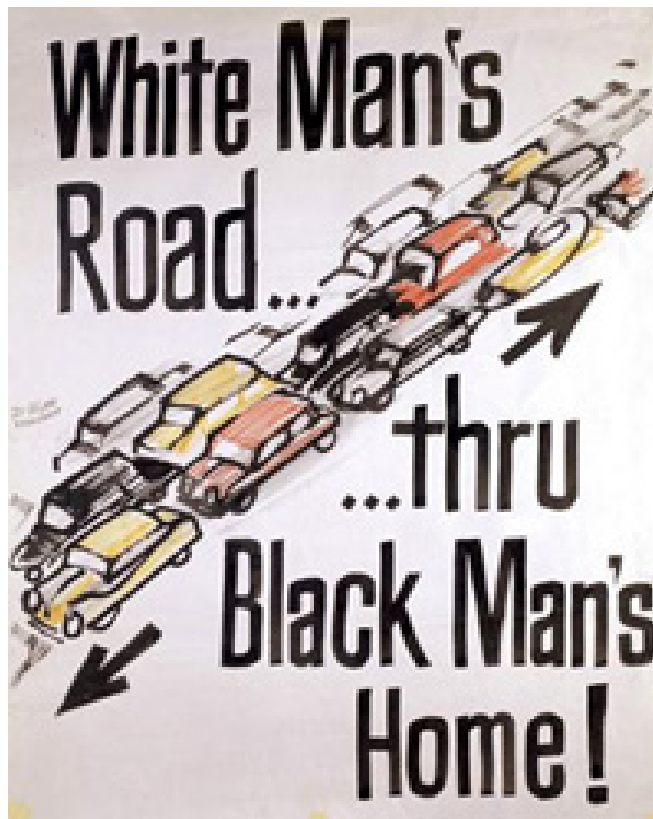
virtuality, to representation, that also accounts for architecture's return to prominence in the imaginary of the arts, displacing not only music but architecture's spectral double, the cinema. This change in the conduct of everyday life, and the centrality of the city to such changes, were apparent to the Situationists, and Debord's concept of what he termed "the society of the spectacle" is larger than any particular instances of architecture or real estate, and certainly larger than questions of cinema or television. Debord's "spectacle" denotes the all-encompassing, controlling nature of modern industrial and "post-industrial" culture. Thus, Debord defines the spectacle not in terms of representation alone but also in terms of the social relations of capitalism and its ability to subsume all into representation: "The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."<sup>10</sup> Elements of culture were in the forefront, but the focus was quite properly on the dominant mode of production.

The Situationists' engagement with city life included a practice they called the *dérive*. The *dérive*, an exploration of urban neighborhoods, a version of the nineteenth-century tradition of the *flâneur*, and an inversion of the bourgeois

promenade of the boulevards (concerned as the latter was with visibility to others, while the *flâneur's* was directed toward his own experience), hinged on the relatively free flow of organic life in the neighborhoods, a freedom from bureaucratic control, that dynamic element of life also powerfully detailed by Lefebvre and Jane Jacobs. Both Baudelaire and Benjamin gave the *flâneur* prominence, and by the end of the twentieth century the *flâneur* was adopted as a favored, if minor, figure for architects wishing to add pedestrian cachet to projects such as shopping malls that mimic public plazas – thus closing the book on the unadministered spaces that the Situationists, at least, were concerned with defending.

The Western art world has periodically rediscovered the Situationists, who presently occupy what a friend has described as a quasi-religious position, embodying every aspiring artist/revolutionary's deepest wish – to be in both the political and the artistic vanguard simultaneously. The ghostly presence of the Situationists, including Debord, Asger Jorn, Raoul Vaneigem, and Constant, predictably took up residence at the moment the very idea of the artistic vanguard disappeared. The cautionary dilemma they pose is how to combat the power

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Photograph by Richard Layman of poster in the collection of the Washington, DC, Department of Transportation.

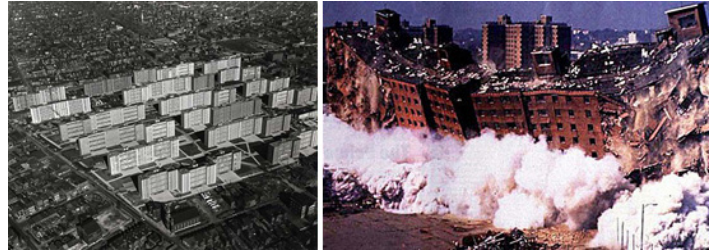
of “spectacle culture” under advanced capitalism without following their decision to abandon the terrain of art (as Duchamp had done earlier). To address this question, context and history are required. Let us continue with the events of the 1960s, in the Situationists’ moment – characterized by rising economic expectations for the postwar generation in the West and beyond, but also by riot and revolt, both internal and external.

By the 1960s, deindustrialization was on the horizon of many cities in the US and elsewhere as the flight of manufacturing capital to nonunion areas and overseas was gathering steam, often abetted by state policy. In an era of decline for central cities, thanks to suburbanization and corporate, as well as middle-class (white) flight, a new transformation was required. Dilapidated downtown neighborhoods became the focus of city administrations seeking ways to revive them while simultaneously withdrawing city services from the remaining poor residents, ideally without fomenting disorder. In Paris, riven by unrest during the Algerian War, the chosen solution encompassed pacification through police mobilization and the evacuation of poor residents to a new, outer ring of suburbs, or *banlieues*, yoking the utopian high-rise scheme to the postwar banishment of the urban poor and the dangerous classes.<sup>11</sup> By 1967, the lack of economic viability of these *banlieues*, and the particular stress that put on housewives, was widely recognized, becoming the subject of Jean-Luc Godard’s brilliant film *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*.

In other countries, conversely, the viability of “housing projects” or “council housing” in improving the lives of the urban poor has been increasingly challenged, and it is an article of neoliberal faith that such projects cannot succeed – a prophecy fulfilled by the covert racial policies underlying the siting of these projects and the selection of residents, followed, in cities that wish to tear them down, by consistent underfunding of maintenance and services. In Britain the Thatcherist solution was to sell the flats to the residents, with the rationale of making the poor into stakeholders, with results yet to be determined (although the pitfalls seem obvious). With the failure of many state-initiated postwar housing schemes for the poor supplying a key exhibit in neoliberal urban doctrine, postmodern architecture showed itself willing to jettison humanism in the wake of the ruin of the grand claims of utopian modernism. In the US, commentator Charles Jencks famously identified as “the moment of postmodernism” the phased implosion in 1972 – in a bemusing choreography often replayed today – of the

Pruitt-Igoe housing project, a 33-building modernist complex in St. Louis, Missouri. Pruitt-Igoe, commissioned in 1950 during an era of postwar optimism, had been built to house those who had moved to the city for war work – primarily proletarianized African-Americans from the rural South.

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Pruitt-Igoe housing project in the 1950s and in the process of implosion.

The abandonment of the widely held twentieth-century paradigm of state- and municipality-sponsored housing thus properly joined the other retreats from utopianism that constituted the narratives of postmodernism. Either blowing up or selling off housing projects has subsequently been adopted enthusiastically by many US cities, such as Newark, New Jersey, which happily supplied a mediatized spectacle of eviction and displacement – but so far has not reached my home city, New York, primarily because, as a matter of policy, New York’s housing projects have never occupied the center of town. In post-Katrina New Orleans, however, the moment of Schumpeterian creative destruction allowed for the closure *tout court* of the largely undamaged, 1200-home Lafitte Public Housing Development in the Lower Ninth Ward (the project was demolished without fanfare or fireworks in 2008).

Throughout the 1960s, as former metropolitan empires schemed, struggled, and strong-armed to secure alternative ways to maintain cheap access to productive resources and raw materials in the post-colonial world, the Western democracies, because of unrest among young people and minorities centering on increasing demands for political agency, were diagnosed by policy elites as ungovernable. In a number of cities, as middle-class adults, and some young “hippies,” were leaving, groups of other people, including students and working class families, took part in poor people’s housing initiatives that included sweat equity (in which the municipality grants ownership rights to those who form collectives to rehabilitate decayed tenement properties, generally the ones in which they are living) or squatting. In cities that have not succeeded, as New York and London have

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done, in turning themselves into centers of capital concentration through finance, insurance, and real estate, the squatter movement has had a long tail and still figures in many European cities. In the US, the urban homesteading movement, primarily accomplished through the individual purchase of distressed homes, quickly became recognized as a new, more benign way of colonizing neighborhoods and driving out the poor. Such new middle-class residents were often referred to by real-estate interests and their newspaper flacks – not to mention an enthusiastic Mayor Ed Koch – as “urban pioneers,” as though the old neighborhoods could be understood according to the model of the Wild West. These developments surely seemed organic to the individuals moving in; as threatened communities began to resist, however, the process of change quickly enough gained a name: gentrification.

In some major cities, some of the colonizers were artists, writers, actors, dancers, and poets. Many lived in old tenements; but artists did not so much want apartments as places to work and live, and the ideal spaces were disused factories or manufacturing lofts. In New York, while poets, actors, dancers, and writers were moving to such old working-class residential areas as the Lower East Side, many artists took up residence in nearby manufacturing-loft neighborhoods. Artists had been living in lofts since at least the 1950s, and while the city winked at such residents, it still considered their situation to be both temporary and illegal. But loft-dwelling artists continued agitating for city recognition and protection, which appeared increasingly

likely to be granted as the 1960s advanced.

A canny observer of this process was New York City-based urban sociologist Sharon Zukin. In her book *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, published in 1982, Zukin writes about the role of artists in making “loft living” comprehensible, even desirable. She focuses on the transformation, beginning in the mid-1960s, of New York’s cast-iron district into an “artist district” that was eventually dubbed Soho. In this remarkable book, Zukin lays out a theory of urban change in which artists and the entire visual art sector – especially commercial galleries, artist-run spaces, and museums – are a main engine for the repurposing of the post-industrial city and the renegotiation of real estate for the benefit of elites. She writes:

Looking at loft living in terms of *terrain* and *markets* rather than “lifestyle” links changes in the built environment with the collective appropriation of public goods. ... studying the formation of markets ... directs attention to *investors rather than consumers as the source of change*.<sup>12</sup>

Zukin demonstrates how this policy change was carried forward by city officials, art supporters, and well-placed art patrons serving on land-use commissions and occupying other seats of power.

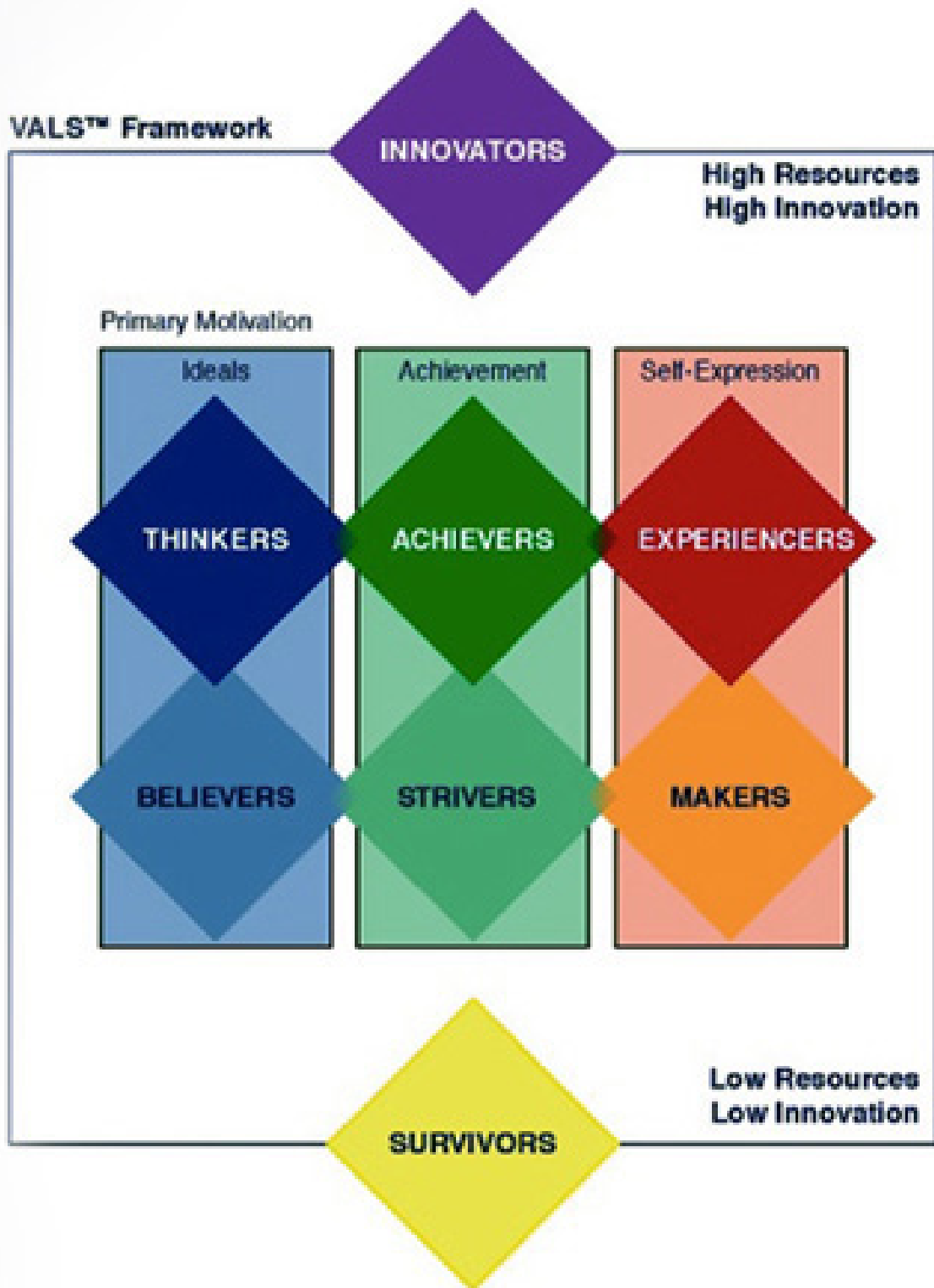
The creation of constituencies for historic preservation and the arts carried over a fascination with old buildings and artists’ studios into a collective appropriation of



# Art means business for New York.

## Creative industries employ nearly 200,000 New Yorkers.

Source: Alliance for the Arts, “Arts as an Industry: Their Impact on New York City and New York State, 2005”



VALS chart.



these spaces for modern residential and commercial use. In the grand scheme of things, loft living gave the *coup de grâce* to the old manufacturing base of cities like New York and brought on the final stage of their transformation into service-sector capitals.<sup>13</sup>

Reminding us that “by the 1970s, art suggested a new platform to politicians who were tired of dealing with urban poverty,” Zukin quotes an artist looking back ruefully at the creation of Soho as a district that addressed the needs of artists rather than those of the poor:

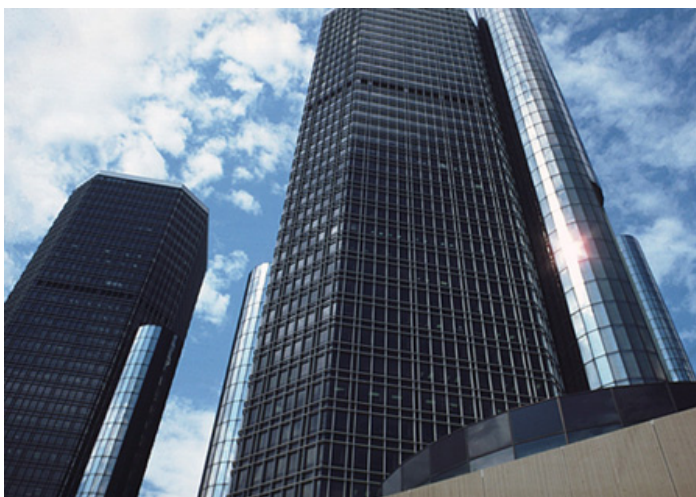
At the final hearing where the Board of Estimate voted to approve SoHo as an artists’ district, there were lots of other groups giving testimony on other matters. Poor people from the South Bronx and Bed-Stuy complaining about rats, rent control, and things like that. The board just shelved those matters and moved right along. They didn’t know how to proceed. Then they came to us. All the press secretaries were there, and the journalists. The klieg lights went on, and the cameras started to roll. And all these guys started making speeches about the importance of art to New York City.<sup>14</sup>

One of Zukin’s many exhibits is this published remark by Dick Netzer, a prominent member of New York’s Municipal Assistance Corporation, the rescue agency set up during New York City’s fiscal near-default:

The arts may be small in economic terms even in this region, but the arts “industry” is one of our few growth industries ... The concentration of the arts in New York is one of the attributes that makes it distinctive, and distinctive in a positive sense: the arts in New York are a magnet for the rest of the world.<sup>15</sup>

Many cities, especially those lacking significant cultural sectors, established other revitalization strategies. Efforts to attract desirable corporations to post-industrial cities soon provoked the realization that it was the human capital in the persons of the managerial elites were the ones whose needs and desires should be addressed. The provision of so-called quality-of-life enhancements to attract these high earners became urban doctrine, a formula consisting of providing delights for the male managers in the form of convention centers and sports stadia, and for the wives, museums, dance, and the symphony. An early, high-profile

example of the edifice complex as proposed urban enhancement is provided by the John Portman–designed Detroit Renaissance Center of 1977 – a seven-skyscraper riverfront complex owned by General Motors and housing its world headquarters, and including the tallest building in Michigan – meant as a revitalizing engine in the car city that has more recently been cast as the poster child for deindustrialization. But eventually, despite all the bond-funded tax breaks paradoxically given to these edifices, and all the money devoted to support of the arts, cities were failing to build an adequate corporate tax base, even after the trend toward flight from city living had long been reversed. This strategy has continued to be instituted despite its failures, but a better way had to be found. The search for more and better revitalization, and more and better magnets for high earners and tourists, eventually took a cultural turn, building on the success of artists’ districts in post-industrial economies.



Detroit Renaissance Center.

During the turbulent 1960s, the rising middle-class members of the postwar “baby boom” constituted a huge cohort of young people. Whereas the older generation lived lives that seemed primarily to revolve around family and work, the upcoming generation seemed to center theirs primarily on other, more personal and consumerist sources, including the counterculture: music, newspapers, cheap fashion, and the like, coupled with rejection of the corporate “rat race,” majoritarian rule, repressive behavioral codes, and “death culture,” or militarism (nuclear war and Vietnam) – and often rejection of urbanism itself. This highly visible group was closely watched for its tastes. Advertising and marketing, already at what seemed like saturation levels, could segment the market, aiming one set of messages at traditionalist consumers and the other at young

people, and “culture” was transformed into an assemblage of purchases. The youth theme was “revolution” – political “revolution,” whether real, imaginary, or, as it gradually became, one centered on consumerism.

Constellations of consumer choice were studied by research institutes such as the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) based at Stanford, an elite private California university. Founded by Stanford trustees in 1946 to support economic development in the region, SRI International, as it is now officially known, currently describes its mission as “discovery and the application of science and technology for knowledge, commerce, prosperity, and peace.” It was forced off the university campus into stand-alone status in 1970 by students protesting against its military research.

“Lifestyle,” an index to the changes in the terrain of consumerism, was a neologism of the 1960s that quickly became comfortable in everyone’s mouth. In 1978, SRI announced a lifestyle metric, the Values and Lifestyles (VALS) “psychographic,” dubbed by *Advertising Age* as “one of the ten top market research breakthroughs of the 1980s.”<sup>16</sup> VALS today seeks “to find out about a person’s product ownership, media preferences, hobbies, additional

demographics, or attitudes (for example, about global warming).”<sup>17</sup> (Its categories are innovators, thinkers, achievers, experiencers, believers, strivers, makers, and survivors, which articulate in primary and secondary dimensions.) The VALS website establishes its connection to other survey vehicles that provide in-depth information, among other preferences, about how each of the eight VALS types uses, invests, and saves money. Such detailed data helped marketers early on to determine how to tailor their pitches – even for matters that should be subjects of debate in the public square.

Thus, the concept of taste, one of the key markers of social class – understood here as determined by one’s economic relation to the means of production – became transformed into something apparently lacking in hierarchical importance or relationship to power. Rather than representing membership in an economic or even a social group, taste aligns a person with other consumer affinities. In the 1960s, the Greenbergian paradigm based in a Kantian schema of faculties in which taste is the key operator for people of sensibility, also fell. While it would be absurd to conflate the Kantian faculty of taste with consumer taste, there remains a case to be made that the ideas

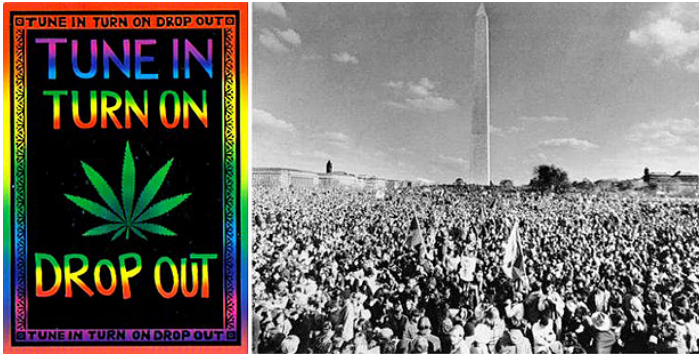
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Advertisement for a Roy Lichtenstein exhibition at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, in late 2006.

energizing vanguard art shift along with shifts in the social worldview. In a pre-postmodern moment, so to speak, when artists were exhibiting a certain panic over the relentlessly ascending tide of consumerism and mass culture, and Pop art was bidding for a mass audience, the terms of culture shifted.<sup>18</sup>

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Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam, 1969.

A great deal has been asked of artists, in every modern age. In previous eras artists were asked to edify society by showing forth the good, the true, and the beautiful. But such expectations have increasingly come to seem quaint as art has lost its firm connections to the powers of church and state. Especially since the romantics, artists have routinely harbored messianic desires, the longing to take a high position in social matters, to play a transformative role in political affairs; this may be finally understood as a necessary – though perhaps only imaginary – corrective to their roles, both uncomfortable and insecure, as handmaidens to wealth and power. Artists working under patronage conditions had produced according to command, which left them to express their personal dimension primarily through the formal elements of the chosen themes. By the nineteenth century, artists, now no longer supported by patronage, were free to devise and follow many different approaches both to form and to content, including realism and direct social commentary.<sup>19</sup> Still, the new middle-class customers, as well as the state, had their own preferences and demands, even if a certain degree of transgression was both anticipated and accepted, however provisionally (the Salon des Refusés was, after all, established by Napoléon III). The fin de siècle refuge in formalist arguments, in aestheticism, or “art for art’s sake,” has been called by such scholars as John Fekete a defensive maneuver on the part of the era’s advanced artists, establishing a professional distance from the social and honoring the preferences of their high-bourgeois market following a century marked by European

revolutions and in the midst of industrial-labor militancy.<sup>20</sup> In the US, the lionization of art by social and political elites in the new century’s first fifty years had been effective in the acculturation of immigrants, and of the native working class to some degree. Especially in the postwar period, the ramping up of advanced, formalist art provided a secular approach to the transcendent. The mid-twentieth-century rhetorics of artistic autonomy, in the US at least, reassured the knowing public that formalism, and, all the more so, abstraction, would constitute a bulwark against totalitarian leanings. This tacit understanding had been especially persuasive in keeping prudent artists away from political engagement during the Cold War in the 1950s. Under those conditions, only autonomous art could claim to be an art of critique, but advanced, let alone abstract, art could hardly expect to address large numbers of people. Thus, the “professionalization” of art also doomed it to be a highly restricted discourse.<sup>21</sup>



“Sure, I was into revolutions back in the 1960’s. That’s one of my 45s and here’s a 33 and a 1/3.”

Let us look at taste not as a decision reflecting the well-formedness or virtue of an artistic utterance but through the wider popular meaning of the exercise of choice among a range of goods, tangible and intangible (but mostly the former) – that is, as an expression of “lifestyle.” Taste has expressed class membership and social status in every modern industrial society. In 1983, the American cultural historian and English professor Paul Fussell, author of the acclaimed book *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), published a slim, acerbically acute book called *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*.<sup>22</sup> There were earlier treatises on ruling elites, such as American



sociologist C. Wright Mills's *Power Elite* or British linguist Alan Ross's 1954 article on distinctions between U and non-U speech patterns, in which U refers to the "upper class" (a discussion that caused an Anglo-American stir when picked up by Nancy Mitford) and Arthur Marwick's *Class: Image and Reality* (1980), cited by Fussell.<sup>23</sup> Fussell meant his book as a popular exposé that taste is not a personal attribute so much as an expression of a definable "socioeconomic" grouping, and in his preface he gleefully describes the horrified, even explosive, reactions middle-class people displayed to the mere mention of class. His scathing description of the missteps of the non-elite are well situated in economic class categories; it is only when he arrives at a class of taste he calls Class X – of which he considers himself a member – that he loses his bearings, besotted by this motley group of self-actualizing people who are mostly university-based and float free of the demands of social codes of dress and behavior, pleasing only themselves. We should recognize in this group not just the expression of the counterculture, now grown up and college educated, but also of the gold mine that had just begun to be intensively lobbied by niche marketers, the "creative class" – a social formation and process that seems to have escaped Fussell's notice.

A couple of decades later in 2000, the conservative ideologue and US media figure David Brooks, in his best-selling book *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*, quipped that "counter-cultural values have infused the business world – the one sphere of US life where people still talk about fomenting 'revolution' and are taken seriously."<sup>24</sup> His thesis is that in this new information age, members of the highly educated elite "have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and another foot in the bourgeois realm of ambition and worldly success."<sup>25</sup> Brooks's barbed witticisms claim the triumph of capital over any possible other political world that young people different from him, in the Western democracies and particularly the US, had hoped to create:

We're by now all familiar with modern-day executives who have moved from SDS to CEO, from LSD to IPO. Indeed, sometimes you get the impression the Free Speech movement produced more corporate executives than Harvard Business School.<sup>26</sup>

To decode a bit: "SDS" denotes the emblematic 1960s radical group Students for a Democratic Society; "IPO" stands for a corporation's initial public offering; and the Free Speech movement was the student movement at the elite (though

public) University of California, Berkeley, that agitated on several fronts, sparking the worldwide student movements of the 1960s.

The French intelligentsia have derisively extracted Brooks's neologism "Bobos" from his celebratory analysis, and the book is worth dwelling on here only because of its concentration on taste classes and their relationship to power and influence, and, less centrally, their relevance to literature and criticism.<sup>27</sup> Brooks traces his own intellectual forebears to "the world and ideas of the mid-1950s," remarking regressively:

[W]hile the fever and froth of the 1960s have largely burned away, the ideas of these 1950s intellectuals [William Whyte, Jane Jacobs, J. K. Galbraith, Vance Packard, E. Digby Baltzell] continue to resonate.<sup>28</sup>

Lowering expectations of rigor, Brooks refers to his work as "comic sociology." He compliments his readers on their quirky tastes while ignoring those who do not fit his consumer taste class. The "conspicuous consumption" pattern first described by Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899 during the robber baron era, seemingly does not fit the preferences of the Bobos, who unlike the gilded-age business (but not, it should be noted, technical) class, prefer to spend lots of money on things that appear to be useful and "virtuous" – an adjective often employed ironically in *Bobos*.

A decade later, the laid-back, tolerant wisdom of the benign "Bobo" class-in-ascendancy now appears ephemeral, since in the interim the ostentatious rich have led us into crushingly expensive wars, destroyed the financial markets, restored nepotism, and mobilized the old working class and rural dwellers using a dangerous breed of hater-malarkey to grab and keep political control, all the while becoming vastly richer. Reviewing Brooks, Russell Mokhiber writes,

Most people in the United States (let alone the world) do not share [the Bobos'] expanding wealth and may have markedly different views on important issues, including concepts of "deservedness," fairness, government regulation, and equitable distribution of wealth. For this majority of the population, more confrontation, not less, could be just what is in order.<sup>29</sup>





Richard Florida on TV.

Soon after the collapse of the millennial New Economy that was supposed to raise all boats, Richard Florida, in his best-selling book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), instituted a way of talking about the effects of the needs and choices of Sharon Zukin's, as well as, more broadly, Brooks's and Fussell's, target group that framed the positioning of the "creative class" – that cooperative group – as a living blueprint for urban planners.<sup>30</sup>

Turn-of-the-century changes in the composition of the productive classes in the United States and Western Europe as a result of "globalization" – in which mass industrial work shifted East and South and white-collar technical labor in the developed industries rose to ascendancy during the dot-com boom – led to further speculation on the nature of these workers, but seemingly these were more solidly empirical efforts than Brooks's mischievous rendition. Enter Richard Florida, professor at postindustrial Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, with theories catering to the continuing desire of municipalities such as Pittsburgh to attract those middle-class high-wage earners.

The next installment of this article will address Florida's hypotheses and prescriptions.

x

→ Continued in Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part II: Creativity and Its Discontents.

This essay is an expanded version of a talk given at the third Hermes Lecture at Provinciehuis Den Bosch on November 14, 2010, arising from a suggestion by Camiel van Winkel to consider the work of Richard Florida. I thank Stephen Squibb for his invaluable assistance during the research and editing process. Thanks also to Alexander Alberro and Stephen Wright for their helpful responses.

Martha Rosler is an artist who works with multiple media, including photography, sculpture, video, and installation. Her interests are centered on the public sphere and landscapes of everyday life – actual and virtual – especially as they affect women. Related projects focus on housing, on the one hand, and systems of transportation, on the other. She has long produced works on war and the "national security climate," connecting everyday experiences at home with the conduct of war abroad. Other works, from bus tours to sculptural recreations of architectural details, are excavations of history.

1  
See, for example, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), *passim*. See also Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971); Lukács, interpreting Marx on the development of abstract labor under capitalism, writes that “time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable ‘things’ ... in short, it becomes space,” 90.

2  
A more substantial discussion would need to take account of how the space-time continuum privileges one or the other dimension and how the primacy of each changes with economic regimes.

3  
Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1.

4  
*Ibid.*, vii.

5  
*Ibid.*, 18.

6  
Consider such basic matters as the management of violent crime, prostitution, sanitation, and disease.

7  
See Mike Davis, “Planet of Slums,” *New Left Review* 26 (March–April 2004): 6. “The present urban population (3.2 billion) is larger than the total population of the world in 1960. The global countryside, meanwhile, has reached its maximum population (3.2 billion) and will begin to shrink after 2020. As a result, cities will account for all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050.” (See also Davis’s subsequent book, *Planet of Slums* [London: Verso, 2006] for further data crunching.) Concomitantly, urban poverty is also increasing faster than rural poverty.

8  
I leave out of consideration here the reconstruction of cities and countrysides that served – primarily or secondarily – military and police functions, whether local ones on the order of Baron Haussmann’s mid-nineteenth-century reconfiguring of Paris, among other things securing it against insurrections, or more ambitious national ones such as the construction, under President Eisenhower, of the US’s Cold War-oriented interstate highway system.

9

Ivan Chhtcheglov, “Formulary for a New Urbanism,” trans. Kenn Knabb, *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 1 (June 1958). See <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/formulary.html>.

10  
Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 12.

11  
Today, a few generations on, the dystopian effects of the relegation of the poor and the immigrant to these high-rise ghettos, are there for all to see, if not understood by French xenophobes, in the regular eruptions of fire and revolt among unemployed young men with no future. (Today, however, the young of France and elsewhere recognize in this only a more extreme version of their own condition of economic “precarity.”)

12  
Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 190–191.

13  
*Ibid.*, 190.

14  
*Ibid.*, 117–118.

15  
“The Arts: New York’s Best Export Industry,” *New York Affairs* 5, no. 2 (1978): 51. Quoted in Zukin, *Loft Living*, 112.

16  
See <http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/about.shtml>.

17  
See <http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/presurvey.shtml>.

18  
See Alvin Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins, Grammar, and Future of Ideology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

19  
See Caroline A. Jones’s interesting study, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

20  
John Fekete, *The Critical Twilight: Explorations in the Ideology of Anglo-American Literary Theory from Eliot to McLuhan* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

21  
See the analyses of Pierre Bourdieu in many works, including *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* and “The Market of

Symbolic Goods,” Part One, Chapter One, of *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); as well as, following him, Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity, An Incomplete Project,” in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983).

22  
Paul Fussell, *Class* (New York: Ballantine, 1983). The cover of the firstpaper back edition says “Class: A Painfully Accurate Guide Through the American Status System.”

23  
Alan S. C. Ross, “Linguistic class-indicator s in present-day English,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* (Helsinki) 55 (1954), 113–149; Nancy Mitford, ed., *Noblesse Oblige* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956); Arthur Marwick: *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the U.S.A. Since 1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

24  
David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). The quotation is taken from a review by Russell Mokhiber, *YES! magazine*, posted Oct 27, 2000, at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/a-new-culture-emerges/review-bobos-in-paradise-by-david-brooks>.

25  
Brooks, *Bobos*, 11.

26  
*Ibid.*, 39.

27  
...and art. In the section “How to Be an Intellectual Giant” Brooks points out that rather than writing, say, *War and Peace*, it is better to seek success by presenting “a catchy new idea in a lively format and casting light on what it all means,” a formula dominating art reviewing and infesting art production, the arts section of periodicals, and much else.

28  
“Books like *The Organization Man*, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, *The Affluent Society*, *The Status Seekers*, and *The Protestant Establishment* were the first expressions of the new educated class ethos, and while the fever and froth of the 1960s have largely burned away, the ideas of these 1950s intellectuals continue to resonate.” Brooks, *Bobos*, Introduction, 11–12. Brooks is selective in those whom he cites; several reviews have suggested his indebtedness to the work of César Graña, a professor at UC San Diego, especially *Bohemian vs. Bourgeois* (New York: Basic Books, 1964); Graña, who had studied sociology, anthropology, and urban planning, published

several other works centering on bohemianism and authenticity but died in a car accident in 1986.

29  
Russell Mokhiber, *YES! magazine*, posted Oct 27, 2000, at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/a-new-culture-emerges/review-bobos-in-paradise-by-david-brooks>.

30  
Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

→ Continued from “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I” in issue 21.

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## PART TWO: CREATIVITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Culture is the commodity that sells all the others.

– Situationist slogan

Soon after the collapse of the millennial New Economy that was supposed to raise all boats, Richard Florida, in his best-selling book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), instituted a way of talking about the “creative class” – the same class put center stage by Sharon Zukin, David Brooks, and Paul Fussell – in a way that framed it as a target group and a living blueprint for urban planners.



Florida may see this class, and its needs and choices, as the savior of cities, but he harbors no apparent interest in its potential for human liberation. When Robert Bruininks, the president of the University of Minnesota, asked him in an onstage interview, “What do you see as the political role of the creative class – will they help lead society in a better, fairer direction?” Florida was, according to faculty member Ann Markusen, completely at a loss for a reply.<sup>1</sup> Some who frame the notion of a powerful class of creative people – a class dubbed the “cultural creatives” by Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson in their book of that name published in 2000 – see this group as progressive, socially engaged, and spiritual, if generally without religious affiliation, and thus as active in movements for political and social change. In general, however, most observers of “creatives” concentrate on taste classes and lifestyle matters, and are evasive with respect to the

Martha Rosler

# Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part II

creatives' relation to social organization and control.

Richard Lloyd, in *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City*, in contrast to Ray and Anderson, finds not only that artists and hipsters<sup>2</sup> are complicit with capital in the realm of consumption but, further, that in their role as casual labor ("useful labor," in Lloyd's terms), whether as service workers or as freelance designers, they also serve capital quite well.<sup>3</sup> The Situationists, of course, were insistent on tying cultural regimes to urban change and the organization and regulation of labor. Sharon Zukin, in her ground-breaking book *Loft Living*, provided a sociological analysis of the role of artists in urban settings, their customary habitat.<sup>4</sup> But urban affairs, sociological and cultural analysis, and the frameworks of judgment have changed and expanded since Zukin's work of 1982. In his book *The Expediency of Culture* (2001), George Yúdice leads us to consider the broad issue of the "culturalization" of politics and the uses and counter-uses of culture.<sup>5</sup> Concentrating especially on the United States and Latin America, Yúdice's concern is with explicating how culture has been transformed into a resource, available both to governmental entities and to population groups.

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He cites Fredric Jameson's work on "the cultural turn" from the early 1990s, which claims that the cultural has exploded "throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to social and political practices and the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become 'cultural.'"<sup>6</sup> Yúdice invokes Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality, namely, the management of populations, or "the conduct of conduct," as the matrix for the shift of services under neoliberalism from state to cultural sectors. Foucault's theories of internalization of authority (as well as those of Lefebvre and Freud) are surely useful in discussing the apparent passivity of knowledge workers and the educated classes in general. Yúdice privileges theories of performativity, particularly those of Judith Butler and Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, over the Situationists' "society of the spectacle," describing how identities, including identities of "difference," are performed on the stage set by various mediating institutions.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, he positions the postwar marketing model – "the engineering of consent," in Edward Bernays's potent, widely quoted phrase – at the heart of contemporary politics and invokes the aestheticization of politics



Judith Butler



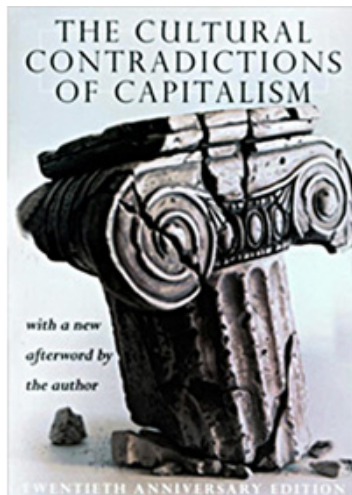
(shades of Walter Benjamin!) that has been fully apparent in the US since the Reagan administration.<sup>8</sup> As I have suggested, this channels much political contestation in advanced societies to consumer realms, from buying appropriate items from firms that advance political activism and send money to NGOs,<sup>9</sup> to the corporate tactic of appealing to identity-based markets, such as gay, female, or Latino publics; but also to the corporate need to foster such identities in hiring practices in the name of social responsibility.

In considering the role of culture in contemporary societies, it may be helpful to look at the lineage and derivation of the creative-class concept, beginning with observations about the growing economic and social importance of information production and manipulation. The importance of the group of workers variously known as knowledge workers, symbolic analysts, or, latterly, creatives, was recognized by the late 1950s or early 1960s. Peter Drucker, the much-lionized management “guru,” is credited with coining the term “knowledge worker” in 1959, while the later term “symbolic analysts” comes from economist Robert Reich.<sup>10</sup>

Clark Kerr, a former labor lawyer, became president of the University of California, in the mid-1960s. This state university system, which had a masterplan for aggressive growth stretching to the turn of the twenty-first century and beyond, was the flagship of US public universities and established the benchmarks for public educational institutions in the US and elsewhere; it was intended as the incubator of the rank-and file middle class and the elites of a modern superpower among nations in a politically divided world. Kerr’s transformative educational vision was based on the production of knowledge workers. Kerr – the man against whom was directed much of the energy of Berkeley’s Free Speech Movement, derisively invoked by David Brooks – coined the term the “multiversity” in a series of lectures he gave at Harvard in 1963.<sup>11</sup> It was Kerr’s belief that the university was a “prime instrument of national purpose.” In his influential book *The Uses of the University*, Kerr wrote,

What the railroads did for the second half of the last century and the automobile for the first half of this century may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry.<sup>12</sup>





Sociologist Daniel Bell, in his books *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), and *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976), set the terms of the discourse on the organization of productive labor (although the visionary educational reformer Ivan Illich apparently used the term “post-industrial” earlier); Richard Florida claims Bell as a powerful influence.<sup>13</sup> The term post-Fordism, which primarily describes changes in command and control in the organization of the production process, is a preferred term of art for the present organization of labor in advanced economies, retaining the sense of continuity with earlier phases of capitalist organization rather than suggesting a radical break resulting from the rise of information economies and changes in the mode of conducting and managing the labor process.<sup>14</sup>

Theories of post-Fordism fall into different schools, which I cannot explore here, but they generally include an emphasis on the rise of knowledge industries, on the one hand, and service industries on the other; on consumption and consumers as well as on productive workers; on the fragmentation of mass production and the mass market into production aimed at more specialized consumer groups, especially those with higher-level demands; and on a decline in the role of the state and the rise of global corporations and markets. Work performed under post-Fordist conditions in the so-called knowledge industries and creative fields has been characterized as “immaterial labor,” a (somewhat contested) term put forward by Italian autonomist philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato. Within or overlapping with the broad category of immaterial labor are types of labor deemed “affective labor” (Hardt and Negri); these include not only advertising and public relations – and, many artists would argue, art – but all levels of labor in which the worker faces

the public, which include many service industries, and eventually permeates society at large.<sup>15</sup> In “Strategies of the Political Entrepreneur,” Lazzarato writes:

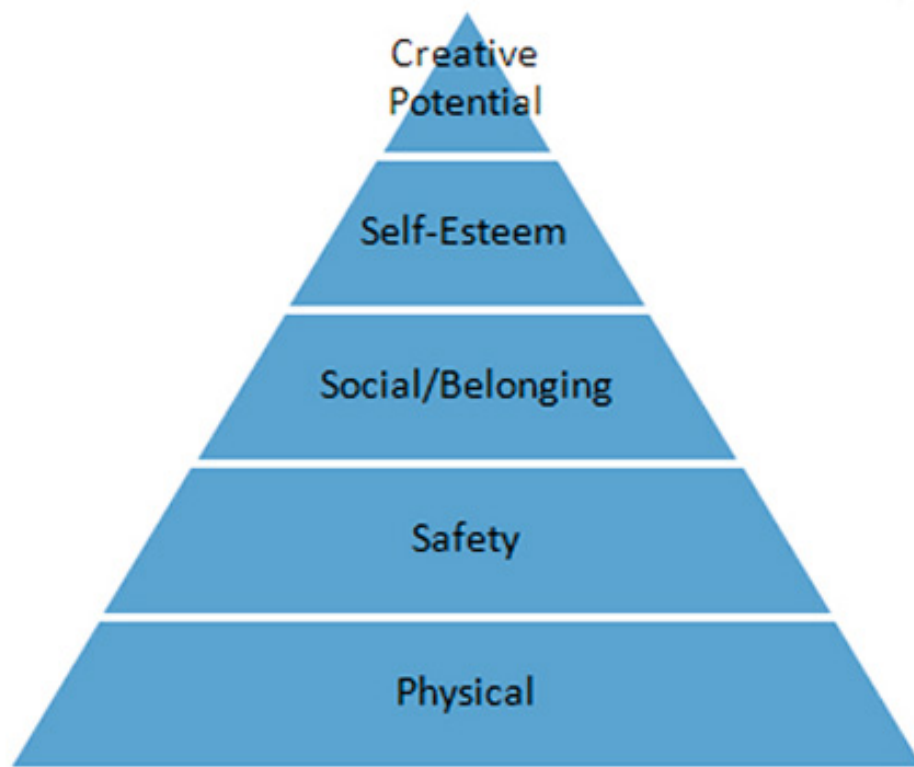
If the factory can no longer be seen, this is not because it has disappeared but because it has been socialized, and in this sense it has become immaterial: an immateriality that nevertheless continues to produce social relations, values, and profits.<sup>16</sup>

These categories look very different from Florida’s.

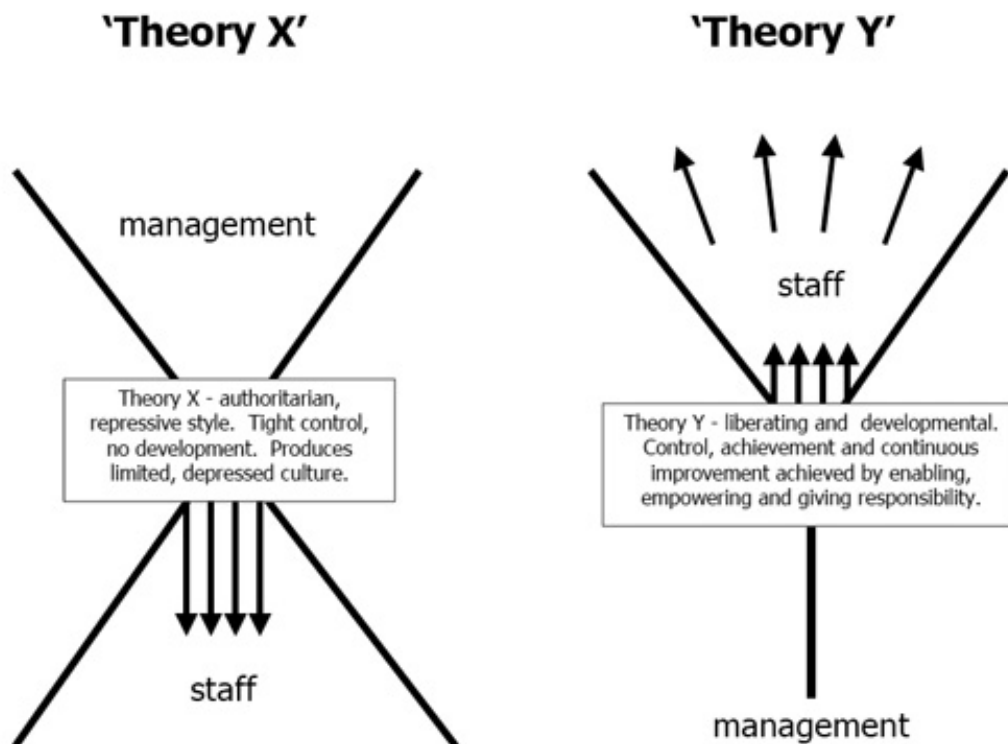
Andrew Ross writes that the creative-class concept derives from Prime Minister Paul Keating’s Australia in early 1990s, under the rubric “cultural industries.”<sup>17</sup> Tony Blair’s New Labour government used the term “creative industries” in 1997 in the rebranding of the UK as Cool Britannia. The Department of National Heritage was renamed the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and promoted technological optimism, a youth cult, and, in Ross’s words, “self-directed innovation in the arts and knowledge sectors.” Both Ross and the social psychologist Alan Blum refer to the centrality of the idea of constant reinvention – of the firm and of the person – as a hallmark of the ideal conditions of the creative class. Ross points to the allure of the “creative industries” idea for a wide array of nations, large and small, of which he names Canada, the US, and Russia and China – we should add the Netherlands to this list – long before Florida’s particular configuration shifted emphasis away from the industries and to the very person of their denizens, and to biopolitics.

In describing the “creative class,” Florida credits Paul Fussell and gives David Brooks a brief nod.<sup>18</sup> Despite building on writers like David Harvey and perhaps other, unnamed theorists on the left, Florida offers the prospect of a category of “human resources” who will, all unbidden, and at virtually no cost to anyone but themselves, remake your city quite to your liking. Rather than portraying the right to the city, as Harvey had termed it, as the outcome of struggle, Florida’s path to action is predicated on the inevitability of social change, in which the working class and the poor have already lost. I will say more about that a bit later, but first, I’ll consider the creative class itself.

What Florida has called the rise of the creative class Sharon Zukin called, in *Loft Living*, the artistic mode of production.<sup>19</sup> Zukin, who never quite explains her phrase, describes the production of value and of space itself, interpretable in Lefebvre’s terms. Whereas Zukin



Maslow chart based on Abraham Maslow's theories of human self-actualization.



Douglas McGregor's diagrams for Theories X and Y identifying different attitudes in the workplace.

traced the entire process from its inception to its present outcome, teasing out the structural elements necessary to bring about urban change and demonstrating how such change affects residents and interested classes, in Florida's account the process disappears in a welter of statistical number-crunching and empirical markers by which to index the success of the creative class. Crucial to Zukin's analysis is the eventual displacement of artists, a development not addressed by Florida, whose creative class encompasses high earners in industries extending far beyond artists, the vast number of whom do not command big incomes.

Zukin had already shown that integral to the artistic mode of production is the gradual expansion of the "artistic class," suggesting how the definition of "artist" expanded and how the epistemology of art changed to fit the sensibilities of the rising middle class. Zukin – writing in 1982 – asserts:

The new view of art as "a way of doing" rather than a distinctive "way of seeing" also affects the way art is taught. On the one hand, the "tremendous production emphasis" that [modernist critic] Harold Rosenberg decries gave rise to a generation of practitioners rather than visionaries, of imitators instead of innovators. As professional artists became facile in pulling out visual techniques from their aesthetic and social context, they glibly defended themselves with talk of concepts and methodology. On the other hand, the teaching of art as "doing" made art seem less elitist.... Anyone, anywhere can legitimately expect to be an artist ... making art both more "professionalized" and more "democratized."... This opened art as a career.<sup>20</sup>

Zukin offers a sour observation made in 1979 by Ronald Berman, former chairman of the US National Endowment for the Humanities:

Art is anything with creative intentions, where the word "creative" has ... been removed from the realm of achievement and applied to another realm entirely. What it means now is an attitude toward the self; and it belongs not to aesthetics but to pop psychology.<sup>21</sup>

I cannot address the changes in the understanding of art here, or the way its models of teaching changed through the postwar period – a subject of perpetual scrutiny and contestation both within the academy and outside it. A central point, however, is that the

numbers of people calling themselves artists has vastly increased since the 1960s as the parameters of this identity have changed.

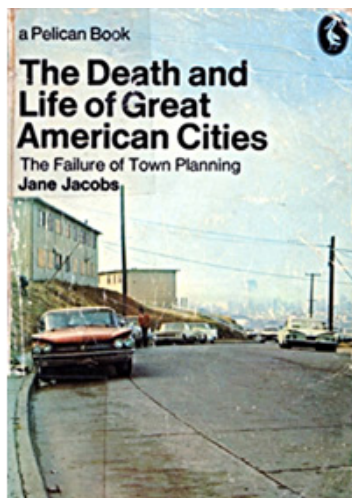
Florida enters at a pivot point in this process, where what is essential for cities is no longer art, or the people who make it, but the appearance of its being made somewhere nearby. As a policy academic, Florida repeatedly pays lip service to the economic, not lifestyle, grounding of class groupings, as he must, since his definition of "creative class" is based on modes of economically productive activity. Economic data, however, turn out not to be particularly integral to his analyses, while the use to which he puts this category depends heavily on lifestyle and consumer choices, and Florida includes in the creative class the subcategory of gay people as well as categories of "difference," which are both racial/ethnic and include other identity-related groupings independent of employment or economic activity. This does not contradict the fact that we are talking about class and income. Although the tolerance of "difference" that figures in Florida's scenario must certainly include of people of color working in low-level service categories who appear in significant concentrations in urban locales (even if they go home to some other locale), the creative class are not low-wage, low-level service-sector employees, and artists, certainly, are still disproportionately white.

Florida's schema is influenced by basic American economic and sociological texts – including Erik Olin Wright's powerful description of the new professional-managerial class (sometimes called the new petite bourgeoisie to differentiate it from the "old petite bourgeoisie," a class of small shopkeepers and the like whose declining fortunes and traditionalist world view have left them disaffected or enraged).<sup>22</sup> But Florida's categories are more directly derived from the US government's Standard Occupational Classification, or SOC, codes. His creative-class grouping includes "a broad group of creative professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields," who "engage in complex problem solving that involves a great deal of independent judgment and requires high levels of education or human capital."<sup>23</sup> Within it is a "super-creative core [of] people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music, and entertainment ... [whose] job is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content."

Doug Henwood, in a critique from the left, notes that Florida's creative class constitutes about 30 percent of the workforce, and the "super creative core" about 12 percent. Examining one category of super-creatives,



“those in all computer and mathematical occupations,” Henwood remarks that some of these jobs “can only be tendentiously classed as super creative.”<sup>24</sup> SOC categories put both call-center tech-support workers and computer programmers in the IT category, but call-center workers would surely not experience their jobs as creative but “more likely as monotonous and even deskilled.” What is striking in Florida’s picture is, first, not just the insistence on winners and losers, on the creatives and the uncreatives – recalling the social divisions within Aldous Huxley’s dystopian novel *Brave New World* – but on the implicit conviction that job categories finally do provide the only source of real agency regardless of their content. Second, the value of the noncreatives is that they are nature to the creatives’ culture, female to their male, operating as backdrop and raw material, and finally as necessary support, as service workers. Stressing the utility of random conversations in the street, à la Jane Jacobs, Florida treats the little people of the streets as a potent source of ideas, a touchingly modern[ist] point of view.



In an online consideration of Florida’s thesis, Harvard Economist Edward Glaeser, a right-leaning mainstream critic, expresses admiration for Florida’s book as an engagingly written popularization of the generally accepted urbanist maxim that human capital drives growth, but he fails to find any value added from looking at creative capital as a separate category. Glaeser writes:

[T]he presence of skills in the metropolitan area may increase new idea production and the growth rate of city-specific productivity levels, but if Florida wants to argue that there is an [effect] of bohemian, creative types, over and above the effect of human capital, then presumably that should show

up in the data.<sup>25</sup>

Glaeser ran statistical regressions on the population-growth data on four measures: (1) the share of local workers in the “super creative core”; (2) patents per capita in 1990; (3) the Gay Index, or the number of coupled gay people in the area relative to the total population; and (4) the Bohemian Index – the number of artistic types relative to the overall population.

Glaeser concludes that in all the regressions the primary effects on city growth result from education level rather than any of Florida’s measures and that in fact in all but two cities, “the gay population has a negative impact.” He concludes:

I would certainly not interpret this as suggesting that gays are bad for growth, but I would be awfully suspicious of suggesting to mayors that the right way to fuel economic development is to attract a larger gay population. There are many good reasons to be tolerant, without spinning an unfounded story about how Bohemianism helps urban development.<sup>26</sup>

Further:

There is no evidence to suggest that there is anything to this diversity or Bohemianism, once you control for human capital. As such, mayors are better served by focusing on the basic commodities desired by those with skills, than by thinking that there is a quick fix involved in creating a funky, hip, Bohemian downtown.<sup>27</sup>

Max Nathan, an English urbanist at the Centre for Cities, an independent research institute in London, observes that “there’s not much evidence for a single creative class in the US or the UK. And although knowledge, creativity, and human capital are becoming more important in today’s economy, more than 20 years of endogenous growth theory already tells us this.” He concludes, “Creativity and cool are the icing, not the cake.”<sup>28</sup>

American sociologist Ann Markusen, left-leaning but agreeing with Glaeser, further cautions that “human creativity cannot be conflated with years of schooling.”<sup>29</sup> Some of the occupations included in Florida’s sample do not call upon creative thinking, while many manual tasks do just that; furthermore, it hardly needs to be noted that human qualities and attributes are not themselves merely produced by schooling.

Florida’s use of the US government’s SOC categories, lumping together artists and

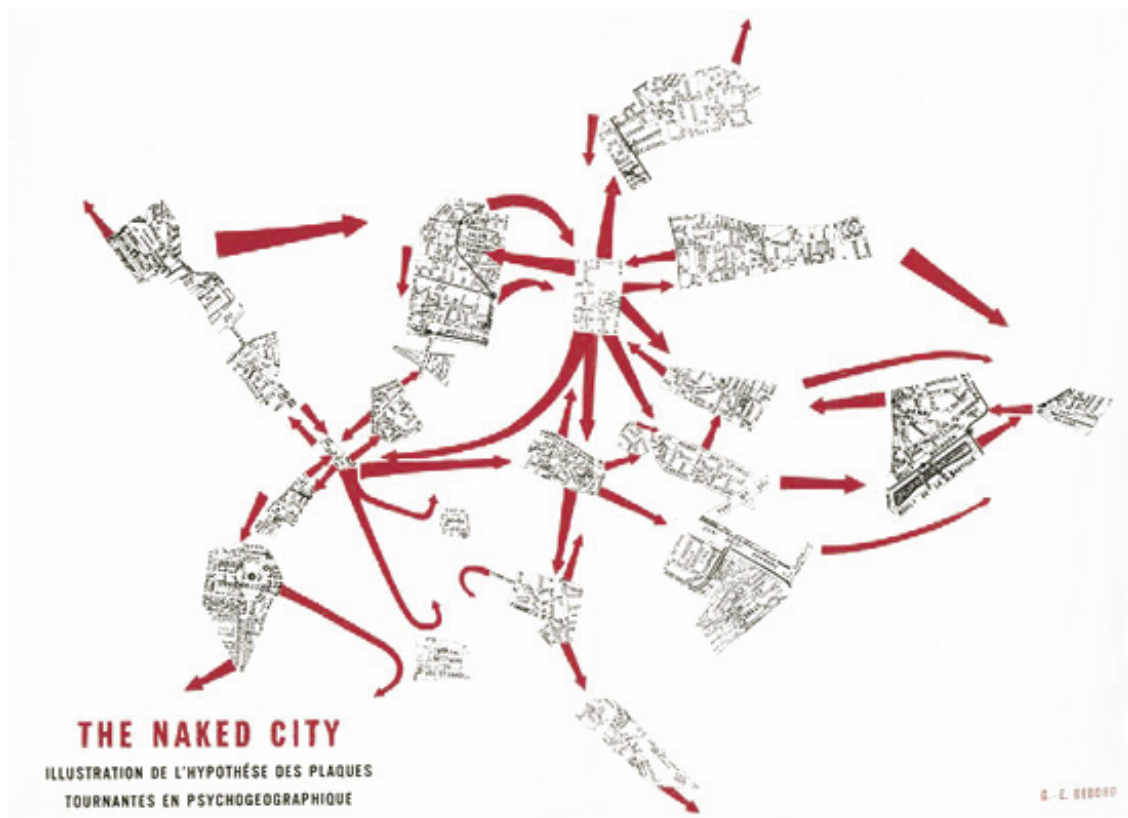
bohemians with all kinds of IT workers and others not remotely interested in art or bohemia, has been identified by many other observers – perhaps especially those involved in the art world – as a glaring fault. Florida fails to note the divergent interests of employees and managers, or younger and older workers, in choices about where to live: it seems, for example, that the young move into the city while somewhat older workers move out to the suburbs, where managers tend to cluster. But Florida's book found its ready audience not among political economists but in some subset of municipal policy makers and rainmakers for government grants, and in business groups.

As Alan Blum suggests, Florida's work is directed at "second tier" cities pursuing "an 'identity' (as if merchandise) that is to be fashioned from the materials of the present."<sup>30</sup> Second tier cities tend to glorify the accumulation of amenities as a means of salvation from an undistinguished history, a chance to develop and establish flexibility. Blum's critique emphasizes the platitudinous banality of Florida's city vision, its undialectical quality and its erasure of difference in favor of tranquility and predictability as it instantiates as policy the infantile dream of perpetually creating

oneself anew. In my estimation, Scandinavian societies seem to have faced the postwar world by effacing history and re-presenting themselves as factories of design; visiting Copenhagen's design museum, I was amazed that a large wall inscription in the exhibition of the great designer Arne Jacobsen emphasized both his complete lack of "interest in Utopia" and his fondness for white tennis flannels. One can think of many cities, regions, and nations that would prefer to transcend an earlier mode of economic organization, whether agricultural or Fordist, in favor of a bright new picture of postindustrial viability. The collective failure of imagination can be extended to entire peoples, through the selective re-creation, or frank erasure, of historical memory. The entire cast of the creative-class thesis is centered on the implicit management of populations, through internalized controls: in essence, Foucault's governmentality.

Florida was teaching at Carnegie Mellon in the Rust Belt city of Pittsburgh when he formulated his thesis, but subsequently moved to the University of Toronto, where he now heads the Martin Prosperity Institute at the Rotman School of Management, and is Professor of Business and Creativity. His website tags him as

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Guy Debord, *Naked City*, 1957.

“author and thought-leader.” Florida has developed a robust career as a pundit and as a management consultant to entities more inclusive than individual firms or industries. Management consulting is a highly lucrative field that centers on the identification of structures of work organization and methods of organizing workers in a manner persuasive to management. Management theory, however, even in the industrializing 1920s, has often claimed that creativity and interpersonal relations would transform management, leading to an end to top-down hierarchies and a harmonizing of interests of workers and management.

Speaking personally, in the early 1970s I worked in a small, Peter Drucker–advised publishing company in Southern California to which Drucker, the management idol then riding the crest of his fame, made regular visits. We were schooled to regard the management tool called Group Y, widely used by Japanese companies, as the new gospel of employee–management relations. As a concept, Group Y is traceable to Douglas McGregor, a professor at MIT’s school of management. Influenced by the social psychologist Abraham Maslow’s then widely popular theories of human self–actualization, McGregor promoted the idea of employees and workers as human resources. In *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), McGregor developed his highly influential paradigm of employee management and motivation in which management is characterized by one of two opposed models, Theory X and Theory Y.<sup>31</sup> In Theory X, people are seen as work–averse and risk–averse, uninterested in organizational goals, and requiring strong leadership and monetary incentives. Theory Y, in contrast, sees work as enjoyable and people as naturally creative and self–directed if committed to work objectives. (McGregor, unrealistically, hoped his book would be used as a self–diagnostic tool for managers rather than as a rigid prescription.) Building on McGregor’s theory, and long after I left my bliss–seeking editorial shop, William G. Ouchi invoked Theory Z to call attention to Japanese management style.<sup>32</sup>

Starting in the early 1960s, Japanese management made extensive use of “quality circles,” which were inspired by the postwar lectures of American statisticians W. Edwards Deming and J. M. Juran, who recommended inverting the US proportion of responsibility for quality control given to line managers and engineers, which stood at 85 percent for managers and 15 percent for workers.<sup>33</sup> As the *Business Encyclopedia* explains, Japanese quality circles meet weekly, often on the workers’ own time and often led by foremen. “Quality circles provide a means for workers to

participate in company affairs and for management to benefit from worker suggestions. ... [E]mployee suggestions reportedly create billions of dollars’ worth of benefits for companies.” Now, however, according to the *New York Times*, Japanese business organization is fast approaching the norms and practices prevailing in the US.<sup>34</sup>

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“In the past the man has been first;  
in the future the system must be first.”

Frederick W. Taylor: *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Norton Library, 1911

Quotation from Frederick Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management*.

Management is always looking for a new edge; after all, managers’ advancement and compensation depend on the appearance of innovation. A few years ago, in an amusing “exposé” in the *Atlantic* magazine, Matthew Stewart, a former partner in a consulting firm, characterized management theory as a jumped–up and highly profitable philosophy of human society rather than an informed scientific view of the social relations of productive activities, which is how it advertises itself.<sup>35</sup> Stewart compares the dominant theory of production known as Taylorism with that of Elton Mayo.<sup>36</sup> Taylorism, named for the turn–of–the–twentieth–century consultant Frederick Taylor, was a method (that of motion study, which was soon married to the marginally more humanistic time study of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth) for analyzing the labor process so as to get more work out of workers.<sup>37</sup> Mayo’s management theory, formulated somewhat later, is based on fostering workers’ cooperation. Characterizing the first as the rationalist and the second as the humanist strain of management philosophy, Stewart claims that they simply continue in these two age–old camps. Anthropologist David Graeber writes that fields like politics, religion, and art depend not on externally derived values and data but upon group consensus.<sup>38</sup> Like many bold ideas in economics and politics, empirical inadequacy and faulty predictive power are no barriers to success. A new narrative is always a

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powerful means of stirring things up; as the twentieth-century Austrian psychologist Hans Vaihinger termed it in his book *Philosophie des Als Ob* ("Philosophy of As If"), a person needs a ruling story, regardless of its relationship to reality, and so, it seems, does any other entity or organization, especially when it requires persuasive power to obtain resources from others.<sup>39</sup> Since the advent of neoliberalism in the 1980s, for example, those newly hired corporate heads who immediately fire about 20 percent of the workforce have been shown to do best for themselves regardless of outcome, despite the fact that this strategy has long been proven to damage a distressed company's profitability, since it destroys corporate knowledge and working culture, if nothing else. Psychological studies are constantly being adduced to prove that many consumers are uninterested in the disproof of claims, whether for miracle cures, better material goods, political nostrums, and so on; sociologists from Merton to Adorno long ago commented in some frustration about people's belief in luck (as in the lottery) or astrology in the face of reason. Ideology offers a powerful sieve through which to strain truth claims.

What matters, then, is not whether Florida's bohemian index is good or bad for urban growth

but that the gospel of creativity offers something for mayors and urban planners to hang onto – a new episteme, if you will. But Florida's thesis also finds enthusiastic support in management sectors in the art world that seek support from municipal and foundation sources while pretending that the creative class refers to the arts.

European art critics and theorists, however, were far more likely to be reading Boltanski and Chiapello's *New Spirit of Capitalism*, which provides an exhaustive analysis of the new knowledge-based classes (or class fractions) and the way in which the language of liberation, as well as the new insistence on less authoritarian and hierarchical working conditions, has been repurposed.<sup>40</sup> Here is a précis, by Chantal Mouffe, addressing an American art audience in the pages of *Artforum*:

As Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello persuasively demonstrated in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999/2005), the managerial class successfully co-opted the various demands for autonomy of social movements that arose in the 1960s, harnessing them only to secure the conditions required by the new,



Installation view of Thomas Hirschhorn exhibition *Stand-alone* at Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, 2008.



postindustrial mode of capitalist regulation. Capital was able, they showed, to neutralize the subversive potential of the aesthetic strategies and ethos of the counterculture – the search for authenticity, the ideal of self-management, and the antihierarchical imperative – transforming them from instruments of liberation into new forms of control that would ultimately replace the disciplinary framework of the Fordist period.<sup>41</sup>

This brings us to the question of authenticity and the creative class.

In the words of the American vaudevillian turned radio personality and actor, George Burns, “The secret of acting is sincerity. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made.”

In *Loft Living*, Sharon Zukin had already put her finger on an unanswerable paradox, namely, the simulacral effect of neatening everything up, of the desired pacification of the city, which, as I have explained, will conveniently replace difficult, unruly populations with artists, who can generally (though not uniformly) be counted on to be relatively docile.

Zukin writes:

Seeking inspiration in loft living, the new strategy of urban revitalization aims for a less problematic sort of integration than cities have recently known. It aspires to a synthesis of art and industry, or culture and capital, in which diversity is acknowledged, controlled, and even harnessed. [But] first, the apparent reconquest of the urban core for the middle class actually reconquers it for upper-class users. Second, the downtowns become simulacra, through gussied up preservation venues. ... Third, the revitalization projects that claim distinctiveness – because of specific historic or aesthetic traits – become a parody of the unique.<sup>42</sup>

The search among artists, creatives, and so forth, for a way of life that does not pave over older neighborhoods but infiltrates them with coffee shops, hipster bars, and clothing shops catering to their tastes, is a sad echo of the tourist paradigm centering on the indigenous authenticity of the place they have colonized. The authenticity of these urban neighborhoods, with their largely working-class populations, is characterized not by bars and bodegas so much as by what the press calls grit, signifying the lack of bourgeois polish, and a kind of remainder of incommensurable nature in the midst of the city’s unnatural state. The arrival in numbers of artists, hipsters, and those who follow – no

surprise here! – brings about the eradication of this initial appeal. And, as detailed in *Loft Living*, the artists and hipsters are in due course driven out by wealthier folk, by the abundant vacant lofts converted to luxury dwellings or the new construction in the evacuated manufacturing zones. Unfortunately, many artists who see themselves evicted in this process fail to see, or persist in ignoring, the role that artists have played in occupying these formerly “alien” precincts.

Zukin’s recent book, *The Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2010), is aimed squarely at the lifestyle arguments typified by Florida’s work. It traces the trajectory of the idea and content of urban cool, with their repeated emphasis on those two terms, authenticity and grit.<sup>43</sup> As she has done throughout her career, Zukin addresses the efforts of the powers-that-be to hang onto working-class cachet while simultaneously benefiting from its erasure. Zukin’s book focuses on three New York neighborhoods – the Lower East Side, or East Village; Harlem; and Brooklyn’s Williamsburg, the present epicenter of cool, walking us painfully through regional history and transformation.

Zukin also considers Manhattan’s venerable Union Square, which – with its history of parades, marches, soap-box oratory, and expressions of urban unrest and decay – has been the focus of twenty years of efforts to tame it. Zukin quotes the promotional slogan of the Union Square Partnership, a “public-private partnership”: “Eat. Shop. Visit. Union Square.”<sup>44</sup>

The Square is part of the “archipelago of enclaves” described by Dutch urbanists Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp<sup>45</sup> as typical of new public spaces, providing, in Zukin’s words,

Special events in pleasant surroundings ... re-creating urban life as a civilized ideal ... [with] both explicit and subtle strategies to encourage docility of a public that by now is used to paying for a quality experience.<sup>46</sup>

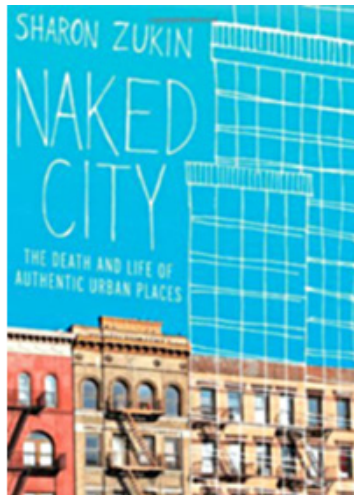
Furthermore,

[T]hese places break with the past not just by passively relying on city dwellers’ civic inattention when they calmly ignore the stranger sitting on the next bench, but by actively enabling them to avoid strangers whom they think of as “aliens”: the homeless, psychologically disoriented, borderline criminal, and merely loud and annoying.<sup>47</sup>

I note in passing that Zukin persistently faults Jane Jacobs, otherwise treated in the field as the

Mother Teresa of the Neighborhood, for her own inattention to the needs and preferences of people other than the middle classes.

The disenfranchisement of those outside the groups who benefit from life in the newly renovated city is replicated in the split between the developed and less developed world; just as the paradigm of urbanism has subsumed all others, so has the globalized knowledge economy done so, and those who are not part of it are nevertheless forced to take a position in relation to it.



The postindustrial shift in Western economies from a welfare-state model to a neoliberal one has resulted in the erosion of the classical working-class base that had provided a political counterpoint during the so-called golden age of capital (1945–1970). The resulting “cultural turn,” in which conflicting claims are played out in the cultural arena – mediated through institutions that include the state, the media, and the market – represents a relocation of political antagonism to the only realm that remains mutually recognizable. In less developed economies, the global reach of aggressive consumer capitalism and the internationalization of (neo-imperialist) corporate control have provided significant challenges to the efforts of grassroots movements to secure first-world rights through political contestation. George Yúdice describes local organizing efforts of poor youth, such as Rio Funk, begun in Brazil in the 90s, and others; but he cites Brazilian commentator Antonio Muniz Sodré and Nestor García Canclini in noting that reliance on grassroots self-empowerment movements to bring about change absolves the states of responsibility and puts the burdens on the subordinated themselves.<sup>48</sup>

In considering the social presence of creative-class members in general and artists in particular, I have focused on the tendency toward

passivity and complicity in questions of the differential power of others. But a significant number of artists do not fit this categorization. There is a divide, perhaps, between those whose practices are well-recognized by the art world and those whose efforts are treated as beyond the pale. I want to focus my attention here on the former group. Yúdice, concerned with the power/wealth divide, assembles an array of critical arguments, drawing on Grant Kester’s critique of the artist as service provider, always positioned from a higher to a lower cultural level, as well as Hal Foster’s 1990s critique of the artist as ethnographer.<sup>49</sup> The problems of artists’ working in poor urban neighborhoods lie partly in the possibility, however undesired, of exploitation, and partly in a divergence in the art world audience’s understanding of the project and that of the local community, as a result of the different life worlds each inhabit. A number of artists he quotes insist that they are not “social workers” but rather seek to expand the frame of art. This suggests that intended readings must occur at least partly in terms of an aesthetic and symbolic dimension. This sits well with commentators such as Claire Bishop, who in a much-noted article winds up favoring the rather vicious projects of Santiago Sierra and those of Thomas Hirschhorn above more benign and perhaps socially useful, “service” efforts.<sup>50</sup> Suspicious of the possible use and meaning of socially invested works, Bishop seems to regard positively the fact that the lack of social effect in Sierra’s heavily symbolic works, and the appeal to philosophical and other models in Hirschhorn’s, make them legible primarily to their “proper” art world observers. As relational aesthetics seems to be carried out on the terrain of service, it is worth noting that these works remove judgment from universal categories or the individually located faculty of taste to the uncertain and presumably unrepeatable reception by a particular audience or group (shades of Allan Kaprow!).

Yúdice joins other commentators in pointing out that art-as-service is the end of the avant-garde, removing as it does the artists’ actions from the realm of critique to melioration. In a section that has garnered some comment, Yúdice outlines how artists, even those who have looked beyond institutions and markets, have been placed in a position to perform as agents of the state. This reinterpretation of the vanguardist desire for “blurring of the boundaries of art and everyday life,” for “reality” over critique, exposes the conversion of art into a funnel or regulator for governmentalized “managed diversity.” Worse, an imperative to *effectiveness* has derived from arts administrators. A 1997 report for the US National

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Endowment for the Arts titled *American Canvas* insists that for the arts to survive (presumably, after the assaults of the then-newly instigated, now newly revived, right-wing driven assault on US art and culture known as the “culture wars”) they must take a new pragmatic approach, “translating the value of the arts into more general civic, social, and educational terms” that would be convincing to the public and elected officials alike:

...suffused throughout the civic structure – finding a home in a variety of community service and economic development activities – from youth programs and crime prevention to job training and race relations – far afield from the traditional aesthetic functions of the arts. This extended role for culture can also be seen in the many new partners that arts organizations have taken on in recent years, with school districts, parks and recreation departments, convention and visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce, and a host of social welfare agencies all serving to highlight the utilitarian aspects of the arts in contemporary society.<sup>51</sup>

Combine this with the aim of funding museums specifically to end elitism. In the 1990s, the federal funding agency the National Endowment for the Arts increased its commitment to “diversity” while museums, pressed by such powerful funders as the Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford foundations and the Reader’s Digest Fund, tried to achieve wider public “access.”<sup>52</sup> The operative term was “community”; art was to serve the interests of “communities” – by which we must understand poor, excluded, and non-elite, non-creative-class communities – rather than promote the universalist values of modernist doctrine, which many thought simply supported the elite-driven status quo. This leaves artists interested in audiences beyond the gallery with something of a dilemma: serve instrumental needs of states and governments or eschew art-world visibility entirely.

To close this section of Culture Class, let me put into play two further quotations. From the introduction to *American Canvas*:

The closing years of the 20th century present an opportunity ... for speculation on the formation of a new support system [of the nonprofit arts]: *one based less on traditional charitable practices and more on the exchange of goods and services.* American artists and arts organizations can make valuable contributions – from addressing social issues to enhancing

education to providing “content” for the new information superhighway – to American society.<sup>53</sup>

And from Ann Markusen:

Artists may enjoy limited and direct patronage from elites, but as a group, they are far more progressive than most other occupational groups Florida labels as creative. While elites tend to be conservative politically, artists are the polar opposite. Artists vote in high numbers and heavily for left and democratic candidates. They are often active in political campaigns, using their visual, performance, and writing talents to carry the banner. Many sociologists and social theorists argue that artists serve as the conscience of the society, the most likely source of merciless critique and support for unpopular issues like peace, the environment, tolerance and freedom of expression.<sup>54</sup>

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→ *Continued in Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III: In the Service of Experience(s) in issue 25.*

This essay is an expanded version of a talk given at the third Hermes Lecture at Provinciehuis Den Bosch on November 14, 2010, arising from a suggestion by Camiel van Winkel to consider the work of Richard Florida. I thank Stephen Squibb for his invaluable assistance during the research and editing process. Thanks also to Alexander Alberro and Stephen Wright for their helpful responses.

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Martha Rosler is an artist who works with multiple media, including photography, sculpture, video, and installation. Her interests are centered on the public sphere and landscapes of everyday life – actual and virtual – especially as they affect women. Related projects focus on housing, on the one hand, and systems of transportation, on the other. She has long produced works on war and the “national security climate,” connecting everyday experiences at home with the conduct of war abroad. Other works, from bus tours to sculptural recreations of architectural details, are excavations of history.

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1  
Markusen had in fact been asked to frame political questions by the university president himself. Markusen's paper is centered on a critique of Florida's creative-class thesis; see Ann Markusen, “Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class: Evidence from the Study of Artists,” *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 38, Issue 10, 2006. See [http://www.hhh.umn.edu/projects/prie/pdf/266\\_creativity\\_class\\_politics.pdf](http://www.hhh.umn.edu/projects/prie/pdf/266_creativity_class_politics.pdf).

2  
I use this term here to signify ironical posers and lifestyle, particularly sartorial, devotees.

3  
Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Lloyd's estimation of the work role of the creatives is counter to the generally benign role accorded them not only by Ray and Anderson but also by such varied commentators as Markusen and all the centrist and right-wing observers.

4  
Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982).

5  
George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

6  
Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 48.

7  
Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

8  
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 217 – 252.

9  
I am thinking of such US-based companies such as the phone company CREDO, which has increasingly positioned itself as a left-wing, “social justice”-oriented advocacy group that happens to sell you phone services, but also of the Fair Trade Coffee “movement” and even mainstream groups as AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) and the nonprofit magazine *Consumer Reports*, which sell services but also run advocacy and lobbying organizations. And then there is the religious sector, which maintains tax exemption while deeply implicated in politics.

10  
Peter Drucker, *Landmarks of Tomorrow: A Report on the New “Post-Modern” World* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1959); Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

11  
Clark Kerr, Godkin Lectures, given at Harvard University, 1963. The Free Speech Movement recognized the blueprint for the new technocratic, pragmatic, and politically disciplined and hegemonic nation, for what it was and erupted accordingly.

12  
Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), based on his Harvard lectures, 66.

13  
Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

14  
This note is simply to acknowledge that – no surprise here – not all labor theorists accept the term post-Fordism and its periodization of capitalist production processes, or the notion of “immaterial labor,” explored below, although they are much favored in the European art world.

15  
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 103–115.

16  
Lazzarato, “Strategies of the Political Entrepreneur,” *SubStance* 112, vol. 36, no. 1 (2007): 89–90.

17  
Andrew Ross, “Nice Work If You Can Get It: The Mercurial Career of Creative Industries Policy,” in Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter, eds, *My Creativity Reader* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2007), 19. See <http://www.networkcultures.org/uploads/32.pdf>.

18  
Paul Fussell, *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System* (New York: Ballantine, 1983); David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). On his website, <http://creativeclass.com>, Florida engages in excoriations of Brooks and presents himself as the good observer while Brooks is the bad.

19  
Zukin, *Loft Living*, op. cit. See

note 4. To my knowledge, the concept of the artistic mode of production was first articulated by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, published in 1981, which develops the thesis of the historical grounding of narrative frameworks.

20  
Ibid., 98.

21  
Ibid., citing Ronald Berman, "Art vs. the Arts," *Commentary*, November 1979: 48.

22  
See, for example, Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

23  
Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 8.

24  
Doug Henwood, *After the New Economy* (New York: The New Press, 2003).

25  
Edward Glaeser, "Review of Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*," 3. See [http://www.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/glaeser/files/Review\\_Florida.pdf](http://www.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/glaeser/files/Review_Florida.pdf).

26  
Ibid., 4.

27  
Ibid., 5.

28  
Max Nathan, "The Wrong Stuff? Creative Class Theory and Economic Performance in UK Cities." See <http://cjrsrcsr.org/archive/s/30-3/NATHAN.pdf>.

29  
Ann Markusen, "Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class: Evidence from the Study of Artists," op. cit. See [http://www.hhh.umn.edu/projects/prie/pdf/266\\_creativity\\_class\\_politics.pdf](http://www.hhh.umn.edu/projects/prie/pdf/266_creativity_class_politics.pdf).

30  
Alan Blum, "The Imaginary of Self-Satisfaction: Reflections on the Platitude of the 'Creative City,'" in Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw, eds., *Circulation and the City: Essays on Urban Culture* (Montreal and Kingston, London, and Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

31  
Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

32  
William G. Ouchi, *Theory Z* (New York: Avon Books, 1982).

33  
W. Edwards Deming and J. M.

Juran, *Quality Control Handbook* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951).

34  
Hiroko Tabuchi, "Japanese Playing a New Video Game: Catch-Up," *New York Times*, September 20, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/20/technology/20game.html?pagewanted=1&sq=japan%20business%20sept.%202010&st=cse&scp=1>.

35  
Matthew Stewart, "The Management Myth," *The Atlantic*, June 2006. See <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/06/the-management-myth/4883/>.

36  
Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933).

37  
Frederick Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1911); Frank Gilbreth, *Motion Study* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1911).

38  
David Graeber, *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion and Desire* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007).

39  
Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of 'As If': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind* (London: Routledge, 1924).

40  
Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006). This book is handy for laying out and following statistically what should be readily apparent to observers.

41  
Chantal Mouffe, "The Museum Revisited," *Artforum*, vol. 48, no. 10 (Summer 2010): 326–330. See <http://artforum.com/inprint/id=25710>.

42  
Zukin, *Loft Living*, 190.

43  
Sharon Zukin, *The Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

44  
Ibid., 142.

45  
Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2001).

46  
Zukin, *Naked City*, 142.

47  
Ibid., 142–143.

48  
Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*; Antonio Muniz Sodré, *O*

*social irradiado: Violencia urbana, neogrotesco e midia* (Sao Paulo: Cortez Editora, 1992); Nestor García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

Grant Kester, "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Art," *Afterimage* 22:6 (January 1995), 5–11; Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer?" *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). See [http://www.corner-college.com/udb/cpro2ZgGKfArtist\\_As\\_Ethnographer.pdf](http://www.corner-college.com/udb/cpro2ZgGKfArtist_As_Ethnographer.pdf).

50  
Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004), 51–79.

51  
Jane Alexander and Gary O. Larson, *American Canvas: An Arts Legacy for Our Communities* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 1997). How easily that term "utilitarian" slides into discussions of a dimension that during the Cold War was always explicitly denied. See <http://www.nea.gov/pub/AmCanvas/AmericanCanvas.pdf>.

52  
Yúdice, op. cit., 245.

53  
Alexander and Larson, *American Canvas*. Emphasis in the original.

54  
Markusen, "Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class," op. cit., 22–23. In this paper, Markusen acknowledges artists' role in gentrification, remarking they are "sometimes caught up in gentrification," but she sees their role in most cities as not different from that of other middle- and working-class people migrating into working-class neighborhoods and on this account criticizes both Zukin, with whom she otherwise generally agrees, and Rosalyn Deutsche.



→ Continued from “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part II: Creativity and Its Discontents” in issue 23 and “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I: Art and Urbanism” in issue 21.

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## PART THREE: IN THE SERVICE OF EXPERIENCE(S)

### 1. Jungle into Garden

In the not-so-distant New York past, tenement roofs, and even those of lower-middle-class apartment buildings – ones without doormen, say – were where women went with their washing and their children, in good or just tolerable weather, to hang the damp laundry on the line, thus joining a larger community of women in performing the necessary and normal, good and useful, labor of reproduction and maintenance of family life. (The clothes themselves, and the hanging of the laundry, were signals easily interpretable by other women as to wealth, status, moral character, and even marital harmony.) For men, many an apartment roof held the lofts of racing pigeons, the raising of which is an intergenerational hobby. Before air conditioning, you went to the roof for solitude, and for some prized “fresh air,” and if you were lucky you could catch sight of the nearest body of water. The roofs of loft buildings, of course, served no familial functions. Roofs with gardens were pleasant idylls for luxury penthouse spaces, absent of the gloss of use value attached to urban farming or green roofs.

Martha Rosler

# Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III



Sketch of the proposed new Whitney Museum at the High Line terminus, in the gallery district of Chelsea, New York City.

The new, and newly relaxed, attitude to the (apparently) natural world in New York – in contradistinction to a city like Helsinki, where wildness is not appreciated<sup>1</sup> – is reflected in the resurrection of the city’s High Line, a disused elevated industrial rail line in lower Manhattan’s far-west former industrial zone.<sup>2</sup> Its salvage and



John Sloan, *Sun and Wind on the Roof*, 1915. Oil on canvas.

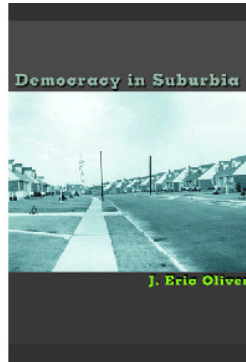


conversion into a Chelsea park, with its (re)importation of frank wild(er)ness into the city, began as a quixotic effort by a couple of architects but soon became a patrician project, and then a municipal one.<sup>3</sup> It marks a further step in the long transformation of urban waterfronts, formerly the filthy and perilous haunts of poor, often transient and foreign-born, workers servicing the ports into recreational and residential zones beckoning the mostly young and decidedly upper middle class. The water's edge, which once figured as the dangerous divide between this-world and underworld, between safety and the unknown, now promises pleasurable adventures in travel or beach-going.

In another register, the city has now decided to embrace neighborhood community gardens, especially in places where the working class has been effectively priced out, a contrast to the 1990s when hard-line suburbanite mayor Rudy Giuliani tried to destroy many of these oases (which he considered "socialistic"), often painstakingly reclaimed from trash-strewn wastelands that had fallen off the city's tax rolls and into public receivership, by selling off the plots to developers at bargain rates. The city now also permits the formerly banned keeping of chickens (but never roosters) and bees anywhere

in the city.<sup>4</sup> In my neighborhood, the still-slightly-gritty-but-on-the-way-to-becoming-hipsterland Greenpoint, in Brooklyn, some enterprising young women have started a well-publicized commercial rooftop "farm."<sup>5</sup> Other incipient hipster neighborhoods are poised to copy. Please try not to think of Marie Antoinette's Petite Hameau, her little farm on the grounds of Versailles, for creatives are not aristocrats, and poor people too are finally allowed to keep such animals and grow cash mini-crops.

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Though they may not be aristocrats, accustomed to hereditary rank and privilege, creatives belong to the first generation to have



Camilo José Vergara, *Detroit Skyline, View South Along Park Avenue*, 1989.

grown up within an almost entirely suburbanized America.<sup>6</sup> US political scientist J. Eric Oliver, in *Democracy in Suburbia*, spells out the links between the suburban retreat to “private life” and the removal of conflict and competition over resources among urban groups:

When municipal zoning authority and other advantages of smaller size are used to create pockets of economic homogeneity and affluence, the civic benefits of smaller size are undermined. The racial bifurcation of cities and suburbs also has civic costs, partly through concentrating the problems of urban areas in racially mixed settings. By taking much of the competition for resources and much of the political conflict that naturally exists among members of an interdependent metropolitan community and separating them with municipal boundaries, suburbanization also eliminates many of the incentives that draw citizens into the public realm.<sup>7</sup>

Thus we should read the “becoming creative” of the post-industrial urban core as the formation of a homogenous space drained of the incentives for political engagement. Philosopher and political scientist Seyla Benhabib has characterized, and criticized, Hannah Arendt for the limitations in considering the public in terms of agonistic and associational spheres. The former, Benhabib maintains, is out of step with the “sociological reality of modernity, as well as with modern political struggles for justice,” through its preference for theatricality, for politics as action undertaken at least partially for its own sake and distinct from considerations of instrumental reason. Even without taking sides, it is possible to read the decline of both models of politics, of association and agonism, in the new “creative sphere” of the upper-middle-class urban elite. The public stage of civic action is increasingly coterminous with the preferences of a specific class, preventing both association and agonism – at least to the extent that either of those would be worthy of the term “politics.” It is in this sense that we must consider the newfound municipal enthusiasm for parks and park-like experiences, and the sanctioning of “neo-hippie” chicken-keeping and urban and rooftop farming, along with many of the examples to follow, as bound up with the shift in the class composition of the urban fabric.

The greenmarkets sited around New York City, the bicycle lanes, and the outdoor patios built in the middle of busy streets, express the conviction that the city is no longer a concrete jungle but a cultivated garden enclosing a well-managed zoo or kindergarten, in which everyone

and his or her neighbor is placed on display, in the act of self-creation, whether you choose to look or not. The gardens, urban and rooftop farms, water slides, and climbable sculptures that have replaced the modernist model of public art works (which had itself displaced the state-sanctioned monumentalism of previous eras) must be understood as of a piece with the increasingly suburban character of creative-class politics.

04/24



If we consider the issue in terms of the role of art sited in public spaces, it would seem indisputable that the “public art” (or “art in public”) sector in the US has turned to a service/experience model. The modernist model of public art, which relied heavily on what we might call abstractionist inspirationalism or on architectural or social critique, had elicited increasing incomprehension and annoyance from the wider public; its ship finally foundered with the removal in 1989 of Richard Serra’s abstract, minimalist, site-specific *Tilted Arc* (1981), describable perhaps as an artful but rusty wall of COR-TEN steel, from its position in front of a lower Manhattan federal courthouse.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, *The Gates*, Christo and Jean Claude’s 2005 project for New York’s Central Park, underlined the role of public art as a frame for narcissistic self-appreciation on the part of bourgeois park-goers and city fathers, who may see themselves perambulating through a proud and cohesive body politic. Further, watching others pace through *The Gates* permitted a grandiose self-recognition, in which participants see each other and acknowledge the (rightful) presence of each on the grand stage with the figure of Nature hovering o’er.<sup>9</sup> This role of forming and framing the New York *polis* was already played by public gardens, like Brooklyn’s Prospect Park and Manhattan’s Central Park, in the nineteenth century; the modern history of the walk through a scenic landscape begins much earlier, in the eighteenth century in Western Europe at least, but the process now

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Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salinas, *Wildflowers*, projected video loop, Henie Onstad Art Center, Oslo, 2009.



relies more prominently on presenting the civic world as remade, however ephemerally, by art, and *as* art – but with that Kodak smile. Creative adulthood means reimagining ourselves as children looking to have fun in our free time; the city no longer embodies the formal relations of the adult *polis* but is viewed by many as a series of overlapping fantasies of safety and adventure, as Sharon Zukin has suggested.<sup>10</sup>

The appeal to Nature, to that which appears as an “outside” to a society organized so that there is no outside, is part of the simulacral effect that attests to the loss of distinction between public and private spheres, and to the atomization of publics into individuals in Brownian motion, often conveniently invisible to one another, or, more properly, no more consequent than street furniture (which is why Christo and Jean Claude’s project was seized upon as municipally appropriate in allowing, temporarily and symbolically, the polity to come into view, pacing in orderly ranks through the crown-jewel park).<sup>11</sup> This is a step beyond the anonymity long remarked on as a simultaneously liberatory and alienating effect of city life, theorized by Georg Simmel in “Metropolis and Mental Life,” an article of 1903 whose acceptance came only much later.<sup>12</sup> A further sign of a breakdown in urban codes and of urban/suburban boundary policing is represented by the casualization, even infantilization, of middle-class dress within city limits that has gone hand in hand with the computer-creative nerds’ habit, starting in the IT shops and cultivated by management, of dressing as though they were at the gym, at summer camp, or on a hike.<sup>13</sup> If the world of “nature” is fetishized, you can be sure a version of the *Übermensch* is lurking somewhere in the bushes.

As Giorgio Agamben reminds us,

Arendt had already analyzed the process that brings *homo laborans* – and with it, biological life as such – gradually to occupy the very center of the political scene of modernity. ... Arendt attributes the transformation and decadence of the political realm in modern societies to this very primacy of natural life over political action.<sup>14</sup>

We see this substitution at work in the highly evolved politics of contemporary consumer consciousness. The selection of consumer products increasingly demands to be taken seriously as a political act, asking us to produce a political self-portrait as we feed, clothe, and clean ourselves.

There is also something fundamental about

the relation between gardening and this emerging biopolitics, between gardening and metaphors of rootedness and the uncomfortable displacements of modernity, the tearing away of deep, even unconscious connections to community and place. The urban farming movement, a corner of the artisanal fever that periodically grips artists’ communities, potentially expresses a desire to return to a mythic, prelapsarian Eden of community and stability, of preindustrial, premediatic life, without the grit of urban disconnection but with the authenticity of *Gemeinschaft* restored. This appealing dream is expressed in the immortal refrain of Joni Mitchell’s song *Woodstock* of 1969, written about a historic event which career demands had prevented her from attending:

We are stardust.  
We are golden.  
And we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden.

Here the garden is the part of the post-suburban Imaginary that governed the transition of the urban economy from industrial manufacturing to a high-end residential and commercial base. If we can imagine each of the distinctive urban spaces – industrial, residential, commercial – as manifesting a certain politics, we can understand not only the cultural trends that have followed in their wake but also the wider characterization of neoliberal consumer capitalism as an “experience economy.”

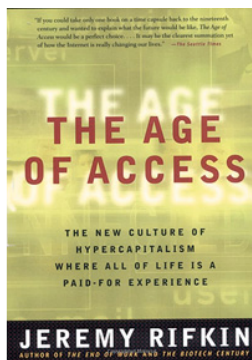
As the vibrancy of interclass contention has been quelled by the damping off of working-class politics, a sanitized version of an industrial urban experience (or some image of one) can be marketed to the incoming middle class, who have the means and the willingness to pay for what was formerly a set of indigenous strategies of survival, of a *way of life*. The rooftop evacuated by the laundry lines and the pigeon loft becomes an urban farm, trailing clouds of glory.

The new Imaginary of New York City, like so many others’, is no longer a concrete jungle but a cultivated garden, a place in which a gardener controls the noxious weeds and plants and directs growth in marvelous and pious ways. Lest I be taken for a romantic crank – or just an old bohemian like Samuel Delany memorializing the days when Times Square was simply The Deuce – I want to remind the reader that, if nothing else, as a female city-dweller I appreciate the newfound feeling of probable safety in the streets, especially after dark; but it is important to discern (as Delany would wish us to) the terms of this exchange.



Image from Paul Elliman & Nicole Macdonald's project on the Detroit Zoo, *Future Park I: Teach me to disappear*, presented at Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, 2010.

## 2. In the Service of Experiences



George Yúdice cites Jeremy Rifkin's article from 2000, "Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience," describing the "selling and buying of human experiences" in "themed cities, common-interest developments, entertainment destination centers, shopping malls, global tourism, fashion, cuisine, professional sports and games, film, television, virtual world and [other] simulated experiences."<sup>15</sup> Rifkin observes:

If the industrial era nourished our physical being, the Age of Access feeds our mental, emotional, and spiritual being. While controlling the exchange of goods characterized the age just passing, controlling the exchange of concepts characterizes the new age coming. In the twenty-first century, institutions increasingly trade in ideas, and people, in turn, increasingly buy access to those ideas and the physical embodiments in which they are contained.<sup>16</sup>

One effect of this search for meaningful – or authentic – experience is the highlighting of authenticity as nothing more nor less than the currency of the experience economy. We should not be surprised to find a business/motivational book entitled *Authenticity*, with the subtitle "What Consumers Really Want." Written by Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, consultants living in the small city of Aurora, Ohio, the book is the successor to their previous book, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*, of 1999.<sup>17</sup> These and similar books are guides not just to the creation of spectacles but for rethinking all business activity as gerundive, providing those fantastic, perhaps transformative, experiences we all supposedly seek, on the Disneyland model. Urbanism itself becomes fertile ground for precisely these transformations. (Zukin's *Naked City: The Death*

and *Life of Authentic Urban Places* illustrates this thesis through considering three signal New York neighborhoods.)

The fraying of traditional ties evident in the preferences and behaviors of the creative class also points to the tendency to form identifications based on consumerist, often ephemeral, choices. Taste in lifestyle choices with no political commitment has hollowed out the meaningfulness of taste – in art, music, furniture, clothing, food, schools, neighborhoods, vacation spots, leisure activities, friends – as a clear-cut indicator of the individual's moral worth (of the individual's "cultivation," to use an old-fashioned construct, drawn from gardening). (This is one more reason why it is impossible to base a serious contemporary aesthetics on those of Kant, for whom the faculty of taste could not be more clearly separated from the "possessive individualism" that marks contemporary consumer choices. Kant, you may recall, in *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, developed a tripartite system in which taste is clearly demarcated from both reason and the urge to possess, or the "pornographic.") Taste now seems to be a sign of group membership with little resonance as a personal choice beyond a certain compass of selecting which token of the requisite type to acquire; perhaps that is why David Brooks (ever a keen observer of telling details while remaining completely incapable of seeing the big picture), recognized that for the creative class, choices must be understood as *virtuous*. (That individual choices are made on the basis of preferences already exhibited by a group is not completely new, since members of every group and tribe are instantly identifiable from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, but the present context seems different, centering more on consumer acuity than on quality.) But virtue is not to be exhibited as virtuousness but rather as dictated by some external force other than religion, such as ecological awareness or putative health effects. Public institutions, and even royalty, have tried to become one with the people, exhibiting the same sentimentality through the public display of grief, joy, and family pride. Websites follow the example of Facebook, with portrait photos of even distinguished professors and public officials; smaller art institutions show us their staff members (mostly the women) proudly hugging their offspring or (mostly the men) their dogs.

In general, art institutions, particularly those smaller ones that used to form part of the alternative movement, have furthermore married the provision of experiences to the culture of celebration by turning up their noses at





One of the houses included in the Heidelberg Project, Detroit. Photo DetroitDerek Photography.



Keith Piacezny, *Demolished by Neglect*, Detroit, late 1980s.  
Image: Center for Urban Photography.

seriousness and critique, as reviewers, if not critics, have as well.<sup>18</sup> We can see the rhetoric, often vividly expressed, of service, on the one hand, and fun experiences, on the other, among smaller art institutions and initiatives. I offer a few excerpted examples, mostly from email announcements. They span the spectrum of contemporary exhibition venues from small, artist-run spaces, to larger, more established organizations to the self-branding of cities. There are several core concepts that provide the rhetorical touchstones in these self-descriptions. On the fun side, these range from cross-fertilization in disparate “creative” user-friendly fields to an array of anti-puritanical hooks that touch on energetic pleasure in love, dancing, or whatever, and, on the service side, to bringing culture to the lower classes, helping heal the traumas of deindustrialization, and covering over the catastrophes of war.

My first example is an outlier: a public relations and events management company for “cultural projects” in New York and Milan, called Contaminate NYC, announcing a solo cartoon and manga show at a place called ContestaRockHair, described as:

a brand created in 1996 by a group of hairstylists who shared the passion for fashion characterized by a rock soul that links music and art with the creation of hair styles, fostering innovation and experimentation. Today ContestaRockHair counts 11 salons in Rome, Florence, New York, Miami, and Shanghai.<sup>19</sup>

One venerable New York artist-run institution, now positioning itself as a discursive space as well as an exhibition venue, has “partnered” with a boutique hotel in strange ways and touts the “Peace, Love & Room Service Package,” from which it receives a small percentage. Another 1970s New York nonprofit (listing a hotel and six other public and private funders), expresses its “passionate belief in the power of art to create inspiring personal experiences as well as foster social progress.” In the economically depressed 1970s, its earliest programs “invigorated vacant storefronts.” This strategy, in which property developers rely on artists to render the empty less so, has today become formulaic and ubiquitous in the US and beyond, making the connection between art’s appearance on the scene and the revaluing of real estate embarrassingly obvious.

Two further representatives of this trend strike a more sober note. The first is also from New York: this relatively new group’s “core mission is to revitalize ... areas ... by bringing thoughtful, high-caliber art installations ... to the

public....” A recent show in the formerly industrial zone, now “artists’ district,” of Dumbo uses construction materials crafted into “visual oxymorons that shift function and meaning in highly poetic ways.”

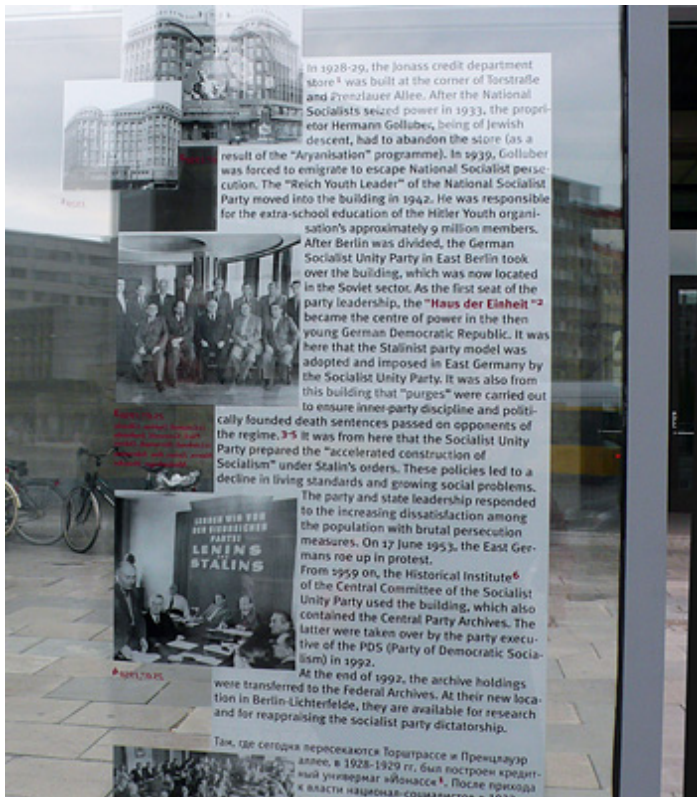
The second, a dockside location in southern Europe, listing a dozen corporate and municipal partners and sponsors, “targets the need to rehabilitate and revitalize urban spaces, without losing their identity or altering their nature....” By “taking into consideration the location of the project” in the docks, the art space

aims to expand art into non-traditional spaces and promote the use of places that previously lacked museum-like characteristics. ... Without culture, societies cannot have a true civic consciousness.

Berlin is experienced in the framing discourses of creative-industry gentrification, especially after a 2007 report in *Der Spiegel* rated it as Germany’s top “creative class city,” based on Richard Florida’s “3T” indices: Talent, Technology, and Tolerance.<sup>20</sup> So far, Berlin has been slow to embrace becoming “the hippest down-to-earth booming urban spot for the creative industries,” as described by the Berlin MEA Brand Building, advertising itself as “dedicated to luxury, fashion, art, cosmetics and accessoires [sic].” A Wall Street Journal article of 2010 mocks artists’ and bohemians’ unhappiness over the arrival of Soho House, one of a string of “ultra-hip private social clubs” because many Berliners, “proud and protective of their anarchic, gritty brand of cool,” are “stubbornly wary of gentrification symbols.” Berlin’s Soho House is in a former Jewish-owned department store turned Hitler Youth headquarters turned East German Communist Party building, a history that fuels people’s indignation over the arrival in town of a members-only club.<sup>21</sup>

As it once did in the repurposing of German real estate contaminated by recent world history, the transformation of cities newer to the conquest of urban space can raise the eyebrows of those to whom such things may matter. The *New York Times*, writing of the Podgorze district in Krakow, Poland, an infamous Jewish ghetto under the Nazis that was subsequently commercially orphaned in the postwar years, gushes about new restaurants springing up alongside “an ambitious history museum in the renovated [Oskar] Schindler Factory” and other promised museums nearby. “The award for prettiest real estate goes to Galeria Starmach, one of the most celebrated contemporary art galleries in Poland ... an airy white space in a red brick former synagogue.”<sup>22</sup>





Historical information panel from the Soho House Club.

But keep smiling! Mourning is consigned to new art-like spaces, such as complex architect- or artist-designed sculptural memorials and other secular pilgrimage shrines, such as museums of remembrance. In other words, those who wish to engage in mourning are directed there rather than to actual religious structures or to more general-purpose museums. Meanwhile, *those* established museums wish to make themselves seem less like mausoleums and grand palaces and more like parks and gardens, going beyond the typical decor of the past, of vast floral lobby vases and discreet landscaping, toward pavilions and bamboo structures produced by a host of artists or journeyman architects in museum backyards and on their roofs. This happy-face effort is but a short step beyond their efforts to justify their right to funds from skeptical municipalities and donors by attracting, through various programs administered by education departments, visitors from outside their normal ambit, thereby assuming not only the role of service provider but that of a pedagogical institution (often one pitched to lower grade levels).<sup>23</sup> No longer permitted to take the old-fashioned view and to see themselves as a locus of individualized contemplation of worthy aesthetic objects, museums have increasingly taken responsibility for the entirety of visitors' experiences, shepherding them from the shop to the art works, with their enfolding printed and recorded and virtual texts, to the café, while also

beckoning to those formerly excluded population groups and informing them about the manifold rewards that museum-going might offer them.

### 3. Detroit: I Do Mind Dying

Detroit is a city imagined by some as an urban wasteland reverting back to prairie. Over the past twenty-plus years, many projects have tried to engage with Detroit's long slide from an iconic metropolitan vanguard of the eponymous Fordist assembly-line production to a severely distressed relic. As the fastest-shrinking metropolis in the US (it is at its lowest point in 100 years, having dropped from the fourth largest in 1950 to the eleventh in 2009 and losing a quarter of its population in the interim) and long past hoping for salvation from its Renaissance Center, postindustrial Detroit is presently trying to school its residents on how to grow small gracefully.<sup>24</sup> The city has been shrinking for a long time, as suburban, mostly white, flight took hold from the 1950s onward and as the auto industry ceased to be the mighty backbone of the US economy, dispersing its production to low-wage locales in the US and elsewhere and greatly reducing its employee ranks.<sup>25</sup> Detroit's history as the quintessentially Fordist industrial city (Ford is the carmaker that pioneered the moving assembly line) is worth considering. Not only is its history of worker organizing and union struggles long and distinguished, the city government also had a number of socialists for a good amount of time, until their support base disappeared and city government was beset by corrupt politicians. The infamous Detroit riot (some would say uprising) of 1967, while rooted in the inequalities of race, nevertheless included some racial solidarity.<sup>26</sup>



Lowell Boileau, panorama of part of the ruins of Packard Motors, Detroit, n.d.

Detroit has a long and distinguished cultural history as well, most prominently in music – jazz, classical music performance, R&B, and more recently, the Motown sound, hip-hop, and Detroit Techno.<sup>27</sup> But the elite, publicly supported mainstream institutions, including the venerable Detroit Institute of the Arts, the Detroit Opera House (home of the Michigan Opera Theatre), and the world-famous Detroit Symphony, are struggling for audiences and support; this year, the Symphony's musicians, after a contentious six-month strike and the cancellation of 75 percent of the season, accepted a 23 percent pay

cut, and the Opera House now holds a megachurch service every Sunday.



As the locale of a new television cop show, Detroit is the very image of post-Fordist urban abjection.<sup>28</sup> Written off the register of civilized America, suffering from dreadful crime statistics, inadequate policing, and municipal corruption, the city has recently called forth unbidden an extravaganza of projects attempting to establish the authentic street cred of both parachuting artists and local activists. As in the case of New Orleans, some cool people are presently moving in – people who fit under the rubric “creative class.” Some of the renewed interest in Detroit stems from an analysis of the city as both the model failure of (urban) capitalism and a fertile ground for the seeds of the future. Some other observers seem to revel in the opportunity to pick over the ruins in a kind of extended rubbernecking, but with the sometimes-unspecified hope that the outcome takes place in the vicinity of the art world.<sup>29</sup> Others still seem interested in pedagogical opportunities, whether for themselves or others. As is the case everywhere, many new arrivals are looking for cheap rent, for places to live and work comfortably, as Richard Florida has noticed; as Florida also tells us, where hipsters go, restaurants are sure to follow. The *New York Times* asks, “How much good can a restaurant do?” and reassures us that

in this city, a much-heralded emblem of industrial-age decline, and home to a crippling bad economy, a troubled school system, racial segregation and sometimes unheeded crime, there is one place where most everyone – black, white, poor, rich, urban, not – will invariably recommend you eat: Slows Bar B Q.<sup>30</sup>

Opened in 2005, the restaurant has, according to its owner, artist and real estate scion Phillip Collier, “validated the idea that people will come into the city.” The reporter comments, “Anywhere but Detroit, the notion that people will show up

and pay money for barbecue and beer would not be seen as revolutionary.”<sup>31</sup>

Detroit is home to many worthwhile public and community projects off the art world radar, such as the long-standing urban farming movement partly spearheaded by beloved radical activist Grace Lee Boggs, now ninety-six years old.<sup>32</sup> Boggs works with established communities of various income groups, using the collective growing, planting, and harvesting of crops and flowers as a basis for unity and civic mobilization, and as a way to draw in children; planting and harvesting remain a potent metaphor for self-application, communal effort, and the likelihood of a future. In a city like Detroit, neighborhood groups proliferate.



Cadillac Motor & Fleetwood workers' strike, Detroit, 1937.

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People have been making art about Detroit's troubles for a long time, especially through the media of photography and film: see for example, Newsreel's *Finally Got the News* (1970) and Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (1989).<sup>33</sup> Camilo José Vergara, sociologist, photographer, and cogent chronicler of the ills of US cities from the 1980s on, photographed and wrote about Detroit.<sup>34</sup> In the 1980s, the local group Urban Center for Photography outraged officials and city boosters by turning a grant they had received into a public project called *Demolished by Neglect*, which included posting enlarged photos of burned-out homes and decrepit theaters and other grand spaces on outdoor sites.<sup>35</sup>

Detroit is the site of artist-NGO do-gooder projects in the sphere of urban relations, some worthy, some hardly so. In the past few months I have met artists from around the world who have made the sad precincts of Detroit and environs their subject. Some of the projects rest comfortably within the tradition of salvage anthropology, such as the Canadian artist



Monika Berenyi's project archiving the poetry of the 1960s and 1970s Detroit through the *Detroit City Poetry Project: An Oral History*.<sup>36</sup> Several Detroit projects have taken place in New York or have been instituted by New York-based artists. In 2009 a small nonprofit on New York's Lower East Side held a show called "Art of the Crash: Art Created from the Detritus of Detroit."<sup>37</sup>

Another project, *Ice House Detroit*, by an architect and a photographer based in Brooklyn (though the photographer was born in Detroit), consisted of laboriously (and expensively, it turns out) spraying one of Detroit's countless abandoned houses with water in the dead of winter to make it visible and undeniably aesthetic.<sup>38</sup> Back in New York, a young artist having a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art last year showed her symbolic set of photo panels entitled *Detroit*. "The thing you have to understand about Detroit is that ruin is pervasive. It's not like it's relegated to one part of town... It's everywhere." The artist (who has also visited New Orleans) "internalized all that decay, but she also uncovered hopeful signs of reinvention, like a group of artists turning an abandoned auto plant into studio spaces," writes the *New York Times*.

Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman,

artists based in Oslo, have been doing projects in Detroit (Bergman's home town) for a decade in collaboration with institutions in Detroit and Oslo. They will be running an "artist/poet/scholar" residency called INCA: Institute for Neo-Connotative Action, out of a center-city apartment they own. Salinas and Bergman have made animated-text films based on audio recordings of local community and political activists (including Grace Lee Boggs) and on the history of DRUM, the Detroit chapter of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, centered on the Newsreel film *Finally Got the News*.<sup>39</sup>

The Netherlands also sends art students to Detroit, but in much larger numbers and through regularized institutional channels, under the auspices of the Dutch Art Institute, in collaboration with the University of Michigan, an elite public university.<sup>40</sup> The university has set up a Detroit center, accessible only to Ann Arbor-based students with swipe cards. Back in Ann Arbor, about an hour's drive from Detroit, artist Danielle Abrams teaches a course called "Why Does Everyone in Ann Arbor Want to Make Work in Detroit?" During the 2010 Open Engagement conference sponsored by the Art and Social Practice program at Portland State



Union Square, New York City, 2010.

University in Oregon, Abrams's students explained that they didn't go to Detroit to "fix it" but rather "to get to know the community: its history, its people, and movements": "The city will teach you what you need to know."<sup>41</sup> Abrams's students did not produce art projects but rather "research and community engagement."

A pair of young Australian artists received funding from an Australia Council residency in Chicago to do a month-long project in Gary, Indiana, an industrial satellite of Detroit and similarly in ruins. In conjunction with the neighborhood activist group Central District Organizing Project they planted a community garden and painted an all-but-abandoned house with an absentee owner. They also recorded local interviews for a planned film interspersing the interviews with clips from the 1980s Hollywood movie *The Wiz*.<sup>42</sup>

The imperative toward a manifestation of social concern and respect, if not engagement, pervades most of the projects I have learned about. If some of this sounds like missionary social work in a third world city that is part of a first world nation – much like the Ninth Ward in post-Katrina New Orleans – other projects are, like the MoMA artist's, framed in romantic, and sometimes futuristic terms (and what is futurism if not predicated on loss?). Let me invoke the motif of melancholy. Only through the act of mourning something as having been lost can the melancholic possess that which he or she may never have had; the contours of absence provide a kind of echo or relief of what is imagined lost, allowing it to be held. In this respect, most art-world projects centering on decaying places like Detroit are melancholic monuments to capital, in the sense of depicting both the devastation left in its absence but also the politics it provoked. Detroit was home not only to one of the great triumphs of capitalist manufacturing but also to one of the great compromises between capital and labor. To be upper middle class and melancholic about Detroit is to firmly fix one's political responsibilities to a now absent past; mourning Detroit is a gesture that simultaneously evidences one's social conscience and testifies to its absolute impotence. (Looking at Detroit also helpfully eases the vexed question of one's effect on one's own neighborhood in another city somewhere else.)

Such melancholia has nourished a post-apocalyptic futurism. A recent exhibition at Casco, the public design space in Utrecht, by a London-based graphic designer and a Detroit filmmaker, seeks "to imagine a post-capitalist city," focusing on Detroit's abandoned zoo, "not simply to witness the failure of a civilization in its

state of ruin, but to encounter an abundant ecosystem of flora and fauna that has since evolved there."<sup>43</sup> An associated lecture by a Scottish-born, Detroit-based professor of urban studies argued that Detroit is a place "where a model of open spaces or, to use a term that comes up a lot here in Detroit, the urban prairie, starts to come into play."<sup>44</sup> (The architect of the *Ice House* project had similarly told *Dwell* magazine that "Detroit is a place with a lot of potential at the moment, and there are a lot of individuals there working on innovative projects, such as the re-prairie-ization of inner city Detroit, urban farming, materials reuse and redistribution, densification of certain areas, and widespread architectural reuse."<sup>45</sup>)

The decidedly local Heidelberg Project, Tyree Guyton's 25-year effort of decorating house exteriors in an impoverished neighborhood centering on Detroit's Heidelberg Street, fits into the "outsider art" category. Unlike, say, the initiative of artist-mayor Edi Rama of Tirana to paint the downtown buildings of this destitute city in bright colors, captured by the Albanian-born artist Anri Sala in *Dammi i colori*, Guyton's project has not had a high level of art-world or municipal traction.<sup>46</sup> A group of Detroit-based artists going by the name Object Orange, however, achieved a brief moment of attention in 2006/2007 when they painted abandoned buildings in Disney's "Tiggerific Orange" color, hoping, they finally decided, to have the city tear them down and reduce the blight and danger they posed.<sup>47</sup>

I mention these projects on Detroit not to praise or to criticize them in particular but because they represent a movement within art, and architecture, to institute projects in the larger community, in the built environment or in reference to it, surely as part of the "go social," community-oriented imperative. Is it troublesome that such works stand in contradistinction, implicit or explicit, to "political art," to work directly concerned with access to power? Here it is helpful to invoke New York urban theorist Marshall Berman's phrase, the "collision between abstract capitalist space and concrete human place." Community groups, and community artists, are tied to a concrete locale and thus cannot stand up to those in command of capital, which is defined by its mobility. But even more, community groups are composed of members tied to each other, whereas itinerant artists remain always on the outside, functioning as participant observers, anthropology style. Some, like Harrell Fletcher (or, earlier, filmmakers Nettie Wild and Beni Matias), have found communities where they expected only to do a project and leave, but have instead moved in.<sup>48</sup>



In other cities, such as Barcelona, generally presented as a model of humanistic redevelopment, driven by the relentless push of municipal “renewal,” but also notable for its “push back” of local housing initiatives, young activist students work on resistance and reformation campaigns within working-class communities under pressure of gentrification, adding some visibility and perhaps organizational strength to local neighborhood groups. Detroit has no such worries.

#### 4. Public Practice, Social Practice

I do not know whether to be more pleased or apprehensive about art-world artists engaging in, as the sign on the door says, “social practice.” Certainly these essays into the world beyond the art world, which can include any of a spate of pedagogical projects in ordinary communities, feed the instincts of a sector of artists, a sector constantly reborn, to do something “real.” It is worth noting, following Mierle Ukeles, the replacement of the term public art by social practice.<sup>49</sup> The emphasis on personal qualities and social networks will most likely give rise to projects that center on the affective. I have rehearsed some of the difficulties of these efforts. I have also alluded, throughout this

essay, to the relatively easy co-optation of artists as an urban group in cities that simply allow us to live and work in ways we find conducive to our concerns – a pacification made easier by the expansion of the definition of the artist and the advancing professionalization of the field. Baby steps in the formation of community initiatives are treated as deserving of the moral (and professional) equivalent of merit badges, for a generation raised on images and virtual communication and lacking a sufficient grasp of the sustained commitment required for community immersion. These projects can capture the attention of journalists and municipal authorities, all speaking the same language and operating against a backdrop of shared class understandings. (This is precisely the situation Sharon Zukin described in *Loft Living*, which, we should recall, is a case study, using Manhattan’s Soho neighborhood, of the transformation of undervalued urban space into highly valuable real estate, a condition revisited in the more recent *Naked City*, in order to address the process at a far more advanced stage along that course.<sup>50</sup>) But it renders invisible the patient organizing and agitating, often decades long, by members of the local communities (a process I witnessed first-hand in Greenpoint, Brooklyn).



Comptoir des Cotonniers storefront, Soho district, New York.

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such as Kickstarter or PitchEngine, in which the appeal to an audience beyond the professional is often couched in the language of promotion. Like resume writing, now strongly infused with a public-relations mentality, the offerings are larded with inflated claims and the heavy use of superlatives.<sup>52</sup> One should refer here to the manifold and repeated discussions of the artist as flexible personality in the post-Fordist world, forced to “sell” oneself in numerous protean discourses; a literature that encompasses such writers as Brian Holmes and Paolo Virno (I have briefly cited this literature in an earlier essay, in relation to the questions of the political and critical art<sup>53</sup>). Paolo Virno writes:

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praxis, Work or Action – seems to exclude its opposite.<sup>54</sup>

The alienation this creates is so all-pervasive that although the alienation of labor was a much-studied topic in mid twentieth century, the condition has settled like a miasma over all of us and has disappeared as a topic. At the same time, while some artists are once again occupied with the nature of labor and the role of artists in social transformation, Continental theorists have for most of the past century looked at social transformation through the prism of art and culture. The focus on culture itself as a means of critiquing and perhaps superseding class rule has a long lineage. Perry Anderson has pointed out that Marxism on the whole was inhibited from dealing with economic and political problems from the 1920s on, and when questions concerning the surmounting of capitalism turned to superstructural matters, theorists did not, as might be expected, concentrate on questions of the state or on law, but on culture.<sup>55</sup>

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critically, socially, and aesthetically aware,” is announced as follows: “In recent years many artists have begun to work in non-art contexts, pushing the limits of their creative practice to help solve social problems.” Offerings range from presentations on “artists embedded in the government, industries, and electoral politics” to those operating beyond the cash economy. The announcement further elucidates:

[W]e hope to further the possibilities for artists to participate in the development of social policy. Artists, art historians, museum professionals, academics, policy experts and government officials will consider how the art making process can contribute to social change as well as encourage elected officials, community leaders and the general public to think of artists as potential partners in a variety of circumstances.

In direct counterpoint is the Festival of Ideas for the New City, in Manhattan, initiated by the New Museum and sponsored by Goldman Sachs, American Express, Audi, The Rockefeller Foundation, and *New York* magazine, among others, and with thanks to local businesses, socialites, and a clutch of New York City commissioners:

[This festival], a major new collaborative initiative ... involving scores of Downtown organizations, from universities to arts institutions and community groups, working together to effect change ... will harness the power of the creative community to imagine the future city ... . The Festival will serve as a platform for artists, writers, architects, engineers, designers, urban farmers, planners, and thought leaders to exchange ideas, propose solutions, and invite the public to participate.

It comprises a conference, the inevitable street festival, and “over one hundred independent projects and public events.”<sup>56</sup> The conference proper is described (in the inflated vocabulary that we have seen some smaller institutions also adopt) as including:

visionaries and leaders – including exemplary mayors, forecasters, architects, artists, economists, and technology experts – addressing the Festival themes: The Heterogeneous City; The Networked City; The Reconfigured City; and The Sustainable City.



Poster for the Festival of New Ideas found on the New York subway.

While public practices are entered into the roster of practices legible within the art world, they are entered as well into the creative-class thesis, in which they will, along with the much larger group of knowledge-industry workers, transform cities, not by entering into transformative political struggle but rather to serve as unwitting assistants to upper-class rule.

Two near-simultaneous New York City initiatives, occurring as I write, provide insight on the way this plays out, the first from the artists' vantage point, the second from the point of view of the powers-that-be. An ambitious conference, at a not-for-profit Brooklyn gallery describing itself as “committed to organizing shows that are



These two events suggest the two registers of public projects, of the creatives remaking the urban world, which only appear to be following the same script. While artists look for the messianic or the merely helpful moment, aiming for “social change,” the institutional production is centered on various trendy formulas for the “future city.” (Yet the institutional event has secured the participation of most of lower Manhattan and Brooklyn’s project and nonprofit spaces – including some of those whose press releases figured in the present essay – no doubt figuring that they can hardly afford to take a pass.)

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For the business and urban planning communities, culture is not a social good but an instrumentalized “strategic cultural asset.” Consultant and former UK professor of urban policy Colin Mercer writes of the “strategic significance of intellectual property-based cultural and creative (content) industries in urban business communities” that can “work in partnership and synergy with existing/traditional businesses to enhance footfall, offer, branding and opportunity for consumption and diversity of

experience.”<sup>57</sup> Mercer notes that the characteristics of urban life that formerly drove people to the suburbs – such as diversity and density, on the one hand, and, on the other, vacant old factories and warehouses considered “negative location factors in the old economy” – are “potentially positive factors in the new economy because they are attractive to those [the “knowledge-based workers of the new economy”] who bring with them the potential for economic growth.”<sup>58</sup>

Mercer’s paper is, of course, a reading of Florida’s thesis; he writes:

This is not an “arts advocate” making the argument. It is an urban and regional economist from Carnegie Mellon University whose work has become very influential for urban and regional policy and planning in North America, Europe and Asia ... because he has recognised something distinctive about the contemporary make up of successful, innovative and creative cities which ... take account of ... what he calls the “creative class.”<sup>59</sup>

Indeed. Florida’s paradigm is useful for cities – especially “second tier” cities, if Alan Blum is correct – looking to create a brand and publicity for the purposes of attracting both capital and labor (the right kind of labor, for service workers will come of their own accord). As I suggested in an earlier installment, it is of little importance whether the theory pans out empirically, since it serves as a ticket of entry to renewed discourses of urban transformation. If and when it has outlived its use, another promotional package, complete with facts and figures, will succeed it, much as Florida’s urban conversation has largely replaced the more ominous “zero tolerance” and “broken windows” theories of the problematics of urban governance – a replacement that has been necessitated by lower crime statistics and perhaps from the success of evacuating or depoliticizing poor and working class residents. I am more concerned with the point of view of the broadly defined creative classes, especially of artists and other “cultural workers,” although I remind myself that immaterial and flexible labor link the creatives and those implicitly deemed uncreatives, which in the US seems to have led to a wholesale standing down from organization and militancy.

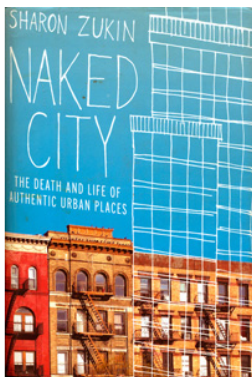
But, from a policy point of view, as UK urbanist Max Nathan remarks,

Everywhere, culture and creativity improve the quality of life; iconic buildings and good public spaces can help places reposition and rebrand. But most cities – large and

small – would be better off starting elsewhere: growing the economic base; sharpening skills, connectivity and access to markets; ensuring local people can access new opportunities, and improving key public services...<sup>60</sup>

Let me, briefly, take this discussion back to Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre, as I noted at the start of this essay, in Part I, had posited that the urban represented a qualitatively new stage in the evolution of society, from agrarian, to industrial, to urban. Thus, he reasoned, future mobilizations against capitalism would have an urban character. This troubled Manuel Castells, who, writing as a structuralist following Althusser, preferred to focus on the *ideological* function of the city – its role in securing the reproduction of relations of production – rather than approaching the city as an essentially new space, one, moreover, that might be construed as endowed with quasi-metaphysical features for the production of both alienation and emancipation. As urban theorist Andy Merrifield writes:

While the city, in Lefebvre's dialectic, functioned for capitalism, it actually threatened capitalism more; now, in Castells's dialectic, while the city threatened capitalism, it somehow had become more functional for capitalism. Indeed, the city, Castells writes, had become the "spatial specificity of the processes of reproduction of labor-power and of the processes of reproduction of the means of production."<sup>61</sup>



The relative clarity of European class politics could allow Castells to write that Gaullist attempts at urban renewal were

aimed at left-wing and in particular Communist sectors of the electorate. ... Changing this population means changing the political tendency of the sector ...

Urban renewal is strong where the electoral tradition of the parliamentary "majority" is weak.<sup>62</sup>

Zukin's interpretation of urban events is similar but tailored to American conditions. The weak and often antagonistic relation of the US student movement, through the 1960s and 70s, to working class life and culture helped produce a politics of cultural resistance in the newly developing "creative class" that was cut off, culturally, physically, and existentially, from traditional forms of urban working class organization. Although artists, flexible service workers, and "creatives" more generally may not be the source of capital accumulation, it is inarguable that the rising value of the built environment depends on their pacification of the city, while the severing of relations to class history – even of one's own family in many instances – has produced at best a blindness, and at worst an objectively antagonistic relation, to the actual character of urban traditions of life and of struggle. What often remains is a nostalgic and romanticized version of city life in which labor is misperceived as little more than a covert service function, for the production of "artisanal" goods, for example, and the creation of spaces of production and consumption alike (manufacturing lofts, workshops, bars, taverns, greasy spoons, barbershops) obscured by a nostalgic haze.

### 5. Artists Seeking Inspiration – Or Consolation

Anthropologist David Graeber writes with some bemusement on a conference of several central figures in Italian "post-workerist" theory – Maurizio Lazzarato, Toni Negri, Bifo Berardi, and Judith Revel – held at the Tate Modern in London in January 2008. Graeber professes to be astonished that neither the speakers nor the organizers have any relation to art, or even much to say about it (except for a few historical references), although the event was sponsored by a museum and the hall was packed. He calls his review "The Sadness of Post-Workerism, or Art and Immaterial Labour Conference," because of what he describes as a general feeling of gloom on the part of speakers, traceable primarily to Bifo, who at that moment had decided that "all was lost."<sup>63</sup> Graeber seems to find a certain congruence with the perpetual crisis of the art world and the difficulties of post-Fordist theorizing, especially since he finds Lazzarato's concept of immaterial labor to be risible. He decides that the artists present have invited the speakers to perform as prophets, to tell them where they are in this undoubted historical rupture – which Graeber finds to be the



perpetual state of the art world. However, he diagnoses the speakers as having, for that moment at least, decided that they too have lost the future.

I am far from prepared to take this to mean that artists have lost the future. It is not of minor consequence that this sort of conference is a staple of the art world (Graeber probably knows this too). Philosophy fills in for previous sources of inspiration, from theology and patrons' preferences to the varieties of scientific theorization or political revolution. A recent Swedish conference asks, "Is the artist a role-model for the contemporary, 'post-Fordian' worker – flexible, creative, adaptable and cheap – a creative entrepreneur? Or the other way around – a professionalized function within an advanced service economy?"<sup>64</sup> A question perhaps worth asking, and which many, particularly European, critics and theorists, along with some artists, are inclined to ask. Here is something to consider: the cultural sphere, despite relentless co-optation by marketing, is a perpetual site of resistance and critique. Bohemian/romantic rejectionism, withdrawal into exile, utopianism, and ideals of reform are endemic to middle-class students, forming the basis of anti-bourgeois commitments – and not everyone grows out of it, despite the rise of fashion-driven (i.e. taste-driven) hipsterism. Sociologist Ann Markusen, in a kind of balance of Lloyd's critique of the docile utility of bohemians as workers, reminds us that artists are overwhelmingly to the left on the political spectrum and engage at least sporadically in political agitation and participation.<sup>65</sup>

I am also not inclined to follow Debord or Duchamp and give up the terrain of art and culture. Certainly, celebration and lifestyle mania forestall critique; a primary emphasis on enjoyment, fun, or experience precludes the formation of a robust and exigent public discourse. But even ruckuses have their place as disruption and intervention; some may see them as being less self-interested than social projects but as full collective projects, while fun remains a term that refers to private experience. There is no reasonable prescription for how, and in what register, to engage with the present conditions of servitude and freedom.

Brian Holmes has likened the dance between institutions and artists to a game of Liar's Poker.<sup>66</sup> If the art world thinks the artist might be holding aces, they let him or her in, but if she turns out actually to have them – that is, to have living political content in the work – the artist is ejected. Although Chantal Mouffe exhorts artists (rightly, I suppose) not to abandon the museum – which I take to mean the art world proper – there is nothing to suggest we should

not simultaneously occupy the terrain of the urban.

X

This essay is an expanded version of a talk given at the third Hermes Lecture at Provinciehuis Den Bosch on November 14, 2010, arising from a suggestion by Camiel van Winkel to consider the work of Richard Florida. I thank Stephen Squibb for his invaluable and edifying assistance during the research and editing process and Brian Kuan Wood for his editing help and infinite patience. Thanks also to Alexander Alberro and Stephen Wright for their helpful responses to earlier drafts.

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e-flux journal #25 — may 2011 Martha Rosler  
Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III

Martha Rosler is an artist who works with multiple media, including photography, sculpture, video, and installation. Her interests are centered on the public sphere and landscapes of everyday life – actual and virtual – especially as they affect women. Related projects focus on housing, on the one hand, and systems of transportation, on the other. She has long produced works on war and the “national security climate,” connecting everyday experiences at home with the conduct of war abroad. Other works, from bus tours to sculptural recreations of architectural details, are excavations of history.

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e-flux journal #25 — may 2011 Martha Rosler  
Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III

1  
In the course of designing a city garden in Helsinki, I learned that city planners worried I would fail to distinguish the urban from the rural via the forms and types of planting. Finland has too much countryside for their liking, it appears.

2  
Advanced societies in the twentieth century saw the apparent conquest of diseases associated with dirt and soil through improved sanitation and germ-fighting technologies. Fresh air movements against disease were important elements of urban reform, opening the way for renewed efforts to enlarge the playground already provided to the middle class and extended to the working class in the early part of the century.

3  
Paris already had such a repurposed industrial rail line, the Promenade Plantée, whose transformation into a park began in the late 1980s.

4  
Poultry keeping was banned in New York City in an effort to extirpate the remnants of the farms and farm-like practices that survived in far-flung corners of the city, such as Gravesend, Brooklyn, or Staten Island. New York City, like virtually every municipality, has detailed laws on the keeping of animals, whether classed as pets, companions, or livestock, including those held for slaughter. Pets were a matter of contention, banned from middle- and working-class apartment buildings, until the 1960s. Animals classified as wild are banned – the category “wild animals” defines the uncivilized zoosphere; ergo, people who keep them are not “virtuous” but decadent or “sick.” New Yorkers may recall the incident a decade ago in which Mayor Giuliani, a suburbanite longing to join the ranks of the cosmopolitan, hurled personal insults (prominently and repeatedly, mentioning “an excessive concern with little weasels”) at a caller to his weekly radio program who wanted ferrets to be legalized as household pets. The call, from David Guthartz of the New York Ferrets’ Rights Advocacy, prompted a famous three-minute tirade in which Giuliani opined, “There’s something deranged about you. The excessive concern that you have for ferrets is something you should examine with a therapist, not with me.” See <http://www.concordmonitor.com/article/from-giuliani-come-s-revealing-rant> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqmbbPRDyXY&feature=related>.

5  
See <http://rooftopfarms.org/>.

6

Here one is tempted to offer a footnote to Lefebvre’s mid-century observations on the urban frame (see Martha Rosler, “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I: Art and Urbanism, e-flux journal, Issue 21, <http://e-flux.com/journal/view/190>), to take account of the blowback onto the urban paradigm of the neoliberal attributes of exurbia that we have classed under the rubric of suburbanization. As neoliberalism takes hold, even long-standing democratic processes of public decision-making, such as town meetings that obtained in small towns, succumb. As to the question of aristocracy, the figure of the aristocrat – especially the one in ratty old furs and drafty mansions – has haunted discussions of the art world, for artists are still disproportionately influential for the culture at large, while some reap handsome financial gain from this excursion and others simply stand around.

7  
J. Eric Oliver, *Democracy in Suburbia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Rather than town meetings, one more typically finds the retreat to the backyard and the country club.

8  
The work was installed in 1981, having been commissioned by the Art-in-Architecture Percent for Art Program, under the auspices of the federal General Services Administration, which also oversaw its removal. The event is interesting because it called upon a probably manufactured split between “the ordinary public” (the victims of the art) and the pitiless elite sectors of the art world – manufactured because the campaign for the removal of the work was in fact spurred by an aggrieved judge, Edward Re, of the arcane United States Customs Court. The following literature on *Tilted Arc* may be useful: Janet Zweig, Notes and Comments column, *New Yorker* (Mar. 27, 1989); Harriet F. Senie, *Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Gregg M. Horowitz, “Public Art/Public Space: The Spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* Controversy,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, 1 (Winter 1996) (“an early version of the strategy of censorship-as-liberation used by regressive political forces in other antidemocratic projects,” 8); and, by Serra’s wife, *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents*, eds. Martha Buskirk and Clara Weyergraf-Serra, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990). For an immediate, partisan view, see the film *The Trial of Tilted Arc* (1986), centering on the hearings relating to the removal of the sculpture.

9  
“The Gates is the largest artwork

since the Sphinx," begins a promo site's appreciative article, see [http://wirednewyork.com/park\\_s/central\\_park/christo\\_gates/](http://wirednewyork.com/park_s/central_park/christo_gates/). Mayor Bloomberg, a man known to tout the arts for their economic potential, inaugurated the work by dropping the first curtain. The artists call the fabric color "saffron," a colorful and exotic food spice but not the orange of the work. A lovely article on children's responses to the work – upper-middle class, upper class, and working class – includes the following: "Subsequent visits have somewhat altered her view. 'I don't like the look of them but I like the way everybody is at the park and happy,' she said, making her the ideal experiencer of the work." Julie Salomon, "Young Critics See 'The Gates' and Offer Their Reviews: Mixed," *New York Times*, February 17, 2005. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/17/arts/design/17kids.htm> l.

10  
See Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)., discussed in part II of this essay.

11  
A further consideration of this project and its municipally sanctioned follow-up, Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfalls* (2008), would have to point to the insistence of these projects on the power of the artist, and his grant-getting, fund-raising, and bureaucracy-busting prowess, with urbanized nature as the ground. In other words, the intellectual labor of the artist is disclosed to cognoscenti but the spectacle suffices for the masses. This problem was partly addressed by Eliasson in a radio interview describing the scaffolding of the *Waterfalls* as an homage to (manual) labor, a theme not otherwise much noted in his work.

12  
Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* ed. Kurt Wolff (Glencoe, IL: Free Press of Glencoe, 1950). Originally published as *Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben* (Dresden: Petermann, 1903).

13  
Here consider the relationship between street fashion, working class attire, and middle-class envy of these. In addition, before youth-culture demands in the 1960s loosened most dress codes (prompting outraged businesses to post notices announcing "No Shoes, No Shirt, No Service"), it was illegal to wear "short shorts" and other forms of skimpy dress on New York City streets.

14  
Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3–4.

15  
Quoted in Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 196. (See Part II of the present article.) Jeremy Rifkin subsequently published a book with the same title as his article. See Jeremy Rifkin, *Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience* (New York: Tarcher, 2000).

16  
Rifkin, *Age of Access*, 54.

17  
Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007) and *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999). Aurora is a tiny town of about 13,000 residents, in Northeastern Ohio, near Akron. Do visit Pine and Gilmore's fun-loving website, <http://www.strategichorizons.com/index.html>. Rifkin cites their first book: "Management consultants B. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore advise their corporate clients that 'in the emerging Experience Economy, companies must realize they make memories, not goods,'" *Age of Access*, 145.

18  
Two reviews, by two women reviewers, from one day's *New York Times* Arts section make this point. They sharply contrast the old, "culture is serious business," mode and the new, "culture ought to be fun" mode. A senior, front-page reviewer in "Cuddling with Little Girls, Dogs and Music," writes skeptically about crowd-pleaser Yoshitomo Nara's show, at the formerly staid Asia Society, that it "adds new wrinkles to the continuing attempts by today's museums to attract wider, younger audiences, and the growing emphasis on viewer participation." A few pages on, in "A Raucous Reflection on Identity: Jewish and Feminine," a junior reviewer writes, "Don't be put off by the yawn-inducing title of the Jewish Museum's 'Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism.' The show is a puckish, punchy look at the women's art movement [that draws] inspiration from Marcia Tucker's 'Bad Girls' survey of 1994." There is nothing particularly raucous in the works she describes. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/arts/design/10nara.html> and <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/arts/design/10shifting.html>. The art journalist Jerry Saltz, based at a local publication, earlier demonstrated his lack of recognition of the atmosphere of exclusivity, high seriousness, and sobriety typically projected by high-art institutions

(definitively analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu) by wondering in print why people do not visit galleries even though they do not charge admission. The need to abrogate this forbidding atmosphere is not what is at issue here, but the emphasis upon "the museum experience," or experiences, represents a new management imperative.

19  
See <http://www.contaminatenyc.com/?tag=contesta-rockhair>.

20  
See <http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/0,1518,510609,00.html>.

21  
Vanessa Fuhrmans, "Berlin Broods over a Glitz Invasion," *Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 2010. See <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703467304575383312394581850.html>.

22  
Rachel B. Doyle, "Krakow: Add Art, Stir in Cachet," *New York Times*, August, 29, 2010. See <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05EED81E31F93AA1575BC0A9669D8B63>.

23  
See part II of this essay.

24  
Or not very gracefully. In February of this year, the state of Michigan ordered the Detroit school superintendent to close half of Detroit's schools, swelling class size to sixty in some cases. See Jennifer Chambers, "Michigan Orders DPS to Make Huge Cuts," *Detroit News*, February 21, 2011. See [http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2011/02/michigan\\_or ders.php](http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2011/02/michigan_or ders.php). The library system may also be forced to close almost all its branches; see Christine MacDonald and RoNeisha Mullen, "Detroit Library Could Close Most of Its Branches," *Detroit News*, April 15, 2011. See <http://detnews.com/article/20110415/METRO/104150371/Detroit-library-could-close-most-of-its-branches#ixzz1JcLCTb fD>.

25  
The auto industry began siting some of its factories in the suburbs and small towns surrounding Detroit, and auto workers followed them there; however, black auto workers complained they were kept in Detroit at the dirtiest, least desirable jobs, while the union bosses were complicit with the industry.

26  
See Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (London and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975; Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998).

27

Berry Gordy's Motown Records itself departed long ago; the Belleville Three had moved on by the 1990s, although the Detroit Electronic Music Festival continues.

28  
See <http://abc.go.com/shows/detroit-1-8-7>.

29  
Fascination with ruins is a long standing and deeply romantic facet of mourning and melancholy; current manifestations include well-established tourist pilgrimages to sites like New York's former World Trade Center but also an interest, no longer disavowed, in images of accidents, death, and destruction, and sometimes up-close, well-supervised, and preferably well-funded short-term visits to the safer edges of war zones of various sorts.

30  
Melena Ryzik, "Detroit's Renewal, Slow-Cooked," *New York Times*, October 19, 2010. The article opens, "How much good can a restaurant do?" and later comments, "To make sure the positive change takes hold, Mr. Cooley has parlayed the good will of his barbecue joint into a restless pursuit of community-building." See <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/dining/20Detroit.html>.

31  
Ibid.

32  
Boggs's most recent book, written with Scott Kurashige, is *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Among her other books are *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century* (1976) and *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (1998). In 1992, she co-founded the Detroit Summer youth program; having moved with her husband James to Detroit, where she expected the working class to "rise up and reconstruct the city," she adapted instead to a city in a very different phase. "I think it's very difficult for someone who doesn't live in Detroit to say you can look at a vacant lot and, instead of seeing devastation, see hope, see the opportunity to grow your own food, see an opportunity to give young people a sense of process ... that the vacant lot represents the possibilities for a cultural revolution.... I think filmmakers and writers are coming to the city and trying to spread the word." *Democracy Now!* radio program (April 14, 2011), archived at [http://www.democracynow.org/2011/4/14/roundtable\\_assessing\\_obamas\\_budget\\_plan\\_state](http://www.democracynow.org/2011/4/14/roundtable_assessing_obamas_budget_plan_state).

33  
Moore is from Flint, Michigan, the site of the historic sit-down strike of 1936–37 that led to the

empowerment of the United Auto Workers as the sole bargaining representative of General Motors workers; the Roger of the title was Roger Smith, the head of GM at the time and the executive responsible for huge worker layoffs that led to the near-total devastation of Flint. Credits for the film *Finally Got the News* are "A Film by Stewart Bird, Rene Lichtman, and Peter Gessner, Produced in Association with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers."

34 See Camilo José Vergara, *The New American Ghetto* (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

35 Parts of this project were included in the exhibition "Home Front," the first exhibition of the cycle "If You Lived Here" that I organized at the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 1989.

36 This project, two years in the making (2008-2010), will continue through the auspices of Wayne State University with some further collaboration with Berenyi and with Eastern Michigan University. See <http://monikaberenyi.wordpress.com/2010/12/06/detroit-city-poetry-oral-history-project-2010-2011>.

37 See [http://www.fusionartsmuseum.org/ex\\_crash.htm](http://www.fusionartsmuseum.org/ex_crash.htm).

38 See Donna Terek (columnist), "Detroit Ice House Is Really All About Art," *Detroit News* (Feb. 7, 2010); and <http://detnews.com/article/20100207/OPINION03/2070309/Detroit-Ice-House-is-really-all-about-art>, which includes a video of the project. Funding was sought via Kickstarter. The creators describe the project as "An Architectural Installation and Social Change Project" on their blog, <http://icehousedetroit.blogspot.com/> (now seemingly inactive), detailing their Detroit activities, a forthcoming film and photo book, and the many media sites that have featured their project.

39 Personal communications. Bergman supplied these links: [http://www.ubu.com/film/aa\\_wildflowers.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/aa_wildflowers.html) and [http://www.alejandra-aeron.com/new\\_center.html](http://www.alejandra-aeron.com/new_center.html). See also <http://www.alejandra-aeron.com/wildflowers.html>.

40 According to its website, <http://detroitunrealestateagency.blogspot.com/2009/12/speaking-for-detroit.html>, "the Detroit Unreal Estate Agency ... is aimed at new types of urban practices (architecturally, artistically, institutionally, everyday life, and so forth) that

came into existence, creating a new value system in Detroit. The project is an initiative by architects Andrew Herscher and Mireille Roddier, curator Femke Lutgerink, and Partizan Publik's Christian Ersten and Joost Janmaat. In collaboration with the Dutch Art Institute and the University of Michigan, generously funded by the Mondriaan Foundation and Fonds BKVB." I note that, by chance, Andrew Herscher is the architect who provided a very workable partnership on plans for the building my students and collaborators and I developed at *Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale of 2003. Another Dutch residency in pilot phase is the Utrecht-based Expodium International Artists Residency Program: European Partnership, with Detroit. "The goal ... is to enter into a long-term collaboration with Detroit by creating an expanding network ... to exchange knowledge about urban models, shrinkage and social, political and artistic developments in urban transition areas. Detroit based cultural initiatives respond creatively to the city's current situation and set to play a vital role in the redevelopment of Detroit. It is this condition that has our special interest. Information gained through this platform provides vital input for the Expodium program here in the Netherlands." See <http://www.newstrategie.sdmc.blogspot.com>. Recently, fifteen students from the Netherlands participated in the Detroit City Poetry Project presentation at the Detroit Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAD); see <http://detroitlife313.com/headlines/radio/detroit-life-radio-john-sinclair>. Why does the Netherlands send its art, architecture, and students to study cities, towns, and neighborhoods – including Dutch ones – considered to pose intractable problems? One may surmise that the Dutch, who seem fully engaged with the creative-class-rescue hypothesis, are hoping that artists and architects will assist in urban research and melioration and further help them found a new consultative industry: a Dutch urban advisory corps (this last solution – urban consultation – was proposed to me as an answer to my question "Why?" by Salomon Frausto, Head of Architectural Broadcasting at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam).

41 See <http://historyofartandsocialpractice.tumblr.com/post/633884270/shotgun-review-the-role-of-the-art-institution-in>.

42 *The Wiz* is a version of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), journalist L. Frank Baum's important putatively allegorical children's book about rural farm-dwellers translocating to up-to-date metropolises and of a still-

fascinating mid-century musical film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), based on the Oz tales; this later version of 1978 has a largely African American cast and features Detroit-born Michael Jackson.

43 See <http://www.cascoprojects.org/?entryid=376>.

44 Ibid.

45 See <http://www.dwell.com/article/s/ice-house-detroit.html>. While vacillating between claiming it as an "architectural installation" and as a social change endeavor, the project's authors suggest that the house will be, virtuously, disassembled and the land donated perhaps to a community garden.

46 Guyton has had some degree of success as a local, indigenous, non-elite artist of choice and was included in the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale as well as garnering other attention. For Sala's project, see <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=80261&searchid=14785>. Rama's project, as part of his mayoral endeavors, has had a different trajectory. According to the UK's Architecture foundation, Rama's actions constituted "an aesthetic and political act, which prompted social transformation, and much debate, through its visualization of signs of change." During the 2003 edition of the Tirana Biennial, Sala and Hans Ulrich Obrist invited Olafur Eliasson, Liam Gillick, and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, among other artists, to "turn residential blocks into unique works of art"; see <http://vimeo.com/8254763>. The project continued, and in the 2009 iteration included façade contributions from Tala Madani, Adrian Paci, Tomma Abts, and others. However, the Tirana Biennial 2009 website notes that the exhibition would critically address the city's moment of development "through 'wild' urbanization, fast capital investments and within the horizon of a neoliberal context, [expanding] into the domain of architecture and processes of urbanization." See <http://www.tica-albania.org/TICAB/>.

47 Although the mayor derided the group as vandals, a number of the buildings were subsequently torn down. See Celeste Headlee, "Detroit Artists Paint Town Orange to Force Change," *National Public Radio* radio broadcast, December 7, 2006. Good magazine uploaded a video of the project to YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQwKk1bggY>. One of the group comments: "This didn't start out as this social crusade;

it started as an artistic endeavor." (That's what they all say, if they have any art-world sense; see Part II of the present article.)

48 For Fletcher's testimony, see *Between Artists: Harrell Fletcher and Michael Rakowitz* (New York: A.R.T. Press, 2008).

49 The term "interventionism" streaked like a comet across the art world firmament but seems to have been largely extinguished.

50 Zukin, *Naked City*.

51 I attempted to draw attention to both this trend's promises and its perils with the work entitled *Proposed Helsinki Garden in Singapore* at the latter city's biennale earlier this year. The project attempted simultaneously to articulate a commitment to public practice and a serious, not to say critical, examination of it. Too often, in discussing art, one finds the equation of criticism with refusal, allowing the absence of one to indict the reality of the other.

52 Facebook itself takes the form in which shouting into the wind small self-promotional messages to an appreciative imaginary public is encouraged, and in which the occasional openings for the genuine exchange of ideas seem to snap shut in an instant. At the other pole from the particular language of promotion are the grant-writing discourses, Orwellian in their Byzantine inapplicability to most artists or projects you might know, but whose categorical imperatives have only escalated over the years. In the UK, the categories for art institutions and academic departments are mind-boggling, but everywhere this instrumentalized language framing instrumentalized projects is infecting the terms in which art exhibitions are laid out.

53 See <http://e-flux.com/journal/view/107>.

54 Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," trans. Ed Emory, in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 188–209.

55 Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979), 75.

56 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVRHAWjIeY> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch>



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Colin Mercer, "Cultural Planning for Urban Development and Creative Cities" (2006), 2–3. See [http://www.culturalplanning-oresund.net/PDF\\_activities/maj06/Shanghai\\_cultural\\_planning\\_paper.pdf](http://www.culturalplanning-oresund.net/PDF_activities/maj06/Shanghai_cultural_planning_paper.pdf).

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Here, Mercer is quoting a 2004 report put out by Partners for Livable Communities, which advises many Business Improvement Districts, or BIDs, with cultural elements. (A BID is a public-private partnership, a step along the path to privatization of urban public amenities and spaces. In New York they saw their genesis during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s.) Mercer also points out that "knowledge based workers" make up half the work force of the European Union.

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Ibid., 2. Mercer's enthusiasm presumably factored into his own decision to leave academia for consulting work.

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Max Nathan, "The Wrong Stuff? Creative Class Theory and Economic Performance in UK Cities." See <http://cjrs-rcsr.org/archive/s/30-3/NATHAN.pdf>.

61

Andy Merrifield, *Metromarxism: A Marxist Tale of the City* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 125.

62

Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1979), 317.

63

David Graeber, "The Sadness of Post-Workerism, or 'Art And Immaterial Labour' Conference A Sort of Review (Tate Britain, Saturday 19 January 2008)." Available at [http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/graeber\\_sadness.pdf](http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/graeber_sadness.pdf), <http://www.scribd.com/doc/38093582/The-Sadness-of-Post-Workerism-David-Graeber>, and <http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20080713130247120>.

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See <http://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/default.aspx?id=13909> and <http://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/%20default.aspx?id=13914>.

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Ann Markusen, "Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class: Evidence from the Study of Artists," *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 10 (2006): 1921–1940; Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See part II of the present article for a further discussion of these authors'

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Brian Holmes, "Liar's Poker," in *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Imagineering* (New York: Autonomedia, 2008). First published as "Liar's Poker: Representation of Politics/Politics of Representation" in *Springer* (January 2003). See [http://www.springer.at/dyn/heft\\_text.php?textid=1276&lang=en](http://www.springer.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1276&lang=en).

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