ONCURATING.org

CURA-
TING
CRI-
TIQUE:

CONTENTS /

CURATING CRITIQUE

MARIANNE EIGENHEER, EDITOR
BARNAY DRABBLE, DOROTHEE RICHTER, GUEST EDITORS

The reader presents a cross-section of the voices that populate the ongoing debate about, on the one hand, how and in what terms curating functions as a critical cultural practice, and on the other, what methodologies and histories exist with which we can critically analyse curatorial work today. This collection of essays was first published in 2007 by Revolver, in Frankfurt am Main and ICE, Institute for Curatorship and Education as the first ICE Reader.

The Reader was quickly sold-out and it is in the spirit of wishing to make the valuable contributions within available to a broader public that we are reissuing the entire book as an issue of the on-curating journal.

The Book was conceived of by its guest-editors Barnaby Drabble, curator and lecturer ECAV and Dorothee Richter, curator and head of Postgraduate Program in Curating, Zurich University of the Arts, and commissioned and edited by Marianne Eigenheer, director of the Institute for Curatorship and Education at Edinburgh College of Art and editor of the ICE series. We are very grateful to all authors and contributors for their permission to re-publish, and to all supporters of the original publication.

FOREWORD

MARIANNE EIGENHEER

“Nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know.” Michel de Montaigne (Essays, 1580).

When, in 2002, we began to consider what the future tasks of the new Research Institute for Curatorship and Education ICE in Edinburgh could be, we knew on thing for sure: we did not want to simply establish another “school for curators” or develop a next curatorial course and thus promote the process of institutional detachment that we have been witnessing frequently over the last few years, perpetuating the automation of self-reflexive autonomous systems within closed “contextualisations”. (The fact that we preferably deal with different discourses especially within the Anglophone and German research traditions becomes evident with the reader presented here; it brings together basic texts from both approaches, which, as we know, are often significantly at variance).

“There once was a man who wanted a new boomerang. But, try as he might, he could not throw away his old one.”

Our interest in research lies in mediating the complexity of what we define as art in the widest sense of the term, in other words in developing an “operating system” that attempts in all its facets to balance order and change, old and new, theory and practice, and, after reaching a solution, to frame new questions that are immanent to the process. By developing projects with different foci in terms of content we wish to create situations where propositions made rigid through the uncertainties of “not-knowing” are dissolved and penetrated, in order to gain new insights and place them in an context that is accessible to all participants involved in the process. Cultural globalisation impels us to neither negate our own background nor to take it as the only premise but to question it time and again in the contextual flow of ongoing projects. Whenever possible we try to design our ICE projects as diversified as possible in terms of content and cultural orientation and to collaborate with local, national and international partners.

Patrick Panetta: How do you understand the term “curate”?
Hans Ulrich Obrist: Curare. The Curator as catalyst. Extending and intensifying (from: The absurdity of Marking art, 2007)

One of our main concerns is to avoid fitting the various participants involved in the curatorial process into a hierarchical; instead, we attempt to assemble different voices and create a multi-facetted image that enables us to visualise and experience interdependencies, permeabilities and transitions. In the course of the process many issues that are usually regarded as given facts — issues that have in the past shaped the views of artists, curators and other observers of Western culture, and still do today — suddenly become blurred and imprecise, no longer logically consistent. However, this can be resolved if one engages in the social processes that characterise contemporary life, as for example Zygmunt Baumann describes so convincingly in “Liquid Life” (2005).

By means of polylogue, presentation and mediation are able to lend a higher degree of specification to the curatorial process and thus attain a significant and indispensable position in today’s complex art system.

“In the contemporary production of images we won’t be able to understand the inherent driving forces if we don’t look to the other spheres of modern life.” (Alexander Dorner)

Since the end of 2003 we have been developing interdisciplinary projects in which we include in our joint work not only the interrelated visual language but also the discipline’s specific discourses. For us it is important that young artists become involved in the curatorial process in museums and similar institutions and learn how to transpose their works of art to these specific spaces. They collaborate with scientists “in the lab” in order to explore new ways of exhibiting, including scientific objects. Of course, filing the required research applications is not always easy because, as a rule, we are not looking for new solutions but seeking novel questions, and combining this artistic approach with a scientific modus is often quite problematic. However, as the following quote by the Nobel laureate and geneticist François Jacob (Die innere Statue, Autobiographie, Zürich, 1988) shows scientific research is increasingly taking into account, and incorporating, a more artistic understanding of its approach, and the work of artists:

“How does one trace research work? How comprehend a fixed idea, an enduring obsession? As in mental work focussed on a minute fragment in the universe, on a ‘system’ that is

continuously revolving, having been rotated to and fro? Above all, how does one envision the feeling of being in a labyrinth with no exit, that incessant search for a solution, without making reference to what has proven to be the solution – without being blinded by is evidence?"

THE ICE READER

It is this kind of research work on and around art, together with artists, scientists, curators and many other partners that we wish to present on a regular basis in the ICE readers.

The first volume containing a selection of diverse texts and interviews not only provides a theoretical basis for inspiring discussions but also shows how different the approaches are between the UK and continental Europe. For this reason we have included the texts in both English and German; it shows how differently specific terms are sometimes used and understood and thus helps to uncover the source of some of the misunderstandings that we frequently face.

In 2004 Barnaby Drabble, PhD student at the Edinburgh College of Art ECA and his colleague Dorothee Richter approached me in my capacity as director of ICE and asked me whether I would be willing to edit the first ICE Reader *Curating Critique*. They wrote the introduction and were responsible for the selection of texts. We are happy that the stimulating volume has now been published and hope for a broad and interested audience.

Edinburgh, April 2007

CURATING CRITIQUE – AN INTRODUCTION

DOROTHEE RICHTER AND BARNABY DRABBLE

"Criticality as I perceive it is precisely in the operations of recognizing limitations of one's thought, for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information rather than rethinking a structure."[1]

The end of the Nineties saw a spate of symposia and related publications looking at independent and freelance practice in the field of curating, discourse about a growing field of practice that many of us felt had for too long remained in the dark. Since then, against the backdrop of changing working conditions for curators, the blurring of traditionally distinct roles in cultural work and an increase in the number of curatorial study-programs, curatorial practice has moved into the spotlight. Barely a week passes without an article focusing on the figure of the curator and for the most part curating is controversially described and debated as a new and powerful form of cultural authorship, an approach that can be attributed to curating's perceived proximity to the subject-oriented ideology surrounding the idea of artistic authorship. Since we began our theoretical and practical engagement with curatorial practice we have purposefully chosen the opposite approach, avoiding the trap of talking about either art making or curating as a question of individual genius we prefer to plumb the critical possibilities of this broad and changing practice and discuss openly where these might lead us. In the process of "rethinking a structure" in the terms suggested by Irit Rogoff, we find the familiar focus on the relationship between the diverse notions of 'artist' and 'curator' giving way to a new focus on the relationship between those of 'exhibition' and 'public'. In 1998 we organized the symposium *Curating Degree Zero*, addressing the innovative artistic and curatorial approaches of the time. The invited curators included amongst others Ute Meta Bauer, Roger Buergel, Stella Rollig, Laura Cottingham, Moritz Kueng, Olivier Kaeser, Ursula Biemann, and James Lingwood, and over three days they started a debate with us and with each other, that has continued to hold our interest to this day. Almost five years later that, together with Annette Schindler, we launched the *Curating Degree Zero Archive* reviving our interest in framing and debating critical curatorial practice. The archive, a collection of documentary material from hundreds of projects and exhibitions, takes the form of a touring exhibition and accompanying web-resource.[2] With the archive we were interested in initiating an ongoing discussion examining exhibition making from a particular viewpoint, namely that of 'critique'. During the tour the idea of archiving such practices has been problematised in various discussions about whether and how it might be possible to label specific practices 'critical' on the one hand or 'acquiescent' on the other. For us, it is an important prerequisite for the archive as well as for this publication that the poles of acquiescent practice and critical practice are understood as relational terms, bound to the specific historical moments at which one observes them. The borderline between 'critical' and its opposite is fine and always hard to pin down, as it is constantly shifting in relation to changes in the unmappable topography of our image-mediated world itself. As such, we understand the archive as a vehicle for collective and often contradictory knowledge production.

One can understand just how unresolved the definitions of this border are when we observe how advertisers recreate images of rioting youths to sell clothes, fabricated in the developing world, to their 'first-world' consumers. While under the title 'culture-jamming' critical resistance is articulated through an obverse but similar subversion of signs: the hacking of logos or the adoption and subversion of the websites of large companies or organizations like the WTO, for example. According to Roland Barthes the mythical charge attributed to images, is created through a process of first de-historicising them and then intentionally charging them with specific meanings.[3] Images make politics, and we witness every day how on the one hand they are strategically used to justify claims to power, while on the other paranoid persecution scenarios based on the mistrust of images are employed to undermine it. With the disappearance of the communist system, representing on the one hand 'threat' and on the other 'utopia', and the simultaneous dissolution of the West's great patriarchal institutions; the family, the state, the army and the church, we are left with a kind of vacuum. For the individual this offers the emancipatory possibility of no longer defining them selves in relation to ideology, state or institution, yet one result of this is the indulgence in short-term and narcissistic identification choices that ultimately have a normalizing effect. Images and image politics are in different ways the artefacts and medium of exhibitions and art projects, while at the same time they are always attached to the political discourse. With this in mind we can seek to describe projects as subversive or critical due to their chosen content, in particular when they deal with the political themes associated with feminism, urbanism, post-colonialism, anti-capitalism and social exclusion. But we have

01 Irit Rogoff "What is a Theorist?" in Katharyna Sykora et al (eds.) *Was ist ein Künstler?*,Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 2004

02 Information available online: www.curatingdegreezero.org

03 Roland Barthes *Mythologies*, Paris: Editions de Seuil 1957

to be careful to combine any assessment of critical content with an awareness of the way such content is structured and made to mean. Thus, we are also interested in the structural transgression of the 'white cube' and classical exhibition formats and a consideration of how these paradigms came about. This reassessment of structure can be seen in interventionist and institutionally critical practices, as well as in new forms of mediation. In this sense it remains a central question for us how displays and settings in exhibitions manufacture, or to use Althusser's term, "constitute"[4] their visitor-subjects. Looking at it this way an exhibition or display literally produces its visitors. It has to be looked at case by case whether the visitor is empowered, placated, informed, taught, entertained or overwhelmed during this process.

In his article, entitled "The Curatorial Function – Organising the Ex/position", the Austrian theorist Oliver Marchart reminds us of the important difference between politics and the political. Institutionalised politics, he points out, is "dominated by consensus, mutual agreement, administrative bargaining and when push comes to shove, a mere exhibition fight between state functionary elites that have joined to form parties that are scarcely distinguishable". Whereas the political, that which belongs to the description of the active polis or state, is described by conflict, or borrowing a term from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe 'antagonism'. Marchart argues that the curatorial function lies in the organizing of the public sphere with respect to an understanding of the conflict that constitutes the genuinely political. Namely a practice that entails the construction of counter-positions from which antagonisms can arise, and that an exhibition as site allows the necessary space for these arisen antagonisms to gain visibility. It is not hard to see how such strategies are at odds with the majority of institutional practice, or indeed how they are not so much institutionally critical as deinstitutionalizing in their effect. The institution and the cultural politics it represents remain a central battleground in any discussion of the possibility of critical curatorial practice. Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt's recent writing has questioned the terms by which so-called 'new institutionalism'[5] adopts critical working methods which she sees as traditionally belonging to the artistic community. Her critique is expanded in her article 'False Economies' in which she broadens her focus and looks at the effects not only of the large institutions themselves, but also of the neo-liberal arts policies they implement. Taking Scotland as an example, she observes the duplicity behind the aims of attracting 'new audiences' for art under the banner of 'social inclusion', when the working conditions of the nation's artists remains so precarious. In doing so, she questions the true agenda behind adapting audiences to a 'lifestyle' based on culture work and creativity, when this sector presents a clear example of deregulated labour and market exploitation.

The inversions and inconsistencies of the 'globalising' world are debated against the backdrop of Gilane Tawadros' exhibition *Faultlines*, which she curated for the Africa Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2002. In a conversation with Sarat Maharaj, the two discuss the differences between a nation 'developing' and its 'being developed' and the role of art activity in opening up a fragmented and multiple spaces for dialogical communication at odds to the reductive and partisan nature of "communications for and on behalf of a globalised capital economy." Marion von Osten begins her text 'Producing Publics – Making Worlds!' with an assessment of how the institutional frame appears structurally unaltered despite the numerous critical projects lanced against it over the past decades. She maintains that the interventions of institutional critique, the separatism of the artist run spaces movement, and the new formats demanded by feminist, postcolonial and queer exhibition practice, though hugely important for artistic discourse, appear to have had little to no effect on the institution itself. The rigidity she perceives and identifies as problematic is the art institution's underpinning of inflexible normalizing concepts of the public. In the face of 'no change' she explains, it is perhaps unsurprising that a critical percentage of the mediators have begun to change sides and even in the rarefied arenas of the biennial circuit, we can find some incidences where the familiar pattern of decontextualised global displays are being abandoned in favour of new strategies of context-relevant political immediacy. Curating in this sense has become radicalized and to a certain extent mutinous and for von Osten it follows a historically definable catalogue of alternative, tactical use of the institutions by artists and by engaged counterpublics[6], which has been in evidence since the early days of modernism.

Reflecting on the recurrent hostility towards the idea that the curator might be involved in the process of constituting meaning, Beatrice von Bismarck proposes a reframing of the debate in her article "Curatorial Criticality, the role of freelance curators in the field of contemporary art", defending as appropriate the specific critical potential afforded by the curatorial procedure of creating connections. She observes how freelance practice plays fast and loose with codes and perhaps due to its lack of permanent connection to the effects of institutional normalization, appears all the more risky for it. The freelancer inhabits a hybrid role, she argues, oscillating between different positions in a practice conditioned by impermanence, performativity and transitoriness,

04
Louis Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation", originally published in the French language in Paris, *La Pensée* 1970

05
Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt "Harnessing the means of production" in Jonas Ekeberg (ed.) *New Institutionalism, Verksted no.1*, Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway 2003

06
After Michael Warner *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York 2002

the critical potential of which lie in its freedom to continually reformulate the constellation of operations on the one hand and positions on the other. The essay "Exhibitions as Cultural Practices of Showing — Pedagogics" by Dorothee Richter analyses exhibitions in respect to theories of power. Exhibitions and displays are seen as the staging and performance of objects and structures, that brings objects and subjects into a particular hierarchical relationship with one another and as such are to be understood as a component part of communicative processes. Seen this way, exhibitions are founded in discourse, and in turn they create it, generating, in the process, meaning. The essay maintains that these effects are based upon the pedagogical nature of showing, and carry both authoritarian and emancipatory potential.

The artist-curator Gavin Wade's ongoing collaboration with the architect Celine Condorelli under the title *Support Structure* can be seen as exemplary of these changing qualities, reinventing itself both physically and conceptually in response to different sites and briefs, in response to which they offered a form of support. For the exhibition *I am a Curator*, Wade and Condorelli provided flexible exhibition architecture elements that played out a parasitic relationship to the institutional architecture itself. Wade explains that their intention was for it to operate as a tool to critique the ideas involved with exhibition making including the production of art, while at the same time 'supporting' and at times 'leading' the activities of the exhibitions visitors. Inherent within their understanding of support is their interest in the fact that though often 'taken for granted' structures are never neutral, but rather programmable and as such ideological. The exhibition itself, conceived and produced by the artist Per Hüttner, sought to interrogate issues of access and elitism in the art-world and to test the rigidity of the roles of producer, mediator and audience in relation to exhibitions. Hüttner chose to explore the idea of empowering the gallery's public in a remarkably literal sense: by inviting them to take a day to curate an exhibition. With the help of a team of art-handlers a broad variety of members of the public curated thirty-six exhibitions in the same number of days. Like Wade and Condorelli, Hüttner approached the project with an interest in experimenting with parameters and playing with roles.

Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham are also engaged in seeking formats for the support and development of experimental and critical practice. Their format matches their focus and in an interview they talk about CRUMB, the Internet resource they established in 1999 with the aim of helping curators 'exhibit' new media art. The challenges and possibilities for curators raised by developments in new media art serve also to illuminate the problem of inflexible institutional structures. Cook and Graham argue that where the art itself challenges traditional terms of display and even proposes new systems of making knowledge, curatorial practices must be given the room to manoeuvre. Complex, uncertain and impossible to generalize about, new media art appears indefinable and indeed unwilling to capitulate to definition. In the light of this, CRUMB focuses on forums, debates, interviews and the sharing of experience. In conversation with Paul O'Neill, Maria Lind talks about her programming at the Munich Kunstverein between 2001 and 2004. She also reflects on the formulaic nature of most 'mainstream' curating and how, with her work at the Kunstverein, she tried to explore alternative formats in which contemporary art-production is developed collectively and discussed, as well as being 'shown'. The two return to the idea that the artworld is suffering from amnesia regarding the long and diverse history of curatorial experimentation.[7] Lind maintains that although the approach she favours is far from new, it is common that curators interested in experimental formats find themselves having to 'reinvent the wheel'. Relating to a number of such programs in recent years in Europe, she notes how difficult it is to sustain them for long enough for their effect to be substantiated; the 'duration' of such projects being of paramount importance if they are to avoid falling foul of precisely the amnesia that undermines their reception. To explain the short-lived nature of many of these projects, she maintains that traditional publics for contemporary art are often unprepared for the different experiences such formats open up, and that art-criticism at present 'doesn't do its job' in mediating such approaches sensibly. Ute Meta Bauer also discusses the problem of what she sees as the mass media's reductive and outmoded coverage of art's concerns and possibilities in her interview with Marius Babias. Talking about her experiences of curating the *3rd berlin biennale*, she links this perceived 'dumbing down' with a more general analysis of neo-liberal expectations of curatorial work; a climate that limits its criteria for judgment on the extent to which a project satisfies the thirst for 'new publics' and 'provide' for the media. She describes a state of affairs in which ambitious large exhibitions are increasingly held to ransom by the importance of the media, both to the reception of the project and to the concerns of their sponsors. In such a situation, Bauer maintains, exhibitions must take high risks to avoid simply providing the visual equivalent to 'easy listening'.

In both Sarat Maharaj's essay on the documenta process and Walter Grasskamp's prehistory of the 'white cube', both authors throw light upon the complex interplay between convention and change that has resulted in the exhibition forms we witness today. Perhaps in response to the overbearing coverage of *documenta XI* as 'the global documenta',

07 Mary Anne Staniszewski first referred to the level of indifference to curatorial histories as 'amnesia' in her influential study *The Power of Display: a history of exhibition installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press 1998

Maharaj marks exhibition's 50th anniversary by pointing out how, from its outset in 1955, the exhibition project was always connected to 'elsewhere', albeit at times in unexpected ways. Grasskamp carefully reconsiders the nature of 'hanging' works, focusing less on the works themselves and more on the wall behind them. By carefully presenting the evolution of the white exhibition wall, he extends the analysis introduced in Brian O'Doherty's texts of the 70s.[8] We are asked to consider not only the specifics of the white wall that has come to be standard in spaces for presenting art, but also its context and the qualities it shares with the domestic, industrial and functional spaces of our everyday lives. In their short article "Words from an Exhibition" Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack circle around the issue of interpretation, from the outset asking themselves the question of how best to write about an exhibition. They are struck by the fact that any attempt to represent curated experiences in the form of words results in a loss of complexity, due to the singularity of the perspective presented. They seek a textual form parallel to their curatorial concerns, one that might continue to offer 'not only the excitement but also the opportunity for an opening, and potentially even the derailment or tattering of what had been thought previously'. They present us with four theses, which they encourage us to view as pictures in an exhibition. An exhibition it would seem, from our singular perspective at least, that understands itself as simultaneously a form of action, a gesture[9] and a reflection on its own mediality. In keeping with the focus of this reader their final thesis reminds us that radical exhibitions are determined not purely by their ideas and forms, but intrinsically by their publics.

It is entirely by chance that this collection of essays, conversations and interviews is published ten years after the two of us first shared thoughts on the urgency of opening up the debate about this changing field of practice, and five since the launch of our archiving project, which continues to tour and expand as we write. However, it is no coincidence that, as curators ourselves, we continue, in the spirit of these earlier initiatives, to support the need for a culture of critique in relation to exhibition-practice; as much in the hope of 'recognising the limitations of one's own thought'[10] as of developing strategies together for moving beyond these. The title *Curating Critique*, does its best to represent the double-agency that this activity demands. The reader presents a cross-section of the voices that populate the ongoing debate about, on the one hand, how and in what terms curating functions as a critical cultural practice, and on the other, what methodologies and histories exist with which we can critically analyse curatorial work today.

08 Brian O'Doherty "Inside the White Cube — Notes on the Gallery Space". Originally published in *Artforum*, 1976

09 In reference to Giorgio Agamben's use of the term in "Notes on Gesture" (1992) in Giorgio Agamben, Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (eds.) *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000

10 Irit Rogoff "What is a Theorist?"

MERZ-THINKING – SOUNDING THE DOCUMENTA PROCESS BETWEEN CRITIQUE AND SPECTACLE

SARAT MAHARAJ

compiled by the editors

01
Bazon Brock created a 'visitors school' for *Documenta 4*, 1968

02
Bazon Brock *Lustmarsch durchs Theoriegelände*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, July 2006

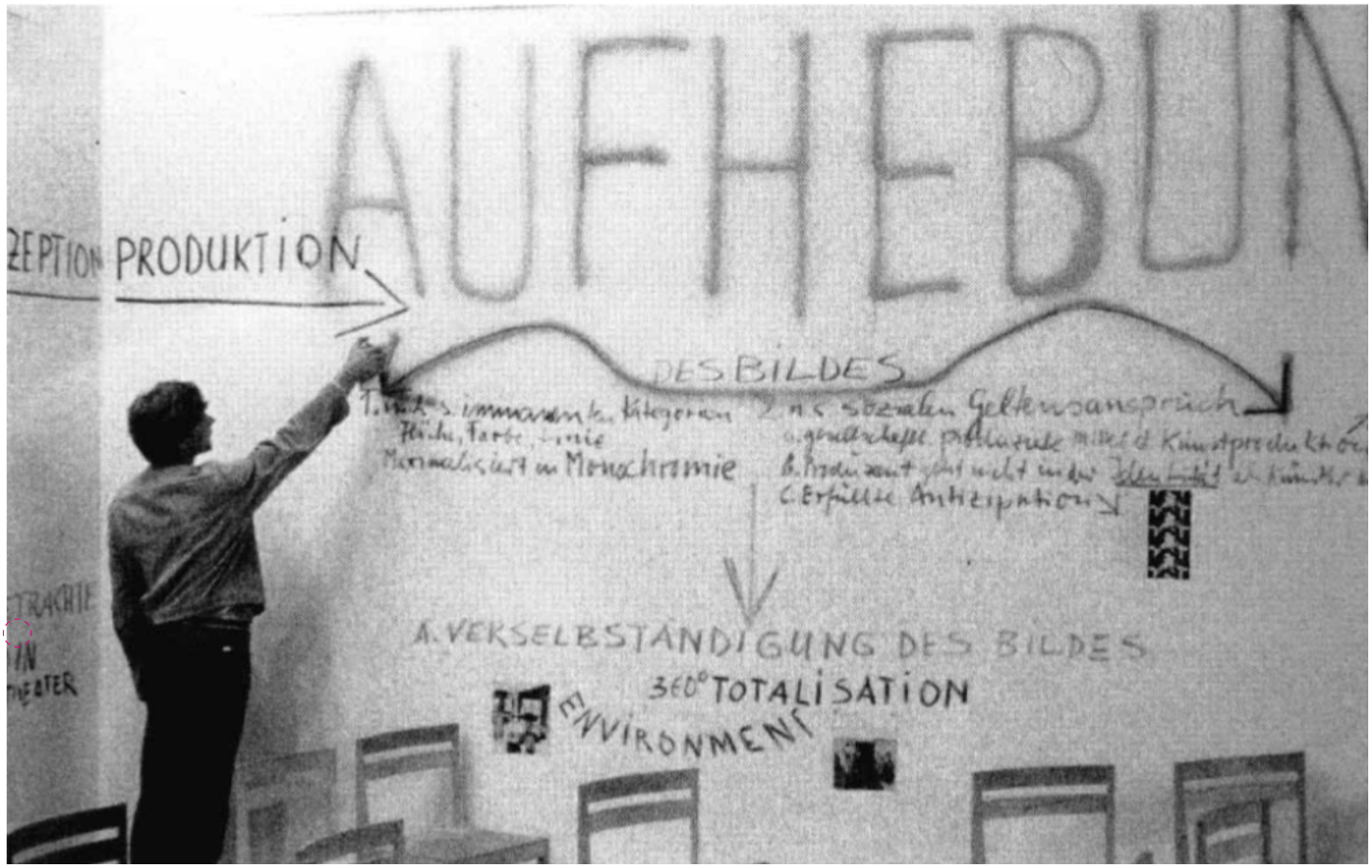
03
Joseph Beuys' *Hundred Day Office for Direct Democracy*, *Documenta 5*, 1972

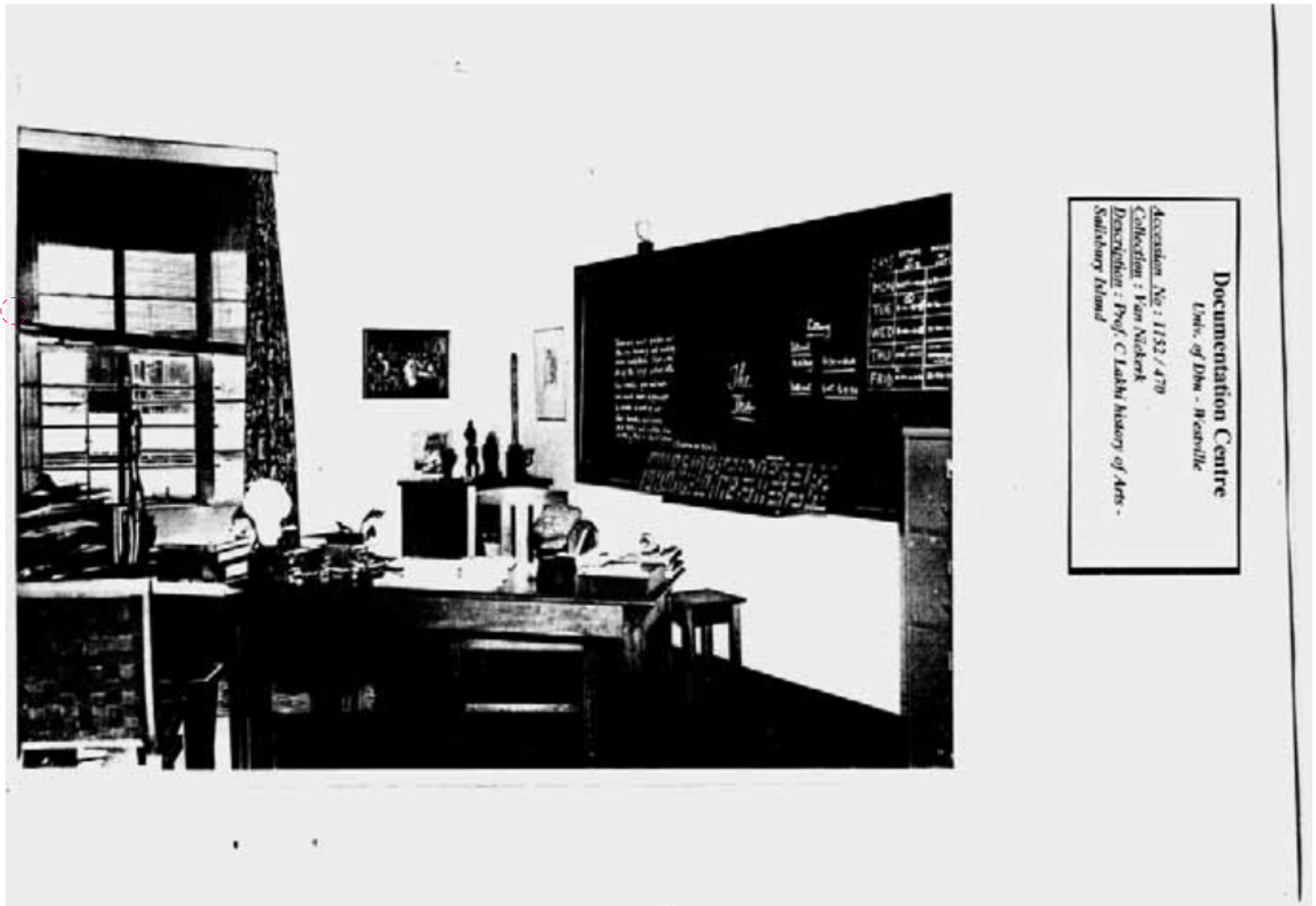
04
Joseph Beuys' lecture at the Ulster museum on 19 November 1974, as part of the exhibition *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*

An edited version of a lecture for the 50-year anniversary of Documenta (Kassel-Hofgeismar. 27 October 2005)

My talk is made up of a series of appreciative if querying annotations on what I call the Documenta Process: an umbrella term I am using to cover the past eleven Documenta curatorial events across 50 years (1955-2005) onwards to the next. It does not mean that I am simply lumping them together. To refer to them as a constellation is little better. It implies I have joined them up and configured them with a pre-given idea in mind. My focus, however, is on the fact that each Documenta is a singularity; each is a one-off affair with its own distinct stamp. At the same time, the regular five-year basis on which they take place, their periodicity, lends them a sense of seamless continuity. By the Documenta Process, therefore, I mean that the eleven events can be looked at in double-terms of continuity and discontinuities, of repetition and difference. We can highlight this by speaking of their quiddity, a word that, in English at least, has dual, contrary meaning. On the one hand, it signals that each Documenta has its own essential nature, that they are discrete, incommensurable curatorial events. On the other, that differences between them are quibbling: insubstantial enough for us to treat them as one undivided thing. The Documenta Process is shot through with a tension between two forces: Inszenierung und Kritik. The first I've translated as 'staging' or 'bringing into view': the endeavour of putting on a presentation, a feat of engineering and ingenuity. It is about the machinery for getting the operation off the ground, for conjuring the show's spell or spectacle. The second is about 'critique' or the reflexive analytic. My focus is on taking the sound of the in-between space or 'Zwischenraum' between critical force and its polar opposite. Can we sustain such a strict division between critique and spectacle except perhaps on an abstract plane? Some Documentas have tended more towards one or the other pole. But each pole really takes in a measure of its opposite. It is hard to imagine pure critique untouched by display and staging. Nor can we easily speak of sheer presentation, though some said the logic of *Documenta 5* tended towards 'exhibition about exhibition'. Today we understand Spectacle less as a mindless spume, more as a retinal-cognitive structure with the capacity to strip bare its own devices, to generate its own critical self-scanning. An abiding impression is that the Documenta Process is about Critique, with exposition in and through art practice, rigorous curatorial thinking, related analysis and discourse. On the English side of the Channel, we fight shy of appearing too earnest about art and full-blown critique. We are apt to say 'let's leave that to the Germans'. Sometimes this conceals a sneaking admiration. But the contrast is with 'our' native empiricism, with a more open-ended, hands-on approach. It is easy to parody critique: in which the aesthetic, social and political spheres are dealt with in a grand system as over the top 'Teutonic'. But it overlooks how critical models, often dispersed by thinkers and artists fleeing the Third Reich, have shaped post war art spaces. Beyond stereotyping bluster, German approaches to art and Critique have now become part of the institutions of art internationally as critique has spread with the art-culture industries of the consumerist economy. In emerging global art scenes today, the art-critique model normalizes before our eyes. As contemporary art sets up shop across China, South Africa, India, Brazil staging and critique intersect as a part of its symbolic and market actualité a norm once associated almost only with something like Documenta.

The normalizing of critique in the Documenta Process seems to be summed up by a photograph of Bazon Brock, tutor extraordinaire, during one of his famous teach-ins.[1] It is not surprising that his zest for learning and thinking through art is now the subject of a celebratory show.[2] The snapshot is of him in front of a spellbound class expounding and debating, like Joseph Beuys in action in his *Office for Direct Democracy*[3] or his three and a half hour Ulster blackboard session.[4] It records the glimmerings of a teaching-learning, public discursive space that would become an institutional feature of the art world by the 1990s. On the blackboard, Brock has chalked up keywords of critique: AUFHEBUNG looms formidably large with a clutch of satellite terms reaching a crescendo with the daunting 'totalization'. With Aufhebung we look on the linchpin of critique and related notions of enlightenment, modernity, autonomy, historical progress, totality, freedom, universalism. In hardnosed English, it can be translated as 'cancellation' and 'carry over', though in philosophy-speak we might have to use the fearful term 'sublation'. It is about a historical passage where a particular stage of art or society is superseded by a more advanced one. As the lower phase becomes obsolete it also provides the germ for the next. Aufhebung evokes a long haul, social-cultural dialectical trek unmatched outside Germany,





Above: Bazon Brock 1968
Below: Art History Room. Salisbury Island, Durban. C. 1980

except perhaps by the arduous route to enlightenment in the ancient Sanskrit philosophy of India. The dynamic of negation in Aufhebung: opposition, crossing out and transposition onto a higher plane, amounts to a constant upgrading. It tots up a linear story of advancing modernity, rational life and enlightenment. But does such an 'abstract' scenario of critique have any bearing on the vagaries of the actual world? I wonder what Brock's group made of the blackboard terms, what scenario they mulled over? By 1968, a string of Documentas had already taken place in a divided Germany with further rumblings from the 'other' side of a split Europe. Did this cast doubt on the cumulative tale of modernity and 'totalization'? For Jacques Derrida, Aufhebung so haunted thinking that Hegel's dialectical snares seemed near inescapable. He therefore juxtaposed an artist's way of thinking: Jean Genet's wayward semantic-sexual force, with Hegel's totalizing steamroller[5]. If this is roughly in tune with poststructuralist unhinging of critique's overbearing 'meta-narratives', it is reflected in an understated way in Catherine David's *Documenta X*; something we sense both in the event's intellectual scaffolding and in its lay out. Okwui Enwezor's curatorial project, *Documenta 11*, applied the deconstructive probe to the intersection of the postcolonial and the emerging global 'Empire'. The scenario of critique propelled by Aufhebung is scaled down. The linear tale of progress and modernity that relegates everything outside the scope of the 'West' to *Der Anderen Modernen* is checked by bringing into view a plethora of vibrant modernities. *Documenta 11* enacted this by setting up platforms beyond the Euro-zone: a de-centred staging that mirrored new networks of heightened, unsquarable diversity. Here critique is not simply about voicing the excluded or aboriginal. Beyond the classic territories and identities of North/South, self/other, inside/outside, there are new play-offs between the authentic, simulated, replica, fake-similar and hybrids. These convoluted relations encapsulate the nature of contemporary entanglements. They are articulated in Georges Adéagbo's installations or in the colonial African landscape as a 'monstrous lookalike' of the English countryside that opens Zarina Bhimji's *Out of Blue*. Looking back from the last, it is apparent that each Documenta throws up its own critical coordinates. They do not mirror a readymade critical essence called 'critique'. Its academic authority does not mesmerize them. They unpack its terms, toy with them, use them as raw stuff for new tools and approaches. We have a détournement of critique, a topsy-turvy of systematic academic force. Here critique is a sounding from within art and curatorial practice.

05
Jacques Derrida
Glas, 1974/86

PROFESSOR Z FROM GERMANY IN THE APARTHEID STATE

Some of us learn German not so much to chat to ordinary German speakers but because we want to converse with Hegel. We end up knowing big words like Aufhebung, Entscheidungsproblem, Verfremdungseffekt. But we still don't know how to order a cup of tea in the lingo. Brock's chalked Aufhebung jogged my memory about similar lettering from my student days in Apartheid South Africa, at one of the racially segregated institutions (University College, Durban for Indians). It was blackboard scrawl in the 'Kant to Heidegger' class run by the brilliant Professor Z from Germany. Suspicion simmered over why he had come to Apartheidland when there were calls for a boycott? Though he was politically wrong-footed, he was a fount of knowledge: our odd link with Hegel. He resisted discussing Marx who was of growing interest to the buoyant students' movement. The University Rector, Professor O, had returned from the US and Europe to warn against the three evil monkeys of critique of our time: Marx, Mao and Marcuse. It simply whipped up our interest even more. To goad Professor Z into discussing the first monkey, we would feign ignorance; asking about the thinker who was reputed to have turned Hegel 'upside down'. I am not sure whether he was making the point avant le Derrida that we imagine we have an escape hatch from Aufhebung, only to find Hegel lying in wait for us down the road. What I'd like us to note this evening are the extensive roots of the scenario of critique; the 'inside' of Germany is matted up with the oddest of 'outsides'.

APARTHEID ART HISTORY ROOM

Was there an equivalent of Brock's blackboard (Kassel), a record of Professor Z's chalkboard (Durban)? The South African artist Clifford Charles found for me something close enough. This is the Art History room in which I studied in the 1970s. It is Professor CL's office at the University for Indians, which was on Salisbury Island in Durban bay in the buildings of what was the naval base. The stamp on the margin is of the University Archive. As you can see, on the back wall is a Breugel: the North European tradition of retinal painting. Through the window, a railway line that normally carried goods to and from the shipping docks, occasionally, a wagonload of prisoners. On the blackboard ledge an Islamic calligraphic strip in angular Kufic style; an Aztec head, an elongated African wood figurine: Prehistoric South Africa alongside contemporary Zulu, Ndebele and Xhosa craftwork. Scholarly papers, bric-a-brac, filing cabinets, the room is a six-continents art-culture-clan tableau, an epistemic-classificatory machine with the Greco-Roman-Hellenistic bust as the radial point. However, Professor CL's staging of the subject is ambivalent. It is ostensibly a straight representation of Apartheid ideology of separate but equal cultures. In actuality, a resistant spark runs through it, not only

a hint of incipient translation and cross-talk but also of the promise of cosmopolitan mix. For on the blackboard is a quote from Rukmini Devi's cosmic universalism. In colonial India, she had led the revival of dance troupes that had fallen into disrepair and disrepute. Islamic rulers and colonial administrators had tried to stamp them out. Indians who had adopted Victorian taboos had become ashamed of the dance's sensual-erotic nature. Hegel too is askance at the misfit in India's thinking 'zwischen' sublime metaphysics and the shameless sensual. One suspects that here was a prime case for an Aufhebung: presumably more for cancellation than carrying over. Anna Pavlova's meeting with Rukmini Devi was key to the revaluation of the dance beyond the Cartesian body-mind split: a pivotal moment of 'dance as critique'. Rukmini Devi stepped out of her sheltered upper caste world to perform in public, to identify with the 'lowly knowledge' of the dancer clans. A defiant move in the rising independence struggle, it marks an aesthetic and gender stand off, a refusal of colonial authority over the 'native, racial' body. The act of resistance took place around 1935. It was the year the Nazi's both shut down the Tanzkongress in abhorrence of the critical, experimental dance body and the year they ushered in the Nuremberg laws.

GLOBAL AND UNIVERSAL

Several universalisms crop up here. Bazon's Aufhebung chimed in with the period's utopian politics: towards a modern, enlightened, liberated commonality. But, as postcolonial critiques asked, was this not also about assimilation to Eurocentric norms? Rukmini Devi's universalism is about live and let live within teeming multiplicity, contradiction, divine proliferation, while finding unity in subjective feeling of oneness with all cosmic life. At odds with the above, is the 'universal' touted by Apartheid. Its claim of not only tolerating diversity and difference but of also giving them room to blossom separately and equally was a façade for racist hierarchy, a fraudulent, multi-cultural commonalty. In Orwell's phrase, here some cultures were more equal than others.

Today, globalization claims to be hammering out a world-system in the name of the universal and cosmopolitan. But it is largely in the interests of the mega-corps and companies. In the deterritorializing world space it forges, it becomes less and less easy to distinguish between outside and in. As a consequence, what dwindles is the sense of an external sphere of universals: freedom, equality, autonomy, that stood distinctly outside and above the everyday with some sort of critical purchase on it. The promise of this levelling out is that lofty universals now become down-to-earth terms within a more concrete legal framework. But brittleness also sets in. Diversity, for example, gets treated reductively: as set-piece representations of cultures. Earlier, I noted how England tends to stereotype Germany through a few stock images. Probably much the same happens the other way round too. We brush it off as handy clichés of global communication. In the same way, under guise of the universal and cosmopolitan, globalization operates with well-thumbed representations and clichés of difference. This is at odds with the world as an unending churn out of difference: heterogenesis, as unpredictable, creative surplus spawned by migration and translation. But 'levelling out' does not mean that critique simply comes crashing down into the realm of Spectacle below trapping us in a one-dimensional situation. That globalization has hijacked critique and its universals[6] is a vivid, pointed but moot observation. But to dismiss multiculturalism as an ideology of globalization[7] overlooks how it is produced by migrant struggles for visibility. What is crucial is the potential paradoxically thrown up by the no-exit situation. For as critique levels off into the everyday, the basis for an immanent strategy is laid, for teasing out transformative possibilities and alternatives from the grain of the globalizing process itself, for critical thinking 'from below'.[8] Ulrich Beck's draws up a more balanced map, in empirical, sociological terms, of the universalizing forces at play for and against cosmopolitanism. He notes that over and above globalization, almost as its unwitting by-product, a process of cosmopolitanization is afoot. With it surfaces an uneven, rudimentary, if somewhat distorted sense of universal interaction and inter-dependence. Is this a co-opting of human rights and the cosmopolitan ideal or the implicit preparation of the ground for its more concrete realization?[9]

'JUST PLUG IT IN' LAOCOON

By deterritorialisation, I mean the dissolution of established fields of experience, action and knowledge. *Documenta 1*, signposted a break with the tribal territories of art-culture-identity of the Third Reich: also, a re-connection with what had been excluded while opening up to fresh, future possibilities. In charting the classic territories of the various arts in *Laocoon*[10] (1766) Lessing had confined sculpture to the static non-temporal part of his division of the arts that is not unlike Adam Smith's capitalist division of material labour in *Wealth of Nations*[11] (1776). Transgressing Lessing's laws, Eduardo Paolozzi's collage *Just Plug It In* (1946) suggests literally wiring up the Laocoon sculpture with electricity to get it moving. His real target was

06 Jean Baudrillard *The Global and the Universal*, The European Graduate School, Summer Seminar, 2002

07 Slavoj Zizek *Third Space Seminar*, 2003

08 Paolo Virno "The Grammar of the Multitude" in *Semiotext(e)*, 2004, p. 93-106. Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri *Multitude*, Penguin Press 2004, p. 328-348. Antonio Negri "Review of Georgio Agamben" trans. A. Bove in *Il Manifesto, 26*. July 2003

09 Ulrich Beck *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 2006

10 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, 1766

the reterritorializing of the arts that Clement Greenberg proposed in *Towards a Newer Laocoon* (1940)[12], a landmark for Anglo-American Art History. He prescribed that each art keep to the limits of it own medium against tendencies to blur 'normal' boundaries, especially against the rising mix of mass culture, advertising, Hollywood kitsch. The stance has a touch of Adorno, without the Aufhebung and weight of German thought. It adds up to a scenario of critique from outside and above: the sense of an authentic, autonomous art sphere that passes judgment on Spectacle, on everyday culture hopelessly mired in consumerist experience. In contrast Rudolf Arnheim's *Laocoon* (1938)[13], from around the time of his exit from the Third Reich, took a much less prescriptive view of the division of the arts and their current tendencies to converge and blend. Beyond this period of 'Kulturkampf', stands Arnold Bode's momentous start-up of the Documenta process, beyond territories of art-culture-identity charted by the Third Reich. Subsequent curatorial projects, such as *Documenta 4* (Arnold Bode, 1968), *Documenta 5* (Harald Szeemann,1972) and *Documenta 11*, are sometimes judged as having brought an undue political charge to critique. More likely, they were chasing up epistemic—political frequencies prefigured by the very first one.

CHEW AND SPIT PARTY

Documenta 6 (1977) featured John Latham who had left Southern Africa for the UK around the time the Apartheid Reich was being set up. By the 1950s, Greenberg's Laocoon essay, later published in his book *Art and Culture*[14] had almost bible status in some quarters. A shift away, though, from the art autonomy and abstract expressionism he championed, was discernable earlier. In the 1960s, Latham, a tutor at the Central School of Art, London, had Greenberg's *Art and Culture* out on loan so long that the Librarian sent him a reminder: 'Urgently needed by students, Art and Culture'. It sounded barely credible: whoever has heard of students desperate for art and culture? In England at least, we somehow expect them to ignore it, then perhaps to get round to making it for themselves before they ever feel they are gasping for a shot of it. Latham organised a party, I imagine it as an indoor picnic, a precursor to the discursive picnickers from Humboldt Universität.[15] Partygoers were offered pages from *Art and Culture*: an awfully dry cocktail to chomp through. They had to spit out the cud into a bowl of chemicals. He distilled the vapour off the ferment, bottled it and sent it to the library in a phial labelled 'Essence of Art and Culture'. On the scent of conceptual art territory? A letter from the School Principal followed. Latham was sacked.

GUTEN(MORGEN)BERG

The moves I've sketched: the Lessing-Paolozzi-Greenberg-Arnheim-Latham chain, fold in and out of Arnold Bode's *Documenta 1*. The exhibition *This Is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Gallery London in 1956, specifically *The Crazy House* by Richard Hamilton et al, dramatizes tendencies that have parallels in the Documenta process. Hamilton participated in Documentas 4, 6 and 10. *The Crazy House*[16] took a quizzical look at media, advertising, pop imagery, consumerist mythologies of everyday life, at spectacle. This was not critique from an external vantage point, as in Greenberg or perhaps the Frankfurt School or the French Structuralists. Around the time, Roland Barthes too had unpacked the mythologies of everyday spectacle, but with the power tools of a systematic semiotic critique. On the contrary, *The Crazy House* ploy was to generate critical awareness through immersion in the sight-sound-smell experience of pop ephemera, ads, kitsch: by soaking it up, getting under its skin, by ironic displacing from within. The dérèglement of the sense faculties, problematizing perception-vision, taste and smell add up to a somatic-motor-sensory event more than a semiotic one. We are not so much connoisseurs conducting a detached reading-interpretation of representations high art or popular culture. We are in a 'hands-on' mode, dunked into the atmospherics with palpable impact on our body-mind states. Across Documentas 4 to 10, models of art as durational flows, performance and immersion run alongside those of a connoisseurial-retinal kind. The art event becomes both about reading-textual decoding and enactive, embodied know-see-feel. Critical thinking takes not only the form of the top-down application of an analytical toolkit. It shapes up as awareness that seeps out from flows of affect and experience. The TiT[17] *Crazy House* summed up James Joyce's phrase Guten(morgen)berg, hailing the bright morning of media technologies and futuristic electronic cultures beyond the print-press-typographic era. The rosy dawn heralded new sensory-cognitive faculties, new territories of art, alternative mental-emotional-bodily possibilities. In *Documenta 10*, Hamilton and Ecke Bonk greeted the new dawn with their Post-Gutenberg Pavilion by displaying a computer stripped bare, its core innards on show. We verge on a new reality made up of both actual and virtual elements. The digit-pixel count: the level of resolution of the image, becomes a sort of yardstick of the 'real'. Hamilton had visited the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm in 1958 when Eduardo Maldonado was the head. The students nicknamed him the 'blue jinx' philosopher, at least, that is how he had heard it. They were referring to his cool dress code of denim jeans and jacket. They visited him in

11 Adam Smith *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776

12 Clement Greenberg *Towards a Newer Laocoon*, in *Partisan Review* 1940

13 Rudolf Arnheim *A New Laocoön: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film*, 1938

14 Clement Greenberg *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*, 1961

15 The collaborative group Unwetter have hosted discursive picnics since the group was formed at Humboldt University in 2001

16 *The Crazy House* was reconstructed at the Friedericianum, Kassel 2001

17 A shortened form of the exhibition title *This is Tomorrow*.

London while he was tussling with *$HE*[18] that blended high brow expressionist painterliness with slick, sexy pop-media imagery. They brought him a plastic laminated eye that winks naughtily as you walk past: just the pop risqué touch to round off the piece. Here we have another instance of intimacy between 'Germany' and 'elsewhere' concerned with unravelling terrains of art, prefiguring the new morrow of techno-spectacle and of Mediengesellschaft that Schneckenburger made the curatorial focus of *Documenta 6*.

18 1958-1963, the work is in the Tate collection.

19 Hannah Arendt "We refugees" in *Menorah Journal* no 1, 1943 or "The 'Nation of Minorities' and 'Stateless People' & The Perplexities of Human Rights" in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harvest books, p. 269-302

20 Theodor Adorno *Negative Dialectics*, 1966

21 Jan Hoet in *50 years Documenta, Archive in Motion*, 2005, p. 334-341

MIGRATION-TRANSLATION

By deterritorialisation I mean both new media, ethernet dimensions of mind, art and culture and present-day migrations: the traffic of people, border crossings, labour circulations of the global economy. It is about the 'non-documented': illegals, refugees, clandestini, sans papiers, asylum-seekers, aliens, detainees, deportees. To keep track, we need an auto-updating dictionary and an atlas of detention centres, prisons, transit camps that 'process' migrants. The migrations hit the headlines every so often with news of yet another disaster, as with the drowning of 30 cockle pickers from China in the UK in 2004. They were 'digging for fish', raking up shellfish on the Morecambe Bay mudflats for the restaurants of the Euro-cities, when they were engulfed by quick-rising tides. The sand banks dissolved beneath their feet, a literal, fatal deterritorializing. Some scrambled frantic calls on their mobiles to families in South China. Without a common language, rescue was severely hampered. It sums up a global communicative sphere seething with translation, a jangle of tongues, of heterogeneous, ever-mutating identities. Against this, Jürgen Habermas' vital mapping of the communicative sphere now appears somewhat even-toned and flat-line. In his perspective of critique and modernity, everyday transactions take place between regular rational citizens. Though he flags up the 'inclusion of the other', the speakers remain comparatively fixed identities tuned to much the same discursive-cultural wavelength. They interact in steady dialogic rounds of exchange on a deliberative plane within much the same cognitive parameters. But is today's communicative space on as even a keel as this? It is riddled with incompatible ways of living and knowing, jammed with cultural difference and untranslatables. It is cacophonic Babel, rather more a space of interference and cross-talk than poised conversational shuttle. It is pervaded by an ominous sense of radical otherness and difference in our midst. The symptomatic figure is, as Hannah Arendt noted, the 'refugee'.[19] But now it also takes in the cases I mentioned earlier, even the suicide bomber's murderous black hole of non-communicating communication. In this space of non-accord, self/other have both to forge a lingo for living in and through difference, contradiction and plurality and to stitch together a commonality or 'plane of parley'.

AGGLUTINATIVE THINKING

I use James Joyce's phrase 'Pidginy Linguish' or 'pigeon-pidgin-English-language' to signal a liquid lingo bubbling up from scratch, an open-ended communicative surge. It has to be distinguished from creole that hardens up as it develops grammar rules of usage. Globalization is a hybridizing condition but it hardly follows that creole should be the 'universal tongue'. Pidginy Linguish is not a meta-lingo with global pretensions. It is a patchy, piecemeal parleying force, something that self/other thrash out on the spot. As it wells up from below in unforeseeable ways, it spreads out, evaporates. It has a 'onceness' about it. I relate this to Merz thinking: to Kurt Schwitters' omni-sprouting constructions that choked up his Hannover flat; Or to his Norway Merz, or his UK MerzBarn wall that Richard Hamilton and students managed to conserve by carting it off from Ambleside in the Lake District to the gallery in Newcastle. His 'stick on' way of working without knowing beforehand how the pieces will configure suggests an add on ad infinitum model of thinking-creating. I call this an agglutinative mode: an unfinishing process of becoming, billowing out, nosing-forward. If we relate Cartesian thinking to clear-cut concepts, then the Merz-mode is cloudy, far less hard edged. It stops short of reductive, black or white expression that ends up eliminating singularity and difference. Adorno observed grimly in *Negative Dialectics*[20] that concepts are homicidal: he was referring to the killer instinct in the conceptual process that snuffs out the quiddity of things. I have updated this with xenocidal: the coercive streak that represents the foreign and alien only by reconstituting them in its own image, by violating them. Both Adorno and Deleuze speak of a 'non-conceptual kind of conceptualizing'. Merz-thinking, however, is not so much for or against concepts; it is about the tightrope of an aconceptual mode. When Jan Hoet remarked, "There is no concept to my Documenta, there is no concept to art. I don't even know what the definition of art is"[21] he raised a few eyebrows, his words taken as an opting out of critique. In hindsight, they sound like an instinctive hesitation over containing or essentializing; the attitude is of 'letting be', a less bullying kind of thinking. We can sense something of the assemblagist drift in Hugh Locke. There is an affinity between Schwitters' 'stick on' and his cut-out, DIY pile-ups: aggregations of Sargasso Sea junk and jetsam.[22] The Merz Meer of rubbish and leftovers parallels flows of migration-translation detritus and surplus in today's communication spaces. Deleuze[23] and Feyerabend[24] had chanced upon Schwitters as

Terror Bomb, Russell Square, Bloomsbury, London 2005

a model for an agglutinative thinking process. The former speaks of a basic add on logical mode formulated as 'and + and + and +…' It is not unlike the loose join-up Feyerabend associated with the common list where items are stuck on without a pre-given sequence. It is key to his 'Dada epistemology' pitted against over-systematizing critical rationalism: as a welter of cross-grained, higgledy-piggledy, unprogrammed procedures. The sort of knowledge associated with Merz-thinking might be paradoxically described as non-knowledge or Avidya to use a Sanskrit term which, however, should not be confused with ignorance. Academic scholarship operates largely within well-recognised channels. The focus here is on the capacity to meander, to stumble over and spawn new think-know-feel spaces. In this sense, Thomas Hirschhorn's *Deleuze monument* project[25] or his *Bataille project*[26] are non-discursive explications of the philosophers. His *24 Hour Foucault*[27] is concerned with how to 'put thinking on display' so the 'exhibition feels like being inside a thinking brain'. His staging: kiosks, shacks, sheds, lean-tos and podiums are makeshift gear for encounter. We can find ourselves knee deep in texts. Critique becomes almost touchable experience, exegesis beyond academic reading, just as Maria Eichhorn's *Documenta 11* piece[28] is a 'discursive-non-discursive' disquisition on capital. With legal backup, it places a sum of money in deep freeze but blocks any loophole for gaining interest on it suspending the drive of capitalist accumulation. In contrast, Lu Jie's *The Long March. A Walking Visual Display*[29] looks explicitly at scenarios of critique and modernity. It is a road show of installation-events. It shadows the original route trudged by Mao's Red Army: the violent uphill to modernity through the ordeal of critique. As knowledge-production in progress it conjoins the critical, curatorial and creative. Several Western stars, from Julia Kristeva, Philippe Sollers through Louis Althusser to David Hockney had actually undertaken some sort of China pilgrimage or made it their critical touchstone. The road show stops at villages where Mao and his band had sojourned. By initiating discussions with local communities, a kind of lab emerges to probe critique, its coercive use in communist times and after. The test-sites veer between cultural-revolution style auto-critiques and soul-searching confessions. Plugging into local expertise, such as the paper-cutting co-op, various kinds of knowledge about past and present, about skills and practices are aired and eked out.

WARBURG IN KREUZLINGEN

I draw to a close with an image from the Weimar period: Aby Warburg confined to the Kreuzlingen clinic because of a mental crisis. Around 1921, he pleaded to be allowed to make a trip to the Pueblo and Hopi. He had originally visited them 27 years before. The intensity of Native Indian living, performance and experience had led him to look at Renaissance Art with fresh eyes: beyond academic, bookish sources and in terms of the vital sources of ritual. He scandalously linked the elaborate spectacles of the Medici[30] to earthy ritual, basic bodily needs and energies. He made a re-connection with primal forces 'lower down' the cultural ladder, with 'primitive elements' that, in the scenario of critique, Aufhebung and modernity, should have been superseded long ago. Should we see his wish to visit as a desire to re-connect with the 'other' and with 'other ways' of knowing, in terms of what I call Xeno-epistemics?[31] It is about knotted relations between diverse practices, 'unrelated' art-culture territories and knowledge systems. Warburg failed to persuade the Kreuzlingen doctors to let him make the trip. By the 1930s, his library went into exile to London. It is today still in Bloomsbury, round the corner from where the bus terror bomb exploded in Tavistock Square on the seventh of July 2005. I mention these disparate, scattered events to stress that critical thought is not only about detached, connoisseurial states of consciousness. It shuttles between critique and crisis, between rupture and turbulence both as exile and migration and as mental-emotional upheaval. For Deleuze/Guattari, deterritorialization is crisis both in the clinical and cultural-political senses. In their scenario of capitalism and schizophrenia it is the prelude to the emergence of 'other' potentials and creative activity. Warburg's final years were a mix of crisis and creative outpouring: new modes of thinking, non-linear, image-idea assemblages, a Dada epistemics. Critique short circuits regular conceptual-discursive exposition. It is thinking in and through visual processes, perhaps like Arnheim's visual thinking.[32] Both explore ways of thinking in and beyond the linguistic-cerebral register, knowing through sound, smell and movement: elements of a para-discursive-somatic-limbic force. There is no mean overlap with the modes of Merz thinking and non-knowledge. Their ideas prefigured territories of today's new cognitive sciences: probes into mental processes, consciousness, creativity of cognition that intersect with spheres of communication, globalisation and critique to give us the knowledge production in our time. The 're-connect' with lost, terminated, interrupted, exiled, diasporized terrains of idea and art practice parallels the 're-connect' signalled by *Documenta 1*. This marks out the horizons in which future Documentas would have to thrash out their singularity and difference, their quiddity. It is the space in which the Documenta Process thrives, mutates, and transforms in unforeseeable ways beyond the 11th and also the 12th to which we look ahead.

22 Hew Locke and Sarat Maharaj in conversation "A Sargasso Sea Hoard of Deciduous Things" in *Hew Locke*, Walsall art Gallery, Birmingham 2005, p. 8–16

23 Gilles Deleuze *What is Philosophy?*, Verso 1994, p. 10

24 Paul Feyerabend *The Conquest of Abundance*, University of Chicago 1999, p. 240

25 Thomas Hirschhorn *Deleuze Monument* commissioned for the exhibition *La Beauté*, Avignon, 2000

26 Thomas Hirschhorn *Bataille Monument*, commissioned for *Documenta 11*, 2003

27 Thomas Hirschhorn *24 Hour Foucaut Monument*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, October 2004

28 Maria Eichhorn *Maria Eichhorn, Public Limited Company* first shown at *Documenta 11*, 2003

29 Lu Jie, *The Long March, A Walking Visual Display*, 1998 onwards

30 The Medici spectacles A.Warburg refers to occurred c. 1587

31 Sarat Maharaj *Xeno-Epistemics: makeshift kit for sounding visual art as knowledge production and the retinal regimes*, *Documenta 11*, Platform 5, Hantje Cantz 2002, p. 71–84

32 Rudolf Arnheim *Visual Thinking*, 1969

CURATORIAL CRITICALITY – ON THE ROLE OF FREELANCE CURATORS IN THE FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY ART

BEATRICE VON BISMARCK

Since the 1990s the profession of the curator has enjoyed a level of attention previously unknown. Beginning with the historical landmark of the figure of Harald Szeemann, a star cult developed around curators that, as a number of lectures and publications of recent years suggest, has banished artists and art critiques to a lower rank in the field. This intense engagement with the professional profile, with the tasks and demands of curatorial praxis, is thus in no small measure due to a conflict of hierarchization that has almost necessarily emerged within the field. The artist and initiator Susan Hiller opened the multiyear lecture series *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation* in Newcastle by asserting that the curator has replaced art critics and artists today: a statement that was subsequently taken up, discussed, and, with various results, denied by the speakers.[1]

If one examines the arguments that have been advanced in the tribunals on the status of the curator, it is striking that the embattled front by no means describes a clear line but is rather characterized by interruptions, abrupt turns, and spatializations. For while curators on one side are enthusiastically granted an extraordinary status 'on par with the artist', which is seen as progress in the advancement of the field, on the other side this very similarity with the artist's role has triggered vehement criticism and hostility. The relevant perspective shifts in accent, here on the definition of the work done, there on the process of organizing a public sphere or on adapting to consumer behavior once again, can transform from praise of a prominent subject position for the curator to condemnation as presumptuous and improper. What is on trial is not just the redistribution of social privileges that would go along with a rise in the professional image of the freelance curator but also, quite fundamentally, the nature and efficiency of participation in the processes of constituting meaning.

Perhaps more than any other profession in the field of art, curatorial praxis is defined by its production of connections. The acts of collecting or assembling, ordering, presenting, and communicating, the basic tasks of the curatorial profession, relate to artifacts from a wide variety of sources, among which they then establish connections. The possibilities for such connections are manifold and, once the objects have been removed from their original contexts, can also be constructed anew.[2] As exhibited objects, the materials assembled are 'in action'[3]: that is, they obtain changing and dynamic meanings in the course of the process of being related to one another. Ideally, these connections result from formal and aesthetic features or from content, but they also relate to the corresponding cultural, political, social, and economic contexts that attach to the exhibited objects their historicity.

In 1998 Zygmunt Bauman located the curator's position "on the front line of a big battle for meaning under the conditions of uncertainty, and the absence of a single, universally accepted authority."[4] To put it simply, he was hoping to find the roots of a semantic production based in processes of connection in the postmodern transformations in the field of art. Against the backdrop of such antithetical assessments of the role today, one also hears in Bauman's formulation the two essential conflicting poles between which the current, more highly differentiated debate has evolved. On the one hand, there is the positive assessment that the figure of the curator represents the hope for finding footing again in the jungle of meanings that has resulted from the loss of clarity and binding norms. On the other, there are reservations about giving the installation a new position of authority that lays claim to special powers to interpret the processes of connection.

If we choose not to view the current 'curator hype' and star cult as simply a side effect of the enormous growth in exhibition activity as part of today's event culture but also admit it has critical modes of action and effect, then the relationship between these two antithetical assessments of the phenomena becomes more significant. When trying to put curatorial practice in perspective, which is necessary if it is to have a critical potential, this relationship proves to be an essential aspect, which can for its part be made useful as an element of a critical praxis. Hence the remarks that follow will be devoted to it. They are based on the assumption that a specific variety of criticality is appropriate to curatorial practice, given its procedure of creating connections.[5]

Art's claim to autonomy is one of the main points of reference for the reservations raised about the role of the curator today. The art sociologist Paul Kaiser observes

01 On this, see the introduction to the series by Susan Hiller and the responses of James Lingwood, one of the directors of Artangel, London, and Sune Nordgren, director of the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle, in: *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation*, March 30th 2000, University of New Castle, Department of Fine Art. James Lingwood and Sune Nordgren in Conversation chaired by Professor John Milner, in Susan Hiller and Sarah Martin (eds.): *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation*, Gateshead: BALTIC 2000, p. 12, 13, 21

02 On the changing connections in the handling of what has been collected, see seminally Walter Benjamin *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge/ Massachusetts: Belknap Press 2002, p. 204, 205, and Allan Sekula "Reading an Archive" in: Brian Wallis (ed.) *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*, Cambridge/ Massachusetts: MIT Press 1993, p. 117, excerpted from "Photography between Labour and Capital" in: *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures, 1948–1968: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton*, Halifax 1983

03 Susan M. Pearce describes the contexts in which the objects in a collection take on new meanings under the title "Objects in Action"; see Susan M. Pearce *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, Leicester: Leicester University Press 1992, p. 210

04 Zygmunt Bauman, quoted in Mika Hannula, "Introduction: Remarks on the Discussion during the Seminar Thank God I Am Not a Curator" in: Mika Hannula (ed.) *Stopping the Process? Contemporary Views on Art and Exhibitions*, Helsinki: NIFCA – The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art 1998, p. 13

05 On the concept of 'criticality', which searches by way of other forms of the critical for the 'criticism' of errors and pursues 'critique' that makes the investigation of the premises that makes something seem logical, see Irit Rogoff "WIR. Kollektivitäten, Mutualitäten, Partizipationen" in: Dorothea von Hantelmann and Marjorie Jongbloed (eds.) *I Promise It's Political: Performativität in der Kunst / Performativity in Art*, Bonn: Theater der Welt 2002, p. 54–55

along these lines: "The success of curators as social figures in recent years derives from the old dilemma of art in the (post-)modern age, i.e. the need for art to assert its supposed autonomy in a market heavily regulated by economic factors." In comparison to earlier decades, he identifies the specific nature of the present situation as the fact that the other authorities that have previously responded to art's need for commentary "newspaper criticism, academic study, educated patronage (…)" have "largely ceased to be parallel sources of creative production (…)" in our "fun, consensus and aspirin society."[6] The commentaries on the figure of the curator mentioned above reflect this assessment of a crisis. Even if they disagree on what triggered the crisis, art theory, art criticism and even art itself have all been held responsible[7], they all share the view that the genesis of the curator position can be attributed to the inadequacies of other positions in the field of art. Kaiser's formulation makes this judgment concrete and at the same time once again puts the curator in the service of art as 'marketing manager', 'artistic intellectual', or 'amateur trend scout'.[8]

The basis for the discussion is a development in the field of art that began in the 1960s with the rapid growth of activity, increased differentiation within the art field, and the associated rise of new professions, including both the freelance curator and the increasingly specialized curator associated with an institution. Ever since curators have been sharing the tasks involved in communicating art with scholars in various disciplines, gallery owners, critics, and teachers. The 'dealer-critic system' that Cynthia White and Harrison White identified in their groundbreaking 1965 study of the development of art institutions in France in the nineteenth century as the structure of the art field in the modern era had added a whole series of new players.[9] Enhancing the status of the freelance curator to the extent that is done in the current discourse means an essential shift and concentration of the power to constitute meaning that had previously been distributed more equally among various authorities for communicating such meaning. The trend was encouraged by the deprofessionalisation that began at the same time in the 1960s as these processes of increased differentiation in the filed and have clearly accelerated again in the 1990s, in a kind of countermovement to efforts at professionalisation institutionalized in courses and schools.[10] In these trends, two fundamental developments of art reveal their consequences for the roles and tasks in the field of art: increasing conceptualization, on the one hand, and a focus on context, on the other. Artist's encroachments on tasks and roles that had been assigned to other players in the field of art were closely connected to this concentration on the discourse of art. Because these other players in turn exchanged and appropriated various activities and positions among themselves, since not only artists but also critics and curators can write, create exhibitions, teach, and sell art, because aspects of both harmonization and indistinguishability emerge in these mutual transfers, it is also possible for professionals who do not explicitly think of themselves as artists to participate in the elevated social status of the 'artist'.

The debate over power and status appears to become especially heated around the profession of the freelance curator, who is thus not tied to an institution. The basis for this is the social status associated with communicating art, which is part of the various professional disciplines in the field of art. Institutions that mediate between art and the public, be they museums and collections in private or public hands, exhibition houses, commercial galleries, magazines, publishing houses, universities, or art colleges are authorities that consecrate and legitimize. In their dependence on their objective relations and positions in the field, they participate in the process of evaluating art as art. The players active in them and for them, curators, gallery owners, critics, publishers, teachers, and theoreticians, carry out these processes. For its part, the effectiveness of these players develops in dependence on their position in the field, in their relationships of powers relative to other players and the institutions. From this plexus obligations for the mediators emerge that cause them to be torn between artistic and economic, individual and institutional, aesthetic and social, immanent and contextual demands. They are 'double forms' in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, uniting in themselves contradictory dispositions through which they can remain close to each of the sectors of the art field. Contexts that ensure recognition and success in an economic sense must to be understood and handled, as they are supposed to possess an understanding of and affinity to artistic working processes and conditions.[11] This intends a hybrid role that then develops a potential for conflict when it abandons the balance between the two directions that is established by the rules of the game in that field.

This becomes evident in the analogous balancing act that Bourdieu associates with the figure of the 'priest' in the religious field: the priest possesses an authority in the capacity of his office and by means of his belonging to the church exercises control over the access to the means of production, reproduction, and distribution of sacred goods. He preserves the existing *doxa* and sees himself as a mediator between God and humankind.[12] Transposed to the art field, it is the mediators, in their role as 'priests', who

06 Paul Kaiser "Is the Curator a Product of the Cultural Crisis?" in: Christoph Tannert and Ute Tischler (eds.) *Men in Black: Handbook of Curatorial Practice*, Frankfurt a. M.: Revolver 2004, p. 198–199

07 For different responses to the question of who is responsible for this crisis, see, for example, Hannula "Introduction" (see note 4), p 16, and Liam Gillick, in: *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation*, October 24th, 2001, University of Newcastle, Department of Fine Art, "Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Liam Gillick in conversation Chaired by Susan Hiller" in: Susan Hiller and Sarah Martin (eds.) *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation*, Newcastle 2002, p. 23

08 Paul Kaiser "Is the Curator a Product of the Cultural Crisis?" (see note 6), p. 199

09 See Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993; originally published, New York: Wiley 1965, p. 94–98

10 The deprofessionalisation of the exhibition curator is described by Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak as a development that played an essential role in the enhanced status of the subject position of the curator. See Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position" in: Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.) *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London: Routledge 1996, p. 231–259, esp. 238

11 See Pierre Bourdieu *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Cambridge / UK: Polity Press 1996. A depiction, often uncritically organized around economic contexts, of the obligations that curators may find themselves exposed to in the expanded and accelerated art world, is to be found, in overstated form in: Doris Rothauer and Harald Krämer (eds.) *Struktur und Strategie im Kunstbetrieb: Tendenzen der Professionalisierung*, Vienna: WUV Universitätsverlag 1996

12 Pierre Bourdieu *Das religiöse Feld: Texte zur Ökonomie des Heilsgeschehens*, Konstanz: UVK Universitätsverlag Konstanz 2000, p. 78–81

exercise gatekeeper functions, who guard over the opportunities of the production, presentation, and distribution of art, who employ the relevant set of values and rules in evaluating art as art, and who see themselves as agents between art and their public.

However, anyone who dares to upset the balance of this intermediary position by stepping over to the side of the art producers, violates the rules. This corresponds in the religious field to the transformation from priest to prophet. The latter receives his power not through his office but on the basis of his personality and his charisma. He is interested in the production and dissemination of 'new kinds of sacred goods,' which can also lead to the discrediting of the old ones. The group of initiates that assembles around him can evolve, in accordance with the processes of sacralization of what was once sacrilege, from a sect to a church and thus become the new guardian of the true doctrine.[13]

The parallels to the art field become especially relevant if one considers the political dimension of the position of the freelance curator. For in comparison to the priests, the freelance curators lack a fixed connection to an institution that would lend them authority, and in this respect thus resemble the prophets, so that, forced to rely on their personal charisma, they obtain and reobtain their authority procedurally.[14] Through this process of adoption, they too can deviate from the doctrinal opinion represented by the institutions only to become a part of the institutions themselves at a later stage when the hierarchies and dogmas they introduce are recognized. In the end, like the prophets they too have a closer relationship to the object being communicated: if the prophets are distinguished by the fact that they are not, like the priests, the advocates of humankind before God but rather God's spokesmen on earth[15], then analogously one can say of the freelance curators that they function not so much advocates before artists and art of the various spheres within their audience but rather the representatives of art and artists to the public. The sacralization effects that function in the art field by means of establishing distance are thus transferred to the curators: the distance that the priests and mediators dramatize and preserve between the public and the goods they are communicating also exists between the public and the prophets or artists. In a cult-like adaptation, this distance ultimately feeds on the star cult around the freelance curators as well, even though their circumstances do not warrant assigning them entirely to the status of the priests or to that of prophets, and in contemporary practice they may have an artistic background but it is just as likely to be something else.

Such attributions of status place freelance curators in conflict both with other parties active in communicating art and with artists, and they do so in several ways: not only do they not hold to the distribution of tasks that has been worked out in their relationship to gallery owners, staff curators, theoreticians, and critics, according to which they are responsible as 'double forms' for establishing the connection between art and the public that appreciates it, but rather operate on the art side. Hence they also take stances by means of the other communicating positions to which they ascribe more subservient actions that are limited by a wide range of institutional, social, and economic guidelines. Because they claim the freedoms that have traditionally been granted artists, they also take from the other communicative roles the aspects of their activity that are constitutive of meaning. Curators tied to institutions see themselves as placed in a role relative to freelance curators in which they are merely responsible for the administrative, architectural, and financial framework of an exhibition project. Another factor is that their relationship to artists becomes more tense, because the latter have to concede to curators not only their exclusive claim to a special place in society but also aspects of their role in the production of meaning. The clash between Harald Szeemann and Daniel Buren on the occasion of *Documenta 5* in Kassel in 1972 demonstrated this zone of conflict exemplarily in that Buren responded to the subjugation of participants in the exhibition to a thematic focus by taking over sets of tasks that were normally the responsible of curators.[16] Both the curatorial and artistic approaches of the subsequent three decades would, despite a wide variety of circumstances and objectives, continue the same struggle for power in the process of creating meaning that was practiced there. This may be seen the recent exhibition series on the theme 'Spaces of Conflict' or in the debates over Eric Troncy's curatorial interventions or the communicative practices of context-oriented artists.[17]

The fact that freelance curators enjoy particular appreciation in this latently conflictual position is due in large part to the similarities that have evolved between artistic and communicative practices in the field of art over the last fifteen years and to the exemplary character that these practices have adopted outside the art field in the economic world. I am referring to the forms of 'immaterial work' that Maurizio Lazzarato has defined and described as a characteristic element of post-Fordist economic structures.[18] This form of work, which is directed not at material production but the creation, administration, and distribution of meaning should be understood as a direct analogy to the curatorial practice of assembling, arranging, and communicating. The critique of a 'parasitical'

13 see Bourdieu *Das religiöse Feld*, p. 79-82

14 see Bourdieu *Das religiöse Feld*, p. 78

15 see Bourdieu *Das religiöse Feld*, p. 80

16 For further details on the relationship between Harald Szeemann and Daniel Buren on the occasion of *documenta 5*, see Beatrice von Bismarck "Der Meister der Werke: Daniel Burens Beitrag zur *documenta 5* in Kassel 1972" in: Uwe Fleckner, Martin Schieder and Michael Zimmermann (eds.) *Jenseits der Grenzen: Französische und deutsche Kunst vom Ancien Régime bis zur Gegenwart; Thomas W. Gaehtgens zum 60. Geburtstag*, Cologne: DuMont, 2000, p. 215-229

17 On these discussion, see, for example: *Spaces of Conflict: An Audio-visual, Research-based Essay on Institutional Spaces by Mike Bode & Staffan Schmidt* at the Kunst-Werke, Berlin, November 28th, 2004 until January 9 th, 2005 and the discussion "Institutionelle Räume" on January 8 th, 2005, that accompanied the exhibition; Jean-Max Colard "Collustre: Collection Lambert — Avignon" in Artforum, November 2003; Marius Babias "Vorwort" in: *Im Zentrum der Peripherie: Kunstvermittlung und Vermittlungskunst in den 90er Jahren*, Dresden: Fundus 1995, p. 9-26; Hal Foster "The Artist as Ethnographer" in: The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century, Cambridge/ Massachusetts: MIT Press 1996, p. 171-203, and the response to it by Renee Green "Der Künstler als Ethnograph?" in *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 27, September 1997, p. 154

18 See Maurizio Lazzarato "Immaterielle Arbeit: Gesellschaftliche Tätigkeit unter den Bedingungen des Postfordismus" in: Toni Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato and Paolo Virno *Umherschweifende Produzenten: Immaterielle Arbeit und Subversion*, Berlin: ID Verlag 1998, p. 39-52

fundamental character of the contemporary 'art of communication'[19] undergoes a re-evaluation as a process of selection and connection that is characteristic of postmodernism and that can be applied as a social practice not only to tasks with museums and other cultural facilities but also in work situations that are primarily economic in orientation. As a process of the production of meaning, it is ascribed the potential to liberate creativity under conditions of self-determination and self-realization. With this kind of accentuation of the difference relative to Fordism that temporarily suppresses the simultaneously occurring forms of self-exploitation and self-discipline, those members of society who have traditional been granted a space characterized by freedom and self-determination, namely artists, obtained their function as model actors who are to be imitated.[20]

In order to avoid the economization of the cultural that is built into this, and instead open up spaces for critical action, it is necessary to reinforce more explicitly another parallel between curatorial and communicative practice. This refers to a site-specific mode of operation in art that was an especially frequent subject of discussion during the 1990s.[21] In expanding the approaches to 'institutional criticism' and to working with the architectural, social, economic, and discursive functions of the sites at which exhibitions were held, it was also necessary to take into the account the effects that are triggered by the practices that become evident at that those sites. This form of contextualization brings out the various obligations to which not only artists but also, and especially, freelance curators are put: to art and artists as well as to various circles of the public and communities or institutions and the professionals occupied there. The project Services, initiated in 1994 by Andrea Fraser and Helmut Draxler, performed the perspectives contained therein of artistic labour defined by analogy to 'service task' in a way that set new standards for the 1990s.[22] Going beyond the analyses that were worked out with site-specific procedures and also including the effects of practices means for contemporary art making its own practices more flexible and structuring them as temporary, contingent, and polyphonic.

This would be a good starting point for someone who wanted to take advantage of the status attributed to freelance curators with their conflict zones in the sense of a critical practice. Choosing, linking, presenting, and communicating in a way that reflects the relationships, conditions, and effects of these acts with the goal of taking part in the changes or displacements corresponds to the 'criticality' that Irit Rogoff called for in a contemporary approach to art: working from 'a trembling ground of genuine embedment,' according to Rogoff, a criticality on the basis of an awareness of the limits of one's own way of thinking, which takes into account that new things can only by learned by forgetting the old.[23] In the work of freelance curators, the process orientation that this demands applies both to the meaning of individual objects and to their constellations; to their relationship to the place as well as to various circles of the public and communities; processes of generation, performativity and transitoriness develop here. It is, however, also necessary to incorporate into such a procedural approach the position the curator has adopted, with its attributions, tasks, roles, and once again its overlapping with other positions. To the extent it is about the political potential of the curatorial, it is quite fundamentally about processing the curatorial role, in addition to other processes of 'becoming'. It represents a continual process of negotiation in which the positions taken vary in relation to the other subjects or objects involved in exhibitions, take on new directions, and appear in various constellations.

According to Michel de Certeau, the rejection of a fixed position to which power, hierarchies, and status could be attached in an unambiguous and lasting way takes place as a space-generating movement that manoeuvres between established codes. This movement in which various things are temporarily linked and then separated possesses, according to Certeau, a subversive, even 'criminal' potential. The space that it produces is, for its part, shaped by and permeated with conflict programs and contractual agreements.[24] Anyone who performs the movements between the various attributions and tasks from a curatorial position can produce in relation to the subjects and objects with which she or he operates a social, discursive, and aesthetic space of action that destabilizes, annuls, and reformulates the conditions and relations between which the movements occur. An exhibition understood in this way reveals the political dimension that Jacques Rancière describes in the context of the politics of the 'distribution of the sensory': aesthetic practices can take part it in to the extent that they sublate the usual coordinates of sensory perception and reframe the overall network of relationships between spaces and times, subjects and objects, the universal and the individual. Art can create a stage, in a museum for example, on which politics can play out as a reconfiguration of the distribution of the sensory as a way of making the invisible visible.[25] On that stage an 'unreasonableness' is manifested that for Rancière is the center of any political argumentation, as the presence of two worlds in one.[26]

Integrating the role of freelance curators into these space-generating, politically conceived processes means drawing up the various tasks and positions that have been

19 On the polemic against discursively oriented contemporary art, see George Steiner *Real Presences*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1989

20 For more detail on this, see Beatrice von Bismarck "Kuratorisches Handeln: Immaterielle Arbeit zwischen Kunst und Management-modellen" in: Marion von Osten (Hg.) *Norm der Abweichung*, Zurich: Edition Voldemeer 2003, p. 81–98

21 See two considerably earlier contributions to the discussion, James Meyer "Der funktionale Ort" in *Springer 2*, no. 4, December 1996 until February 1997, p. 44–47, and Miwon Kwon "One Place after Another" in *October* 80, 1997, p. 85–110

22 See Helmut Draxler and Andrea Fraser "Services: A Proposal for an Exhibition and a Topic of Discussion" and "Services: Working Group Program at the Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg" in: Beatrice von Bismarck, Diethelm Stoller and Ulf Wuggenig (eds.) *Games Fights Collaborations: Das Spiel von Grenze und Überschreitung; Kunst und Cultural Studies in den 90er Jahren*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz 1996, p. 72–73, 74, 196, 197

23 see Rogoff "WIR. Kollektivitäten, Mutualitäten, Partizipationen" (note 5), p. 55

24 See Michel de Certeau "Récits d'espace" in: *L'invention du quotidien*, vol. 1, *Arts de faire*, Paris: Gallimard 1990, p. 218–219, p. 236–238

25 see Jacques Rancière "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link", manuscript of a lecture given at the Institute of European Studies, Berkeley, September 30th, 2002. The idea of a space that makes political action visible can be related to Hannah Arendt's concept of "space of appearance": a transitory space that results when people interact, speak, and thereby manifest their presence to one another. See Hannah Arendt *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1958, p. 250–254. On this, see also Rancière's critique of Arendt's definition of the political sphere, in "The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics" lecture held as part of the conference "Fidelity of Disagreement: Jacques Rancière and the Political", organized by the Post-Structuralism and Radical Politics and Marxism specialist groups of the Political Studies Association at Goldsmiths College, London, September 16th until 17th, 2003, information available online http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/psrpsg/ranciere.doc

26 see Jacques Rancière *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1999, and "Eleven Theses on Politics", information available online http://theater.kein.org/node/view/121

assigned to them as well as the processes of reframing and redefinition described above. Rather than adopting a 'natural' order, under which curators would have the status of 'prophets' or 'priests', the operations of assembling, ordering, presenting, and communicating could be freely distributed and interchanged among the parties engaged in an exhibition. Equally, the proximity and distance, the hierarchies and dependences in the relationship of curators to objects, to artists, to other communicating professionals in the field, and to the various communities and spheres of the public must always be renegotiated and fixed only temporarily. Taking into account attributions of status that now resemble 'prophet', now 'priest', comparing them, exposing the differences and areas of intersection with the circumstances used to justify them, transforms the seemingly clearly defined profession of the curator into a playable role that can be recast performatively in an imitating, reflecting, or parodistic balance with the various expectations made of it. Understood in this way, the curatorial task proves to be a flexible, dynamic, and contingent constellation of operations and positions, a specific form of criticality in the art field.

Translated from the German by Steven Lindberg

EXPERIMENTS ALONG THE WAY – *I AM A CURATOR* AND *SUPPORT STRUCTURE*

PER HÜTTNER AND GAVIN WADE IN AN INTERVIEW WITH BARNABY DRABBLE

I Am a Curator, an exhibition project by the artist Per Hüttner, took place at the Chisenhale Gallery, London in November/December 2003. *Support Structure* is an evolving work by artist-curator Gavin Wade and architect Celine Condorelli. It was first commissioned for Per Hüttner's exhibition in London and has since then 'supported' a number of other projects, spaces and organisations around the UK.

Barnaby Drabble:
Per, do you think you can briefly describe the exhibition *I Am a Curator*?

Per Hüttner:
The original idea was to invite members of the public to come each day of the project and, during one afternoon, put together an exhibition at the Chisenhale. I made sure that these slots would be made available as democratically as possible, divided between different people from different backgrounds and ages. Interestingly this focus of the project changed as it progressed and each session became more focussed on the artwork that was made available for the participants to curate. Increasingly the curator of the day would reflect on the questions and problems that they wanted to approach and use these artworks as a resource to do this. This change of focus was partially practical because to fill a space that is almost three hundred square meters in four and a half hours is not an easy task, and for the first exhibitions people were just running around shouting 'look we just need to get this up'. We fairly immediately understood that this strict focus on the finished exhibition didn't work and that a looser model with more preparation for the curators of the day, was working the best.

Because I didn't want the curator of the day to curate my taste, I asked five other people to select works that the invited curators could select from for their show. In the end there were fifty-seven artists from seventeen countries that were part of the exhibition. In addition to this selection process there were also other elements in the exhibition itself like the *Support Structure* that Gavin will talk about later, the interface cards that Scott Rigby designed, and the gallery crew. At the beginning of the day the fifty-seven artworks were packed into the *Support Structure*, and it was very hard to get an overview. The interface cards had an image and a description of each artwork so when the curator of the day came in in the morning we sat down at the table with them and basically laid out all the cards, they were also viewable on the website, and most people had printed them out and came in with their own pack. The gallery crew were responsible for both handling the work and also leading the curator of the day through the process of realising their exhibition. To avoid damage we didn't want the actual curator of the day to handle the work, a point of a lot of frustration but a necessary precaution when doing thirty six shows in six weeks. The gallery crew were a pool of roughly fifteen volunteers, mostly art students or curating students, headed by Hannah Rickards who was in there every day.

Barnaby Drabble:
Regarding the title of the exhibition. In your published thoughts and projects you said 'Contrary to what the title suggests the project had little to do with curating'. If so, why did you decide to call the exhibition *I Am a Curator*?

Per Hüttner:
Well there are two things I need to say to that. Number one is that we were toying with a lot of different titles for the show that more explicitly dealt with the complexity of the project, but those titles were not very straight-forward and, given the people we wanted to involve, we decided on something that was kind of catchy. The statement that you quote is also very important, because I wanted to make it clear in the catalogue that I am an artist, who is interested in curation from an artist's point of view and that I make no claims to doing a curator's job.

Barnaby Drabble:
In the exhibition, as you have described, members of the public were invited to arrange pre-selected art works or art objects in the gallery space. How would you respond to the criticism that this represents a very particular or very traditional approach to the idea of how an exhibition might be made? What about the questions of commissioning artists or being involved in the initial selection, how did you feel about perhaps presenting an imaginary choice, but at the same time restricting the possibilities that a normal curator might have?

Per Hüttner:
I think that there are many different answers to your question really, I do agree, when you are faced with the possibility of just selecting existing art work, that is a very traditional take on what a curator is. But then again, I think that *I Am a Curator* tried to do something that goes beyond that. By using a very traditional approach it enabled us to do something that was extremely creative and which opened new ideas about how to put together exhibitions. In terms of selecting the works, it wasn't as if they had only five pieces to choose from. To consider the work of fifty-seven artists in one afternoon is a major task. Also, a lot of the work was not finished, it was up to the curator of the day to complete it, a lot was interactive, and a lot had different elements that needed to be put together. So there were many different approaches on offer, reflecting the working methods of the original selectors. You could also read the text that each of these people had written about their selection, and these were often dealing with this interactive aspect.

Barnaby Drabble:
One thing that interested me was the question of the opening of the exhibition. Presumably nothing had been achieved at the moment of the opening, why didn't you do a closing instead?

Per Hüttner:
Well I wanted an opening and I felt it was really important. Basically, in the central space we had the *Support Structure* with all the work in it, and then the doors were open and we had the interface cards mounted on the inside of the doors so visitors could virtually browse all the work that was there. I thought there was something extremely poetic and strong in imagining the array of infinite possibilities that could take place in the coming six weeks.

Barnaby Drabble:

You variously described *I Am a Curator* as a 'solo exhibition, one project by one artist' and 'a collaborative experiment'. And you have already mentioned that you are coming into this as an artist and not as a curator. Can you tell me how you see these contrasting or conflicting models of authorship, functioning within the project? What was the response of your collaborators to your very clear insistence that this was a solo show by Per Hüttner?

Per Hüttner:

Well, collaboration is a cornerstone of my artistic practice, no matter what I do. It's always based on collaboration in one way or another. And for me there is no contradiction and no conflict between these different models. I think that they coexist very harmoniously. And also even in the historical perspective I think that all the great artists have been collaborators and every good artist makes use of the people around them, even if it is just a case of conversation or dialogue. Concerning my insistence on calling this a solo show, I think that that all worked out very well. There were jokes that were made about me being the 'über-curator'; and hogging the limelight. But I think that everyone felt that there was room for their participation and that there input into the project was recognised and made visible. If anything, I should have probably been a lot firmer about the fact that it was my solo exhibition. But that is easy to say in retrospect.

Barnaby Drabble:

In an historical moment where curators who introduce creative strategies in their dealing with art and exhibition are heavily critiqued for assuming authorial positions, do you feel that there is a fundamental difference if you do this as an artist?

Per Hüttner:

I think there is, because there is a fundamental understanding of collaborative process among artists and perhaps also between artists and curators who have come from an art-making background. To my mind there is a different expectation with people who have come form an art-historical background or those who have trained as curators. It is a big claim and goes against common knowledge, but my experience of artists is that for them it is not always necessary to be in the limelight. There is more fundamental trust in the work at hand and the roles emerge from that. Naturally, among the participating artists there was a slight concern that their work would not be seen, simply because there was such a number of works in the show. As each show, each day, was different their doubts were in some way valid; the work wasn't seen by as many people as it would have been seen if it was on the wall all the time. But it is also, and I kept saying this at the time, that the people who saw it, saw it very differently because they had to think about where it came from and how it was placed in the context of other artwork. There was a more profound understanding and viewing of the works than in a normal show. And that kind of goes with my ideology about art; that it is better to be seen by few people who really see it, than to be seen by lots of people who just glance at the work.

Barnaby Drabble:

Gavin, you were involved in this project *I Am a Curator*, on the invitation of Per you provided a structure to support the exhibition. Can you briefly outline what *Support Structure* is?

Gavin Wade:

Support Structure changes all the time, but how it actually panned out in the exhibition was a physical structure that played host to all of the artworks. It had six sections for the six different selections of work; from the five invited selectors and Per. It was movable, exactly as wide as the gallery so you could turn the rectangle of the gallery into a square or a corridor, whatever was required. So it introduced another set of spatial strategies for the daily curator to use as well, by providing a gallery within a gallery, a tool to develop ideas while you were in the space, in addition to the art works in the exhibition.

Per Hüttner:

Support Structure became very much the aesthetic part of *I Am a Curator* because it was always there and it was very big, it became a visual marker for the exhibition and particularly when you go through the documentation you see lots of different permutations of how *Support Structure* was used.

Gavin Wade:

I agree, but I would like to think that the concept of *Support Structure* was broader than what was physically there, and I think that you understood that when you came to use it. We wanted to make a structure that informed you and led you to do certain things, and provide a tool that was able to critique the exhibition, to deal with ideas of curating and to deal with all aspects of exhibition making, including the production of art. That concept was developed very strongly out of my previous work and as a response to Per's invitation to come up with the best thing possible for this exhibition called *I Am a Curator*. We contemplated how to add to it, how to be of value and how to make the daily curators aware of what they were doing.

Barnaby Drabble:

Can you describe your work with the architect Celine Condorelli in relation to *Support Structure*. Did you come up with the idea prior to Per's invitation?

Gavin Wade:

The idea for *Support Structure* existed before Per's exhibition, but in a very different form. I saw it initially as an exhibition, a display of devices, structures and systems that had been used throughout recent history. I was interested in producing a wooden bench that went around a pillar that Lawrence Weiner used for naked models to stand on in one of his films. I wanted to make elements of walls that were constructed originally for the Museum of Modern Art to display works by Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman. The idea was to have a whole array of say forty different structures, in a way an archive, a reproduction and also a curatorial artwork. I got in touch with the architect Celine Condorelli after Per contacted me and together we began to start thinking about designing some sort of facilitating system for the exhibition. I wanted to push beyond the knowledge and experience that I had already gathered working on other projects, so I invited Celine to collaborate with me on *I Am a Curator*, but also beyond.

Per Hüttner:

This was symptomatic of what happened in I *Am a Curator*, in that I asked people to contribute with something slight and everyone kind of took it beyond what the original pitch was. Basically, I asked Gavin to design a shelving structure and he came back with *Support Structure*, which went way beyond that.

Gavin Wade:

In relation to this I have to say that I disagree that this was a collaborative project. Per was the director of

the project and he invited me to provide a service. To do this I collaborated with Celine but not with Per, although his ideas and his invitation provided my context. This was really a case of a commissioner and a brief, so for me there wasn't collaboration between us as such.

Barnaby Drabble:
So *I Am a Curator* was potentially less a collaborative project and more a project of collaborations?

Per Hüttner:
Yes, maybe.

Barnaby Drabble:
I wanted to talk about what happened beyond *I Am a Curator*, what other things has *Support Structure* supported?

Gavin Wade:
From the beginning one of our goals was that *Support Structure* should become an interface, and we wanted to become more of a general interface than something that would just be exhibition design. We soon set up four other sites around the UK that we would go to as *Support Structure*. We aimed to take the gallery system that we produced for *I Am a Curator* to the other sites and evolve that, letting it develop in relationship to whatever the site was. The next site was the Economist Building; there has been a gallery run there for the past fifteen years or so and I was interested in that site as one that had been adapted for showing art but that wasn't particularly good as a gallery site. In our work there we dealt with that change of function and proposed a further change of function for the site. On the one hand we aimed to deal with the business activities in the building and, on the other, the more general context of Alison and Peter Smithson's architecture. The building is one of the best examples of modernist 1960's architecture in Britain and was meant to resemble a miniature city, a concept that interested us and formed the starting point of the support we offered.

This is just one example, and I would like to briefly mention the others. After the Economist Plaza we went to support a multi-cultural group in Portsmouth, a context entirely outside the art world. They offered us a very precise brief to come up with a new shape for their multi-cultural festival. Portsmouth led to Greenham Common, where the brief was to develop the interpretation of the common, in the light of its recent change of status. It was a public common for a few hundred years and in the 1940's was taken over by the military, during the Second World War. In 1980, or there about, it became an American base and controversially housed nuclear missiles, and only three or four years ago was it given back to the public. We are now exploring a further two sites for *Support Structure* and as such it is an ongoing, evolving project.

Barnaby Drabble:
You mentioned how the initial idea was to take the structure which you had at the Chisenhale Gallery and adapt that, was that eventually the case?

Gavin Wade:
Yes, but only partially. In the Economist Building we used all parts of the physical structure for *I Am a Curator*, but adapted it. We took some parts away but the main frame of the structure was still there, split into two and converted it into two office units instead. The structure hosted Celine and myself as we were in residency there throughout the duration of the project. In Portsmouth the only physical element we used was Unit E, which became the multi-cultural archive. This we left with the multi-cultural group as some kind of legacy. That triggered an idea that has become a part of the *Support Structure* concept: to leave parts at different sites. That is also kind of what has happened at Greenham; although we haven't used any of the actual elements from the Chisenhale we have produced a new, much larger space there, including a bill-board structure, which we originally imagined for *I Am a Curator*.

Barnaby Drabble:
I wanted to ask you about this definition of support, which is in the title of your project. In respect to an active term like intervention, how passive is your definition of support here?

Gavin Wade:
I don't imagine that it is passive, but I think it could be. The support could be quite understated and hidden, something you are actually not even aware of it. *Support Structure* at the Chisenhale was a huge thing, but somehow it was taken for granted. It is interesting that at the same time as being taken for granted it could actually program you to do certain things. That for me is then an underlying concern for a curator, you need to imagine that there are some programmable aspects of what you can do, but you don't know what they all are. You set up a system to interrogate this.

Barnaby Drabble:
Both *Support Structure* and *I Am a Curator* have been described in terms of their 'playfulness'. I'm interested in the possibilities of understanding the exhibition as a game and the idea of the viewer as player, but also concerned with whether these strategies lead us towards prescriptive interactivity and a lack of seriousness. Do you see a conflict there or do you think that these ideas can co-exist?

Gavin Wade:
Well I don't think the exhibition and the things that I have talked about are a game as such, but I think they are resolutely 'play'. The big difference is that with a game there is one goal, there is one outcome and one way of winning, and with open play, there are structures and rules and systems but there is no singular goal.

Per Hüttner:
I think also that this show was truly interactive because when the curator of the day came in, they were given this resource, and three people working for them the whole day. By 'true interactivity' I mean opposing the 'push button' mentality, which can be seen as pseudo-interactivity, and actually offering people a chance to create something themselves. This is what the exhibition offered; the space was virtually empty when you came in and you really had to interact with it. One of the curators of the day even came in and said, 'we're just going to spend the whole day discussing which work is going to be in the show'. The day was spent in a democratic discussion where everyone had to vote. This was a very deliberate creative choice, 'we're not going to show anything'. This shows how *I Am a Curator* raised questions about the idea of the elitism of art, in particular questions having to do with access, democracy and the roles of the artists, the beholder and the curator.

Barnaby Drabble:
Yes, I have a question about that, in both *I Am a Curator* and *Support Structure* you have both made clear your wish to involve 'non-art world people'. Can you

explain your reasons for choosing to involve audiences who have little knowledge of contemporary art in these projects? What, in your eyes, is the difference between art world people and non-art world people?

Gavin Wade:

With *Support Structure,* the impulse is to test an idea. Our idea was, can we take the idea of support and evolve it, not just for the benefit of art, but for the benefit of life. We had to take it out of the art world to do this. The impulse was to see what art could do in other types of situations that I had no experience of. I see no major differences between the art-world audience and others, but there may be differences in motivation of why they want certain things and what they are interested in dealing with. I think there is also an issue relevant to curating here. Predominantly curators work with people that are self-motivated to produce art, but with experiments like *Support Structure*, we approach people with no clear motivation in this direction and ask simply 'How can we support you?' With the emergence of a brief, and our response to that, expectations are reversed and the fact that the outcome might be described as art is often surprising and problematic for those we support.

Per Hüttner:

I think I come from a very different angle when it comes to the non-art world audience because in my artistic-curatorial practice I am dealing with exactly the same issues that I do in my photographic practice. My photographic work is always shot in busy public spaces, and I am putting myself in this situation in order to raise issues about vulner-ability, but also about the role of the artist, about what is staged and what is real. I am interested in different layers of reality, as perceived by different kinds of people. This goes also for *I Am a Curator*, where working with different members of the public can be seen as a learning process, as much for me as for them. Most of my time in art school was spent collaborating with scientists, particularly people involved in medical research. My initial aim was to prove that art could be as precise and exact as science. After a few years I realised that it was the other way around, that science is exactly as haphazard as art. It is just that the rules that apply are viewed differently and inscribed in different systems of evaluation. What I learnt from this experience was the value of appropriating parts of the methodology of science, and I think that I use that a lot in my work. I want to find stuff out; my works are steps in this research, experiments along the way.

Barnaby Drabble:

The scale and complexity of both projects suggest that they are labour intensive, involve long timescales and as a result require relatively large budgets. What do these considerations suggest for the planning of future projects of this kind? Is this intensity manageable within current structures for supporting art practice?

Gavin Wade:

To my mind, there just isn't enough out there to sustain a huge number of practitioners working in this way. Its clear to me that with *Support Structure*, we actually needed double the budget that we had and I needed to give myself double the amount of time that I had. This makes you question how important the project is, what the outcomes are, are they worth the time and money invested in them. I think that is probably what I am dealing with now. I am trying to work out if other methods might have been more productive in dealing with say the multi-cultural issue, or the issue of public ownership of land.

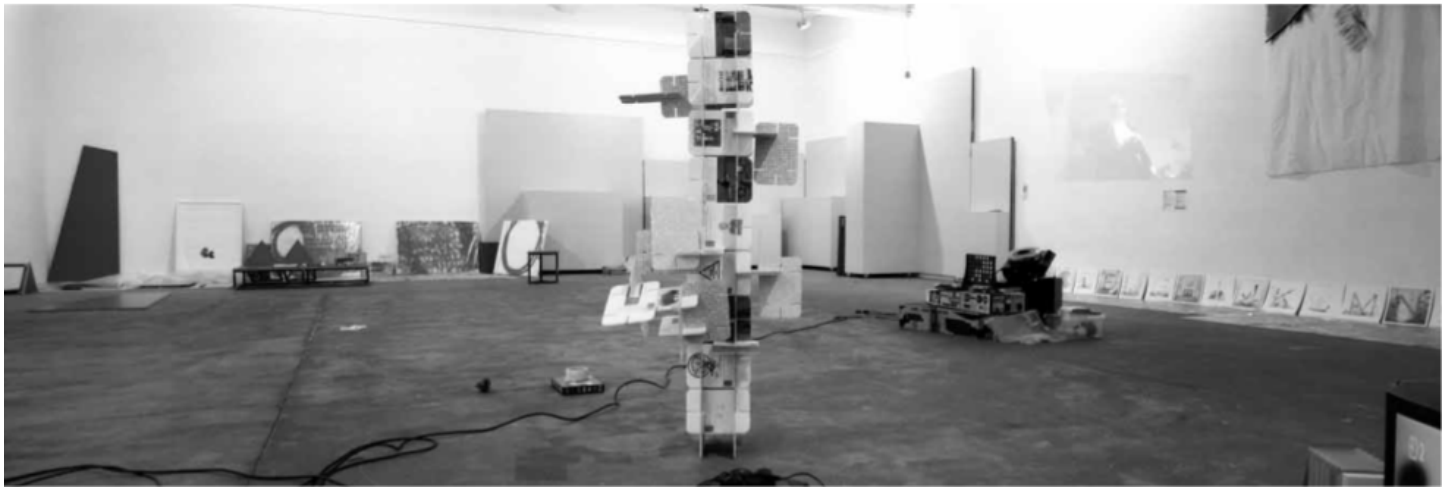
Per Hüttner:

Well, all my work is about pain, and there is a level of masochism involved in the way that I approach my projects. I think you need to make these labour intensive, crazy, insane, projects in order to find out what it is that you want and need to do as an artist. Once you have arrived at this, it is not an end point, but a starting point, maybe then, and only then you can start to be more selective.

Gavin Wade:

I guess I agree. Each phase of *Support Structure* has been a big investment, primarily because each phase raises very new challenges, but by the end of each stage we have developed a set of tools, either as concepts or physical products. Now we have been commissioned to do a new phase, and the brief that we received for that was quite similar to a combination of some of the other briefs from previous phases and as a result we are able to deal with it very efficiently. So suddenly what we have been doing becomes clear: we have been setting up, making priming tools and developing prototypes. We have been learning to support. What also becomes clear is how, as this project progresses, it strays further from art; I think we are producing architecture now, and for the last phase we were thinking of a retail site in Birmingham, so we would end up with a clear link to this idea of designing a product. I am quite happy with this evolution; in fact I am fascinated by it. What we might be able to do at some stage is present *Support Structure* like an autonomous toolbox. It's like: 'Here is our kit – give us something to do. We are going to support you wherever.'

The interview was conducted in Copenhagen, November 2004.



Title of exhibition: *I am a Curator*
Place: Chisenhale Gallery, 64 Chisenhale Rd, London.
Date: 5 November to 14 December 2003
Artist: Per Hüttner
Display system: Support Structure (Gavin Wade and Celine Condorelli)

WORDS FROM AN EXHIBITION

RUTH NOACK AND ROGER M. BUERGEL

When we were invited to reflect on the possibilities for playing with boundaries, we were in the middle of completing an exhibition. The obvious response was to use the opportunity to give the exhibition's concept a kind of test run. We did so less for reasons of advertising than out of an interest in finding a form in which a methodology of exhibition beyond the dichotomy of theory and practice could be negotiated. At the time we proposed the thesis that our lecture itself was an exhibition. That was not intended as a provocation; rather, it was a serious attempt to give priority to our film examples over the spoken word. The idea was to give the films the status of intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic arguments; to that end, it was important to choose the right medium. We saw our task in organizing the cinematic images as if we were installing an exhibition. The difficulty in writing about this venture afterward is that the images themselves can only be represented, and they lose their complexity thereby. Their meaning is of necessity reduced to the meaning we give to them; other levels of meaning are closed off to readers. That makes our text more flat; we lack not only the support but also the competition of meanings and sensualities that made our play with boundaries possible. There is no use crying over what was said back then, but the problem remains: how can thinking about an exhibition be brought into this new form. Not only the excitement but also opportunity for an opening, and potentially even the derailment or tattering of what had been thought previously, should continue to be possible. For us, it seemed worth experimenting: namely, if the images can occur here only as support for a given line of argument and no longer as something autonomous that can also undercut our arguments, then we will attribute to the theses themselves the status of images. The theses will be organized as pictures in an exhibition: that is to say, in a relationship to one another that is not restricted to epistemological thinking but also develops its own aesthetic effect, or at least does not preclude that possibility. The risk of such a procedure is, primarily, that it might fail: that nothing of interest might happen or that the gesture would not point beyond simple self-mirroring, the fetishising of one's own practices. With a little luck, however, something else comes of it.

The point of departure for our venture is the thesis that it is possible to imagine the exhibition as one of those transitional zones with which the present publication is concerned. An exhibition would thus be a place where the drawing of boundaries could be made visible without this visibility necessarily going hand in hand with a legitimisation of the boundaries. An exhibition would also be a place where things (artworks, discourses, fields) could be assembled in such a way that the joints creak. For example, in an exhibition on the current fate of modernism one might clarify the relationship between political populism and aesthetic hermeticism; or, as was done in our above-mentioned exhibition, inquired about the relationship between the organizational forms of the global justice movement and aesthetic relationality.[1] But we are not happy with the image of a place that makes a given praxis possible a priori. We want to characterize the exhibition itself, not its topology, as a form of action.

Our second thesis is that the exhibition is an action that can be understood as an act of communication. Thus we define the exhibition as a medium or, to borrow from Giorgio Agamben, as a gesture.[2] Our concern in an exhibition is neither with ends in themselves (keyword: *l'art pour l'art*) nor with something completely subordinated to an external meaning (keyword: art as social policy) but rather doing something that opens up possibilities. That may sound idiotically abstract, so we should add immediately that it need not be understood so abstractly. Consequently, at this point in the lecture we showed an excerpt from a film that we wanted to use to express the dynamics of Agamben's conception in more concrete terms.

In *De stilte rond Christine M.* (released in English as *A Question of Silence*; Marleen Gorris, The Netherlands, 1981, 96 min) a court psychiatrist accepts an assignment to assess the mental state of three women. Though they did not know one another, these three women killed a boutique owner, without any apparent motivation. The psychiatrist is unable to get the women to talk. Only when she questions her own position as a liberal assistant of the legal system of the state does she perceive the act's socio-political connections. The murder was the women's reaction to the (not exclusively class-specific) oppression of women. The film gives expression to female anger without idealizing the act itself. It takes on an ethical dimension by refusing to let the solidarity of women be undercut by their differences. The excerpt we selected showed the part of the trial concerned with determining the women's soundness of mind. Contrary to all expectations, the psychiatrist finds the accused to be of sound mind, which triggers a wave of outrage

01
Formen der Organisation, Skuc Galerjia, Ljubljana; Galerie der Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig; Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg, Lüneburg 2002–2003

02
Agamben's typology distinguishes between two types of gestures: those that are ends in themselves, which he characterizes as 'ends without means' or *poiesis*, and those that he labels 'means for ends' or praxis. To these two conventional types he then contrasts a third, radicalized type that he calls 'means as such'. This last type is distinguished by supporting or spreading something. We refer here to the English version of Agamben's essay, which he reworked several times. Thus our translation of the terms into German does not correspond exactly to the terminology in the German-speaking world. See Giorgio Agamben "Notes on Gesture" (1992) in *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000, p. 49–60

from legal scholars. A violent exchange of blows follows; at the height of the melee, the public prosecutor is moved to ask what is then the difference between the murder of a man by three women and the murder of a woman by three men. Seemingly out of nowhere, one of the accused begins to laugh, and gradually that laughter infects nearly all the women in the courtroom. Within the film's diegesis, the laughter provokes the formation of a collective that potentially includes the female viewers as well. As long as the laughing continues, the law is suspended. At various times in history, laughter has been granted the power to subvert authority. The laughter in our example can, of course, be interpreted as such a gesture: a gesture that, as in the tale of the emperor's new clothes, reveals the apparatus of the state to be a performative body whose actions are sustained by arbitrariness. *De stilte rond Christine M.* does not, however, deny that the state performance imbedded within a patriarchal structure has real and not so pleasant effects. The laughter in our cinematic example can, of course, also be interpreted as a gesture in Agamben's sense: a gesture that opens up possibilities, namely, the utopia of abolishing patriarchal power relationships. The crucial point with regard to our reflection on exhibitions, however, is that it is a utopia conveyed through the media. The film does not pretend to be revolution; rather, it stages the revolution; it is integrated into the medium.[3]

And here we come back to the abstraction of the concept of the gesture, and hence to our third thesis: the mediality or mediated nature of the political act is not politically relevant where a narrative is presented as the possibility of a better world, in a kind of parallel universe,[4] but rather where reality and representation are combined. The crux of the parallel universes of the media industry, one that affects Hollywood films just as much as daily newspapers, is precisely that they fit together all too easily; causing us to forget that something is being mediated. On the one hand, we lose any awareness of the process of mediation and consequently any need for better images and more complex forms of mediation. On the other hand, we give into the illusion all the more easily that we ourselves are somehow free of mediation, beyond all mediality.[5] And that is catastrophic, both politically and personally.[6] But neither should mediality per se be fetishized. Politics should not be limited to creating the space for political responsibility. Nor do we appreciate the narcissism of an art that resorts to depicting the media character of subjectivity. Consequently, an exhibition that is content to open up a space of action does not go far enough. For it is not a matter of indifference how this space is negotiated and what happens in it. One of the things we like about Marleen Gorris's film is that it has a concrete political project: the desire to call forth a feminist audience that is constituted by solidarity not as a uniform community. Calling forth an audience, a phrase we deliberate chose for its double meaning of invocating and producing, is one of the most important and most difficult tasks of an exhibition. That brings us to our fourth thesis. Several years ago we remarked: "The challenge, then, does not merely consist of developing other visions. It also involves creating new kinds of imagination, not just in order to produce different images, but also to keep working on their underlying basic structures."[7] Nothing of that has changed; in the course of our practical work on exhibitions, however, the category of the public has simply become more important. The point is no longer merely to negotiate the specific set of questions at the site of visual production and then to use the exhibition to convey the results. Only with the exhibition is it determined what results are achieved. This idea necessitated changing how we define our concept of action. Earlier we put forward the thesis that the exhibition is an action that communicates something. That thesis is not wrong, but it leads one to believe that this process of communication is unambiguous and linear, namely, that certain content is communicated to a public by means of artworks, by means of passing through the exhibition. The public is too passive in that view. In fact, there are at least two possibilities open to the audience: they can be interested in the exhibition and its object or they can take a stand against the interpellation. And there is yet another objection: what happens when our conception of the process of communication is more relentless, when we undermine its influences? Can we, for example, truly speak of an audience that exists before the exhibition? And do the works have meaning apart from their audience? Briefly, both questions have to be answered in the affirmative. But that isn't all. For us, it only becomes interesting when the exhibition manages to do this in a way that 'not just' powerful. It has to create space for the propositions and influences that preceded the moment of reception as well as for the possibility not just to reflect and change them but also redefine them in a radically new way.[8] It is not so much about disbanding links based on identity than about an attempt to relate lifestyles, everyday practices, and subjectivities in productive ways.

For an exhibition to act in our sense it has to be capable of attracting and seducing a public. Hence we work with all available means for presenting and teaching. But that isn't enough. If an exhibition wants to do more than recognize existing conditions, that is to say, wants to become part of a political reality without being swallowed up by it, then it has to walk the line between social involvement and aesthetic autonomy. Hence we need artworks that can do both: establish relationships and create distance. It cannot be emphasized enough that the aesthetic autonomy does not like in the things themselves but

03 Agamben makes the astonishing assertion that the cinematic medium itself is borne by gesture and thus simply does not belong to the realm of aesthetics but rather to realms of ethics and politics. Without wishing to get into greater detail, it should be said that Agamben's ideas are indebted to Gilles Deleuze's writings on cinema. Anja Streiter discusses "Notes on Gesture" from the perspective of film studies in "Doch das Paradies ist verriegelt . . ." in Hemma Schmutz and Tanja Widmann (eds.) *Dass die Körper sprechen, auch das wissen wir seit langem / That Bodies Speak Has Been Known for a Long Time*, exhibition catalogue Generali Foundation, Vienna; Cologne: König 2004, p. 49–64

04 This is by no means intended to deny the necessity of alternative narratives and their correlate, the imagination, for ethics or politics.

05 For Agamben, being constructed as a medium does not simply mean that the shaping of one's own subject is dependent on the media but also that we are human in a very different place than we used to thinking. If we are human-beings-in-the-medium, then it is not simply the image we have of ourselves that is mediated by the media but in being human we find ourselves fundamentally and constantly 'in mediation'.

06 The socio-political problematic of a construction of the subject that denies its own mediation has been exhaustively discussed in feminist theory of the past thirty years. In the context of playing with boundaries, see the philosophical sketch of an alternative to (feminist) identity politics in Antke Engel *Wider die Eindeutigkeit: Sexualität und Geschlecht im Fokus queerer Politik der Repräsentation*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus 2002

07 Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack *Dinge, die wir nicht verstehen / Things We Don't Understand* exhibition catalogue Generali Foundation, Vienna; Dresden: Verlag der Kunst 1999, p. 89

08 The theoretical backdrop provided by Michel Foucault's definition of government as a form of the direct exercise of power or as an activity that structures other activities (the field of action of others, see Michel Foucault "The Subject and Power" in Michel Foucault *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd edition, Chicago 1983, p. 221) is far better suited here than Agamben's concept of action. Hence we took up this idea for our next exhibition *Government*, Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg; MACBA, Barcelona; Secession, Vienna; Witte de With, Rotterdam 2003–2005

is an effect of perception. Those who perceive them in a given case still have something to say. And so we have come to our final thesis. In order for an exhibition to be able to change the world, it has to make itself radically permeable. Otherwise it isn't possible for something to enter it and then exit it having changed, be that an audience, an idea, or an action. But this radicalness holds many dangers. One horror surely lies in the idea that that which one person perceives as radical seems unreal, unimportant, and imprecise to someone else. Still worse is when only the violence of the propositions is evident, rather than opening doors. Ultimately, the difficult thing about permeability is still that it implies at least two openings. And that means that there has to be a praxis of permeability that goes beyond the idea of permeability and beyond permeable form. For such an action, for such an exhibition, there have to be people who demand permeability of themselves.

Translated from the German by Steven Lindberg

FALSE ECONOMIES – TIME TO TAKE STOCK

REBECCA GORDON NESBITT

Defined as the art of criticising[1], critique is no black and white issue, coming as it does in many shades of grey. This text explores the implications of turning the art of criticising into an art form in itself. In 1977, Adorno wrote that "it is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads".[2] The arsenal aimed at humanity has never been more menacing and the need for critique, resistance and dissent never greater. Some artists have responded to this threat by launching a critique of society through their form and subject matter. Others have not. Critique is incited by inequality. At a macro level, the root causes of inequality: 'free' trade, third world debt, the profit motive, are economic. So, too, at the micro level and, while the art world is not a closed system, protected from the economic forces that operate in broader society, it may be considered as a microcosm in which to study those forces. As art cannot be dissociated from the conditions of its production and distribution, what happens when critique intersects with institutions, which embrace values that form the basis of that critique, must also be examined.

CRITICAL INTENT

In evaluating the potency of critique within art, it is first necessary to consider its intentions; fundamentally whether art seeks to effect change. At one end of the spectrum, critique has been employed by artists as a means to raise awareness of issues, as part of the continuum that sought to use culture in preparing the subjective conditions for revolution when it was clear that this was one of the failings in the 1920s (in the words of Sture Johannesson, 'Revolution Means Revolutionary Consciousness')[3]. In terms of subject matter, where an earlier generation largely engaged in a critique of art and its mechanisms[4], the way has been paved for effective critique to move beyond self-referentiality, as identified by Peter Weibel in his 1994 Kontextkunst (context art) project, suggestive of a proactive attitude towards change:

"It is no longer purely about critiquing the art system, but about critiquing reality and analysing and creating social processes. In the '90s, non-art contexts are being increasingly drawn into the art discourse. Artists are becoming autonomous agents of social processes, partisans of the real. The interaction between artists and social situations, between art and non-art contexts has lead to a new art form, where both are folded together: Context art. The aim of this social construction of art is to take part in the social construction of reality."[5]

Ten years on, approaches to critique by individual artists range from a re-evaluation of ideology, such as that in the work of Colin Darke (Derry) and Pavel Büchler (Manchester), both of whom undertake polemical writing in parallel with their practice, to the leading by example of Scandinavian collective N55.[6] Explicit critique of the consciousness-raising kind, has been variously dismissed as social work that has no business in the art world and as that 'equipped with a clearly visible label saying 'critical art' [in which] there is more of a danger of the work failing'.[7] In other words, 'using the label 'didactic' conceals the fear that something might truly be learned from art, in the sense that it might be a useful source of information'.[8] This raises questions about who stands to gain by maintaining the status quo that actively critical artwork seeks to disrupt, about which more later.

At the other end of the spectrum, critique may be considered as little more than a carping from the sidelines, a way to ease social conscience and an ultimately flaccid endeavour. In recent years, against a backdrop of anti-capitalist protest, the two dominant artistic trends legitimised by the establishment in Western Europe: 'Relational Aesthetics' and 'New Formalism', have been predicated on an ambivalence towards change. Paris-based curator Nicolas Bourriaud's inconsistent thesis Relational Aesthetics identified a loose grouping of artists reacting to the dehumanising and reifying tendency of advanced capitalism, through technology and the excessive mediation of human experience, and sought to revive social relations. From the outset, Relational Aesthetics eschewed utopianism and direct criticism:

Social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies, any stance that is 'directly' critical of society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that is nowadays impossible not to say

01 According to the *Collins English Dictionary*, critique is defined as: 1. a critical essay or commentary 2. the act or art of criticising

02 Theodor Adorno "Commitment" in *Aesthetics and Politics*, London: New Left Books 1977, p. 180

03 See Sture Johannesson *Revolution Means Revolutionary Consciousness* 1968 (otherwise known as 'the hash girl poster'). Thanks to Will Bradley for making this connection.

04 See Andrea Fraser "What's intangible, transitory, immediate, participatory and rendered in the public sphere? Part II: A Critique of Artistic Autonomy" in *October* 80 Spring 1997

05 Peter Weibel *Kontextkunst – Kunst der 90er Jahre*, Cologne: DuMont Verlag 1994, p. 57, translated by Barnaby Drabble

06 Information available online: www.n55.dk with particular reference to the *SHOP* project which operates at the level of both societal and institutional critique.

07 Maria Lind: "Notes on Art, Its Institutions and their Presumed Criticality" in *Spin Cycle*, Bristol: Spike Island 2004, p. 36

08 Isabelle Graw "Field Work" in *Flash Art*, November/December 1990, p. 137

regressive.[9] Taking the baton from artists working with site-specificity, those collectively described by Bourriaud slotted neatly into existing reality to set up situations claimed as 'disconcerting' and thereby subversive. Working nomadically in local situations, the artists were essentially described as operating according to the principles of Foucault's local intellectual, subsequently discredited from an orthodox Marxian perspective as someone who "speaks for those who already have their material needs met that can afford to see politics in terms of what is possible within the existing institutions of capitalism and already have the power to project that interest as universal."[10] Perhaps the most interesting assertion within the flawed concept of Relational Aesthetics is that 'art represents a social interstice'[11] in the context used by Marx to describe zones between and beyond capitalism. However, Bourriaud simultaneously refutes any attempt by the art that he identifies to operate outside capitalism: As a human activity based on commerce, art is at once the object and the subject of an ethic. And this all the more so because, unlike other activities, its sole function is to be exposed to this commerce.[12] Indeed, all the Relational artists have commercial representation and some have made artwork about their relationships to dealers. But, the increasingly elusive potential of the interstice is interesting enough to warrant later study. Across the Channel, Britain responded with the dominant trope of New Formalism, exemplified by the Early One Morning exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery and championed by JJ Charlesworth in London and Neil Mulholland in Edinburgh.[13] As the name suggests, this is market-friendly formalism at its least threatening, whose only claim to critique resides in feint parody, which prompted (then Transmission Gallery committee member) Nick Evans to ask "Why is it that whilst the world outside spirals in ever tighter circles of terror and repression, artists retreat further into a hermetic world of abstraction, formalism, deferred meanings and latent spiritualism?"[14]

PUBLIC SPACES, PRIVATE INITIATIVES

A word about inequality before considering the precise nature of the relationship between artistic critique and institutions. In Scotland, the Arts Council invests the majority of its visual art funding (more than 93% of voted funds) in an infrastructure of galleries and museums with a tiny percentage of the visual art budget going directly to the research and development of artistic practice or to the grassroots organisations that do the most to support this practice. The rationale behind this is that institutions indirectly support artists. However, a recent study, commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council (conducted, as has become customary, by private consultants, employees of public funding bodies presumably lacking the objectivity or expertise), showed that 82% of visual artists in Scotland earn less than £5,000 per year from their practice, with 28% earning nothing whatsoever.[15] This is the status quo, which those in positions of power are happy to maintain. Protectionism is rife within Scottish institutions, with funding and careers at stake. Institutional figures publicly advocate better conditions for artists and the involvement of artists in decision-making processes while any actual attempts at transparency and change are privately vilified. In order to tackle broader social ills, surely we must first address the imbalances on our own doorstep. Otherwise, there is a very real danger of critique acting as empty rhetoric. Established in 2001 along traditional trade union lines, the Scottish Artists' Union[16] aims to address inequalities of income, following similar attempts by the Artists' Union[17] in London (1972-1983) and the Art Workers' Coalition[18] in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, the latter of which tended towards attempts to regulate the art market, leading to the Artists' Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement in 1969 and providing the backdrop to Institutional Critique. Current realities would suggest, however, that artists are barely more empowered than when they first began unionising.

The Euro-wide realisation that artists are being exploited as flexible knowledge- or brain-workers[19] has led to claims of 'flexploitation' and demands for 'flexicurity' and prompted a consideration of (admittedly relatively privileged) artists as precarious workers, with precarity defined in general as the existential state that afflicts us all and, more specifically the condition of not being able to control or predict one's working life and conditions.[20] Exploitation of a flexible labour market is a recurring theme in any consideration of inequality. In most European countries, the public institutions of art are funded, directly or indirectly (through supposedly 'arms length' funding bodies such as Arts Councils), by the state, itself tarnished with the stigma of neo-imperialism in the West and of totalitarianism in the East. In the UK, arts funding policy complements central governmental aims by instrumentalising art in ways which dovetail with the corporate world. Since 1997 under New Labour, this has seen public funds increasingly ring-fenced for priorities like social inclusion which is "premised on the top-down 'democratisation' of culture, a process aimed at engaging members of 'excluded' groups in historically privileged cultural arenas. Such a policy neither reforms the existing institutional framework of culture, nor reverses a process of damaging privatisation. Instead, it attempts to make the arts more accessible in order to

09 Nicolas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics*, Paris: Les Presses du Réel 1998, Eng. trans. 2002, p. 31

10 Stephen Tumino "Pierre Bourdieu as New Global Intellectual for Capital" in *The Red Critique*, September/October 2002. Information available online: www.redcritique.org

11 Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 16

12 Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 18

13 *Early One Morning* was at the Whitechapel Gallery, London 6 July until 8 August 2002. Information available online www.whitechapel.org. JJ Charlesworth "Not Neo but New" in *Art Monthly*, no. 259, September 2002. Neil Mulholland "Leaving Glasvegas" in *Matters*, Summer 2003, issue 17, p. 7-10

14 Nick Evans "Tired of the Soup du Jour? Some Problems with 'New Formalism'" in Variant Volume 2, Number 16, Winter 2002, p. 37

15 Bonnar Keenlyside, *Making Their Mark: An Audit of Visual Artists in Scotland*, available online: www.scottisharts.org.uk

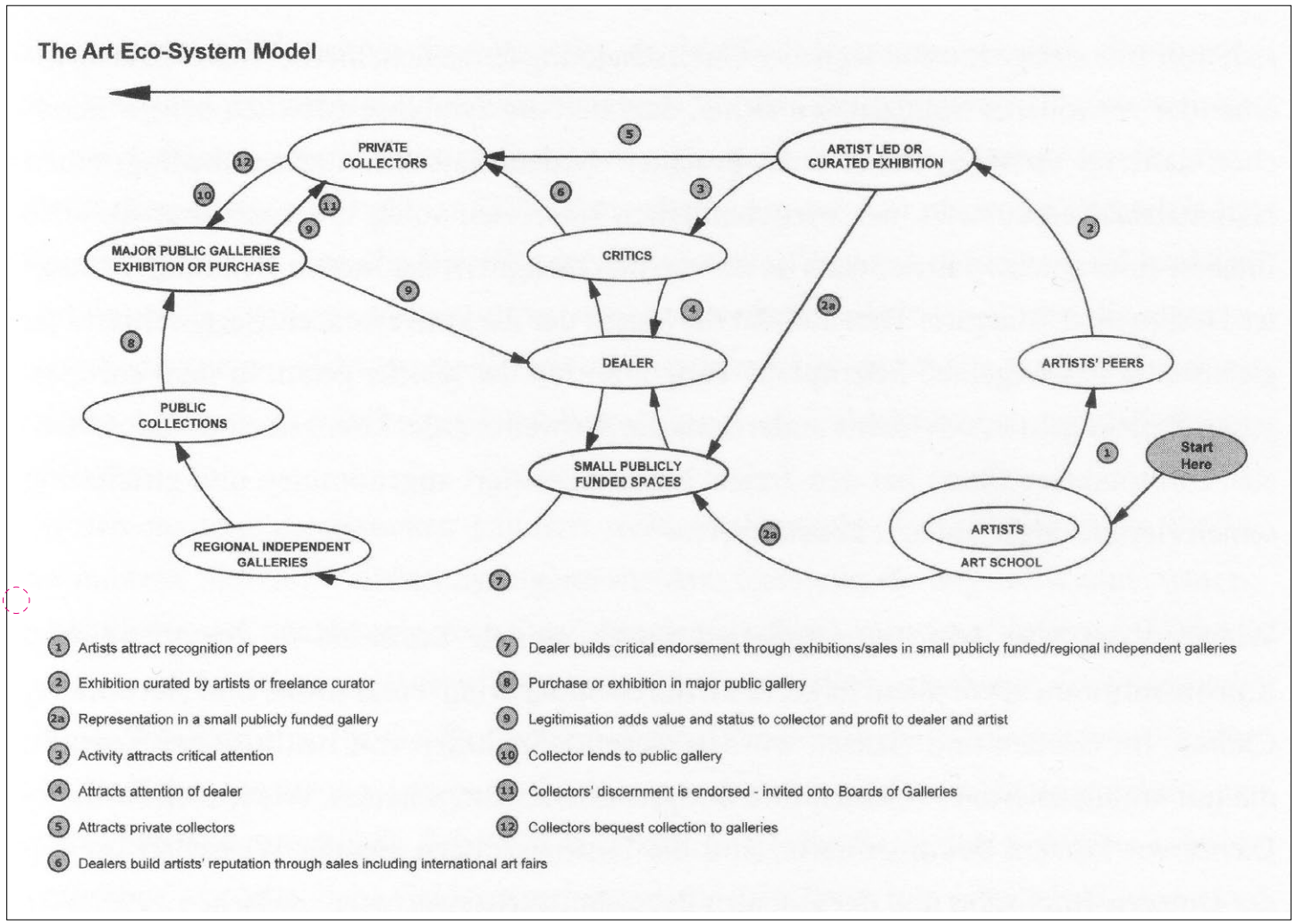
16 Information available online: www.sau.org.uk

17 Information available online: www.art-science.com/Avis/au/au1.html

18 For a consideration of the relationship between the Art Workers' Coalition and Institutional Critique see Fraser "What's intangible, transitory, immediate, participatory and rendered in the public sphere?"

19 See, for example, the panel *Precarious Producers* at the Klartext conference in Berlin 14 until 16 January 2005. Information available online: www.klartext-konferenz.net

20 See *Greenpepper* magazine Precarity issue. Information available online: www.greenpeppermagazine.org. Thanks to *Flaxman Lodge* and Jakob Jakobsen/UKK for compiling source material in the area of unions and precarity.



adapt its target audiences to an increasingly deregulated labour market."[21] Not only does social inclusion policy use culture to encourage previously disenfranchised workers to play a productive role in the economy, it also aims to project a veneer of job satisfaction from within the sector, with 'empowered' arts workers finding self esteem through their poorly paid work. The rhetoric of social inclusion is a palliative that does nothing to address the inequalities of society. Instead, in embracing the arts for their own ends, government ministers fail to acknowledge the critical potential of art.[22]

Where once it might have been possible to speak of a division between public and private interests, within the art microcosm as elsewhere, there has been a steady erosion of any semblance of distinction, with a mesh of interweaving solidarities ensuring that there is an ongoing symbiosis between the two realms. It is important to note that this does not entail a nation state entirely subordinate to corporate interests; rather "The illusion of a weakened state is the smokescreen thrown up by the designers of the 'new order'. Margaret Thatcher concentrated executive power while claiming the opposite; Tony Blair has done the same. The European project is all about extending the frontiers of a 'superstate'. Totalitarian China has embraced the 'free' market while consolidating its vast state apparatus."[23] Throughout the 1990s, multinational corporations intervened into public arts institutions, primarily in London, through sponsorship programmes and networking clubs.[24] This move was, by and large, embraced by institutions whose ambitions had exceeded their budgets. However, as Anthony Davies recently documented, corporate funding has been receding in the wake of the dot com implosion and global recession, with business investment in the arts falling from £134 million to £99 million between 1999/01 and 2001/02 and new initiatives will need to be found to fill the shortfall.[25] Rather than countering the trend for direct corporate intervention into the arts and publicly-funded attempts to fuel the private labour market, by lobbying for recognition of the critical value of art to a free and fair society in order to safeguard it through public funding, Arts Council England has responded by commissioning another report from private consultants called Taste Buds: how to cultivate the art market. This document unequivocally places the flourishing private market at the centre of the art system and examines how it could be better exploited, identifying a further 6.1 million potential collectors of contemporary art. In a final assimilation of public into private, the report identifies "subscription […] the process by which art is filtered and legitimised"

21 Cultural Policy Collective *Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards Cultural Democracy* 2004. Information available online: www.culturaldemocracy.net

22 In the UK, see Tessa Jowell *Government and the Value of Culture*, May 2004. Response by David Edgar "Where's the Challenge?" in *The Guardian*, 22 May 2004 which states: "...Jowell edges uncomfortably close to a new social mission for the arts ... What this leaves out – if not denies – is art's provocative role. Through much of the past 50 years, art has been properly concerned not to cement national identity but to question it. In that, it continued the great modernist project of 'making strange', of disrupting rather than confirming how we see the world and our place in it..."

23 John Pilger "The Great Game" in *New Rulers of the World*, London: Verso 2002, p. 119

24 This was well documented by Anthony Davies and Simon Ford in their trilogy of texts "Art Capital", "Art Futures" and "Culture Clubs", available online: www.infopool.org.uk and by Chin Tao-wu in her book *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s*, London: Verso 2002

25 Anthony Davies "Basic Instinct: Trauma and Retrenchment 2000-2004" in *Mute*, issue 29, Winter 2004. Figures are taken from a survey by Arts & Business, information available online: www.aandb.org.uk.

whereby "Networks of art world professionals, including academics, curators, dealers, critics, artists and buyers, provide advocacy and endorsement for an artist's work through exhibitions, critical appraisal and private and public purchases. The value of an artist's work increases in direct proportion to the subscription it attracts and sustains."[26] The report places "special emphasis on the sales of 'cutting edge' contemporary work, which is critically engaged", failing to take proper account of the intention of such art to remain outside the private market.

A diagram was produced to demonstrate exactly how this process works, with all activities in what was traditionally regarded as the public sphere, from art school and artist-led activity to public gallery, rendered subordinate to the market. This vindicates the neo-conservative rant of Dave Hickey in the US who has long claimed that the artworld is founded on the market, that non-object based art emerged simply because the gallery walls were full and that public institutions exist to absorb the fallout from the private market.[27] Combined with the fact that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has just frozen Arts Council England funding (which essentially means a £30 million shortfall over the next few years)[28] that the Welsh Arts Council has been scrapped in favour of centralised Welsh Assembly control[29] and that the Scottish Executive is undergoing a major review of its cultural provision that is likely to see the replacement of the Arts Council with more centralised control[30], it could be assumed that, by potentially finding a private home for even the most contentious artwork, Arts Council England is pre-emptively exempting itself from support. In Scotland, this move has been paralleled by funding being earmarked for art fairs, a 'collecting initiative' (which has so far seen the production of the 'How to Buy Art' leaflet to engender a new art-buying public)[31] and ongoing funding for Glasgow's internationally successful commercial gallery The Modern Institute.[32] In 2004, Glasgow Art Fair included stands by many grassroots organisations.[33] Lack of funding for travel means that attendance at art fairs is advocated by public funders for those artist-led initiatives wishing to broaden their networks and has been cited as the reason for Transmission taking part in the Frieze Art Fair, something that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that the content of artist-run spaces increasingly parallels that of commercial galleries, providing scant alternative to New Formalism. With 'professionalism' increasingly replacing criticality in art schools, the only viable option that confronts most emerging artists, in many cases before they have even graduated, is to tailor their work to the art market. An interesting example in this regard is that of the Israeli company ArtLink[34], established by Tal Danai in 1997, to whom (if the pathos of the website is to be believed) a vision came in a dream that he could help starving art students by selling their work. Teaming up with Sotheby's in 1998, Danai has signed agreements with hundreds of artists around the world while they are still in education giving ArtLink exclusive rights to sell piece(s) of their work within a twelve month period. Under the assumption that their work is to be auctioned after having been included in an exhibition and promoted accordingly, art students with negligible experience of the art market and no access to advice are asked to state a minimum price (easily mistaken for the starting price at auction) for which their work is to be sold. But, as the contract states, "ArtLink shall have the right not to present all of the works in the auctions, and to offer any of them for sale outside the auction…"[35] Speaking anonymously, one of the artists who signed a contract with ArtLink discovered that their work, a video, was not screened in advance of the auction in which it was sold to an employee of ArtLink for a fraction of its current market value.

These are the problematics of the existing art system that face artists undertaking critique. If they are to maintain an autonomous practice artists are left with little choice besides total withdrawal and a refusal to engage with the mechanisms of the institution and market through their individual and collective activity. While the role of artists arguably remains to ask questions rather than provide answers, multifarious attempts have been made by artists to 'spotlight alternatives' through self-organised activity as a way to bypass the institution. The Cube microplex in Bristol is an interesting example of non-hierarchical voluntary labour, with more than a hundred people involved in producing a lively programme of events (sometimes only tangentially related to film) in an old cinema space, relying on ticket sales for running costs and programming.[36]

CRITIQUE OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CRITIQUE

The situation outlined here is accepted as the norm to such an extent that even the most self-professedly sympathetic curators refuse to see beyond it. Until now, solace has been taken, by curators and commentators alike, in speculative notions like that of Pierre Bourdieu's collective global intellectual[37], whereby local actors undertake their work as part of a global initiative, the danger here being that of being an alibi to capitalism whereby "Bourdieu makes the intellectual into a symbolic category whose knowledges, her cultural capital, make her an 'elite' that dominates over others whose knowledges have less status in the market and who can only unite with them therefore by de-privileging

26 Morris Hargreaves McIntyre *Taste Buds: How to cultivate the art market*, London: Arts Council England, October 2004, p. 3. Available online: www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications.

27 See Dave Hickey "The Birth of the Big, Beautiful Art Market" in *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy*, Los Angeles: Art Issues Press 1997, p. 65 "In the early seventies, however, as these 'new' practices began to lose steam in the natural course of things … they were adopted by a whole new set of venues, by museums, kunsthalles, and alternative spaces across the country, first as trendy, economical exhibitions fodder for the provinces, and then as 'official, non-commercial, anti-art' — as part of a puritanical, haut bourgeois, institutional reaction to the increasing 'aesthetification' of American commerce in general." For a critique of 'Hickey's analysis of contemporary art [that] hinges on a mythic image of the market system which transforms the greed that drives the capitalist accumulation into desire; a natural and even emancipatory component of human subjectivity' see Grant Kester "The world he has lost: Dave Hickey's beauty treatment" in *Variant*, Volume 2, number 18, Autumn 2003, p. 11-12

28 Charlotte Higgins & Maev Kennedy "Arts funding freeze sparks fury" in *The Guardian*, Tuesday December 14, 2004.

29 Magnus Linklater "We all get singed when a quango burns" in *The Times*, December 15, 2004.

30 Information available online: www.culturalcommission.org.uk

31 £10,000 p.a. and £25,000 p.a. respectively over the next three years (2005-2008). Information available online: www.scottisharts.org.uk for 2004-2006 budgets and the "How to Buy Art" leaflet.

32 Currently £50,000 p.a. rising steadily to £51,500 in 2006, which represents 1.3% of the total visual arts budget (£3,975,935 in 2006).

33 Glasgow Art Fair (15 until 18 April 2004) included Collective Gallery, The Embassy, EmergeD, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Lapland, Limousine Bull, Market Gallery, Switchspace and Volume.

34 Information available online: www.artlink.com

35 ArtLink's Agreement with artists, as seen by the author.

36 See Ben Slater "Cube Culture: Exploding the frames of cinema in Bristol" in *Variant*, Volume 2, number 16, winter 2002, p. 29-30

37 See for example Marius Babias "Subject Production and Political Art Practice" in *Afterall*, no 9, 2004, p. 101

her knowledges and becoming a pragmatic activist."[38] When critique-as-art/art-as-critique crosses the threshold of the institution and relinquishes its autonomy, it accepts the hierarchies inherent in the situation and submits itself to the ideology of the institution. Since the infallible, neutral, objective space of the institution slipped from its pedestal during late Modernism, it has been exposed to scrutiny at all levels. The question remains, given the inequalities that persist, as to why the heirs of Institutional Critique would collaborate with institutions at all.[39] One answer would seem to lie with the role of institutions in legitimising culture and the ultimate need of artists for legitimation that drives this bargain:

"If this phenomenon represents another instance of domestication of vanguard works by the dominant culture, it is not solely because of the self-aggrandising needs of the institution or the profit-driven nature of the market. Artists, no matter how deeply convinced their anti-institutional sentiment or adamant their critique of dominant ideology, are inevitably engaged, self-servingly or with ambivalence, in this process of cultural legitimation."[40]

When critique intersects with institutions, whatever its apparent subject matter, it is rightly assumed to be at least in part a critique of the institution itself and the hegemony to which it belongs. Nowadays, self-conscious institutions have come to nervously expect this and assert their progressive stance by 'collaborating' with artists who will assist them in their self-criticality. As early as 1990, Isabelle Graw identified a trend whereby "the commissioning institution (the museum or gallery) turns to an artist as a person who has the legitimacy to point out the contradictions and irregularities of which they themselves disapprove… Subversion in the service of one's own convictions finds easy transition into subversion for hire; 'criticism turns into spectacle'"[41]

Maria Lind, outgoing director of Kunstverein München, has embraced a form of 'constructive institutional critique'.[42] Prior to her departure from Munich she organised a colloquium on collaborative practice that aimed at welcoming self-organised artists' groups back into the institution by posing questions such as: What can institutional politics learn from independent, self-organised teams? What are the pitfalls curators and artists have to be aware of? How should an institution investigate where exactly collaborative, activist teams would feel at home, and where they could use resources and function best?[43] What this colloquium revealed was that there are as many reasons for artists and artists' groups engaging with the institution, from accessing audiences to negotiating with outside bodies, as there are attitudes towards criticality. Curated critique represents only one path through the minefield of engagement and should be undertaken with due caution and attention to the economy of this exchange. Aside from properly remunerating artists for the development of their work, the institution should ensure that the critical intentions of artists are respected in reaching audiences, to which individual artists and self-organised groups would not normally have access.

CURATING AS CRITIQUE

In addition to enacting resistance through their form, and subject matter, artists have consistently assumed the office of spotlighting alternatives through their self-organised activity and would seem to have exhausted most of the options available, with much being subsumed by the institution. But, since the inequalities that persist in the art system and beyond are not tenable long term, this is no longer the sole responsibility of artists. The time has come for all those involved in the commissioning and mediation of art to play an active part in redressing the balance and there are two proactive ways, which suggest themselves. In the past, institutional curators have not been vociferous enough in overseeing the fair distribution of state funding to artists, in the fear that it would jeopardise their own funding. The first step would be to demand that more money reaches artists, directly and through the voluntary sector, lobbying higher up the funding food chain if necessary. Writing in 1995 about the economic situation in the United States, Jeremy Rifkin, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends, predicted that increased automisation would inevitably decrease the amount of labour available. What little work would remain within the market economy, he asserted, should be spread more evenly throughout the populace, reducing the working week and limiting the potential for overtime. In formulating his thesis, Rifkin makes a nonsense of current UK government attempts to channel more workers into the labour market through policies like social inclusion: "Continued efforts to find non-existent jobs in the formal economy, or jobs that will likely be eliminated by re-engineering and automation a few years down the line, seem equally misdirected."[44] In considering the post-market era, Rifkin turned to the so-called third or voluntary sector, whereby the extra time created by those rendered under- or un-employed by the market sector would be used to build community structures:

"The very idea of broadening one's loyalties and affiliations beyond the narrow confines of the marketplace and the nation state to include the human species and the planet is revolutionary and portends vast changes in the structure of society.

38 Tumino "Pierre Bourdieu as New Global Intellectual for Capital"

39 See Fraser "What's intangible, transitory, immediate, participatory and rendered in the public sphere?" Of the descendents of Institutional Critique she writes: "It is not possible to evaluate the work of […] any of the artists whose work proceeds from theirs without taking into account not only the visible, visual manifestations of their practices, but also their policies; not only of the artistic positions they manifest, but also of the positions they construct for themselves within the network of relations that constitutes the fields of their activities.

40 Miwon Kwon "One Place After Another: Notes on Site-Specificity" in *October*, no. 80, Spring, 1997, p. 98

41 Graw "Field Work" p. 137

42 Lind "Notes on Art, Its Institutions and their Presumed Criticality" p. 33. See also Maria Lind "Learning from Art and Artists" in Gavin Wade (ed.) *Curating in the 21st Century*, Walsall: New Art Gallery & Wolverhampton University 2000

43 See Kunstverein München *Drucksache*, Fall 04 supplement on collaborative practice.

44 Jeremy Rifkin "Empowering the Third Sector" in *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labour Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1995, p. 265

Scottish Artist Union

Recommendations for National Rates of Pay Guidelines for Visual + Applied Artists in Scottland 2004-2006

HOURLY AND SESSIONAL RATES OF PAY

Hourly Rates: 16.25 p/hr minimum
21.00 p/hr minimum with 3years+ experience
26.75 p/hr minimum with 5years+ experience

Sessional Rates: 108 p/day (54 p/1/2 day) minimum
161 p/day (81 p/1/2 day) minimum with 3years+ experience
214 p/day (197 p/1/2 day) minimum with 5years+ experience

ARTIST'S RESIDENCIES

Residency Rates: 16,000 p/annum (pro rata) minimum
27,000 p/annum (pro rata) minimum with 5years+ experience

Acting on behalf of the interests of the entire human and biological community, rather than one's own narrow material self-interest, makes the third sector paradigm a serious threat to the consumption-oriented vision of the still-dominant market economy."[45]

Rifkin calculated that government provision of a 'shadow wage' through tax deductions for the partially employed and a guaranteed income for the unemployed (a move which apparently received unambiguous support in the United States as early as 1967), would work out cheaper for the government than administering community programmes themselves. Similar moves within the voluntary sector of the art world would safeguard its necessary survival. While the introduction of salaried positions into voluntary organisations would inevitably force a significant shift in ethos that some may not be prepared to accept, the right to make a living wage should be extended to individual artists and those working in grassroots organisations.

The second response that concerned parties in the art world can make to the inequalities of the system is more radical and may have broader resonance. Erroneously evoked by Bourriaud, the potential still exists for art to operate in the interstices, not only to spotlight alternative models but also to test, implement and disseminate them. As we have seen, the main factor underlying inequality is an economic one and it is an economic solution that needs to be found. In the light of diminishing and instrumentalised public funding and a massive orientation towards the market, a contingency urgently needs to be developed. A self-sustaining economy that does not rely on the mechanisms of capitalism will be needed to create the conditions for truly autonomous artistic production to thrive. Clearly, much work will need to be done, on both a theoretical and practical level, in close dialogue with economists. A study of useful precedents in other fields has already begun, such as Gardar Eide Einarsson's examination of the hardcore music scene, which shows how production and distribution may be controlled, albeit through sales of work, by its authors.[46] On a practical level, *Total Kunst* in Edinburgh is a multi-media space funded through the revenue of *The Forest*, a vegetarian café.[47] In London, a diverse group has formed around *Flaxman Lodge*, a space established in response to the fact thxat "very few economic models, forms of organisation or address […] have managed to keep pace with the fields they claim to engage and critique. Aiming 'to imagine building environments that might offset the crushing corporatisation of cultural

45 Rifkin "Empowering the Third Sector", p. 247

46 See Gardar Eide Einarsson "Hard Core, self-organization and alternativity" available online: www.societyofcontrol.com. He writes: "Contrary to most of the different experiments in alternativity and self-sustained systems in the contemporary art scene, the hardcore scene has managed to build up and maintain a functioning alternative scene outside of the more traditionally commercial music business, and has remained in control of their own output for a substantial number of years now."

47 Information available online: www.theforest.org.uk

space in London." *Flaxman Lodge* acknowledged the "tension between what could be referred to as its inevitable subject-centredness (courtesy of the lease, funds and space that make it possible), and its objective to build models of collective production, enunciation, sustainability." Following an initial invitation for thirty people to join an internet forum and play a part in the democratic regulation of activities[48], many more people have registered to be involved, which has generated as much of a mental space as a physical one. *Flaxman Lodge* is at the forefront of many of the issues outlined here, for example, the week-long Unionising Workshop that was organised by Jakob Jakobsen and collaborators in June, 2004 looked at historical precedents (including the Artists' Union in England), contemporary examples (including UKK[49]) and examined a proposed Knowledge Workers' Union. Projects such as *Flaxman Lodge* provide a tangible opportunity for events to move from the realm of reactive critique towards proactive engagement and have the potential to move beyond the confines of the art world, with new ethical economic models being developed that may be replicated in other situations. In this way, the art world microcosm becomes more than just a vehicle for passive scrutiny and provides an arena for new ideas and models to be developed which, if successful, might leak through its permeable membrane and into society at large.

This essay was commissioned and written in 2005.

48 In the interest of transparency, the author was one of the initial thirty invitees.

49 In Denmark, in response to the policies and cutbacks of the newly-elected right-wing government, the Union of Young Art Workers (UKK) was established in 2002 with a broader remit to tackle the structure and perception of contemporary art and to give artists a voice in policy-making.

GOING BEYOND DISPLAY – THE MUNICH KUNSTVEREIN YEARS

MARIA LIND IN AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL O'NEILL

Between 2001 and 2004 the Swedish Curator Maria Lind was director of the Kunstverein in Munich. The following interview was conducted by artist and curator Paul O'Neill at the Munich Kunstverein in October 2004.

Paul O'Neill:
How would you describe your current practice?

Maria Lind:
As from early on, I am now very influenced by artistic practice, so many of the ideas and methods I use come from looking at work and talking to artists. I would like to underline that the starting point is the art and artworks themselves. I am also interested in context and how you relate to a specific situation, whether it is institutional, social-political or something else. More than ever it is important for me as curator when I start a project, to have a feeling that I cannot predict what the outcome will be. There has to be an element of exploration, of research, of realising something new. I am also less interested in display as the main modus operandi. I want to go beyond display, and if you look at the programme at Kunstverein Munich, you can see that the pre and the post is often as important, if not more important, than what we traditionally see as the moment of art in an institution; which is the display moment.

Paul O'Neill:
For the project *What If: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design* at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, you invited artist Liam Gillick to participate as a 'filter', through which the artworks would take shape in the design and layout of the exhibition. Having an artist make exhibition installation decisions meant that certain dynamics happened within the design of the show that may not have been possible if the curator did them. How affective was this as a curatorial strategy and is this a model that you have worked with again, even in a modified form?

Maria Lind:
When we did *What If: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design*, Liam was involved at an early stage and the filter role was, as you say, to work with me on the layout of the exhibition, but also to be a partner in a ping-pong game. Some of the ideas that were actually carried through in terms of the method came from our discussions, not only about design but also about preparation for the exhibition. One result of our discussions was that a year before the show opened, nine artists who had dealt with art on the verge of architecture and design came together in Stockholm for a brainstorming weekend. Eventually I selected the artists and the artworks, and Liam signed the installation design. We have recently done something related here at the Kunstverein. It was a project entitled *Totally Motivated: A Socio-cultural Manoeuvre* in 2003 which was not only a collaboration between a curator and artist, but also between a group of curators themselves. There were five of us, people who were or had been assistant curators like Katharina Schlieben, Tessa Praun and Ana Paula Cohen, the curator Søren Grammel and myself. We wanted to do something collectively and we realised that the notion of amateur culture, non-professional art making, was an interesting field and we invited a group of artists. Everybody had an input as to the selection of artists and all the curators and all the artists met prior to the exhibition here at the Kunstverein. We actually asked Michael Beutler to design something over-arching for the big space, and Carla Zaccagnini as well. They ended up doing the floor and the ceiling. Carla Zaccagnini made a huge graphite drawing on paper, covering the whole of the second floor, like a Max Ernst frottage, which left traces not only all over the place in the Kunstverein, but in all our houses as well, as graphite doesn't stick to paper. Michel Beutler made a huge wooden ceiling in his typical do-it-yourself style. So here again, the artists were somehow responsible for the overall design, but in discussion with the curators. I think it is often easier for artists to accept, to be part of other artists' overall designs than if it is the design of the curator and in *Totally motivated* the collaboration between the artists worked well.

Paul O'Neill:
In the last fifteen to twenty years there has been an unprecedented interest in the defining contemporary art curating. How do you think the role of the contemporary art curator has changed during this period and what are the dominant forms of curatorial practice that have developed during this time?

Maria Lind:
I find it a little bit tricky to answer, as I cannot really say so much about how it has developed, but what I can say is that mainstream curating is still dominated by institutional logic. It is not following art and artists and this is a problem. I also think that the market has an astonishingly big influence on curatorial practice. This is something we don't like to talk about but it is definitely there and it often has corrupting influence. If you look at the programme at the Kunstverein a majority of the artists we work with don't show with galleries, they don't sell at all and this is unusual for a contemporary art institution. Not that anybody is collaborating in the sense of sleeping with the enemy, but I think that we should often be a little bit more wary of these things than we are. Mainstream curating is mostly happening in the bigger institutions and it's easy to do. It is a formula that you quickly discover and can imitate. Most of the time it works, but it's not particularly interesting as it rarely develops new ideas and doesn't push anything further. I think it would be great if people could take more risks.

Paul O'Neill:
Although the commercial art market informs curatorial practice, but do you think there has been a development of dominant forms of curating within a curatorial market?

Maria Lind:
There is definitely a market, and the dominant form of curating is the type of mainstream curating that I just mentioned. Then there are value systems and exchange systems which are not directly commercial, but which involve as much value, so to speak. That is obviously to do with which curators get to do such prestigious projects and so on. There are people who are more frequently appearing in those circuits than others and that is also problematic, particularly in the Biennale circuit.

Paul O'Neill:
In her book *The Power of Display*[1] Mary Anne Staniszewski highlights a kind of art historical 'amnesia' towards innovative exhibitionary display practices of the past, in particular the laboratory years from 1920s to the 50s and

the curatorial role-played by people such as Alexander Dorner, Frederick Kiesler, El Lissiztsky, Herbert Bayer, Lilly Reich, Alfred H. Barr etc. Projects that you have you been involved in such as *Totally motivated: A Socio-cultural Manoeuvre* and *Telling Histories: An Archive and Three Case Studies* at the Kunstverein in 2003, appear to have addressed a kind of amnesia. Do you think this amnesia has affected the way we perceive contemporary art curating and how do you think curators could address this repressed history?

Maria Lind:

I think it definitely has effected it, but via negativa. Most of us haven't really been aware of these things and have partly re-invented the wheel again. On the one hand this is sad, on the other good not to know everything because that can inhibit you and create a lot of anxiety. However, I think we need to look more at these older projects. I am curious myself and, as you have said, we have tried to address some of these issues here at the Kunstverein. With *Totally motivated: A Socio-cultural Manoeuvre* it was more a focus on a type of culture that was very present in the seventies and which has now been pushed to the side or brushed under the carpet somehow: the amateur and activist related practice rather than particular exhibitions or projects. *Telling Histories: An Archive and Three Case Studies* on the other hand, looked at three key exhibitions in the history of the Kunstverein, one from the seventies, one from the eighties and one from the nineties, all of them having caused a heated local debate. Søren Grammel, Ana Paula Cohen and myself were interested in investigating what these reactions were and what caused them. We looked at the 1970 exhibition *Poetry must be made by all; Transform the World* which was an entirely documentary exhibition about some of the art movements of the early twentieth century, where art and life were placed side by side. The students at the academy in Munich made an additional part to this show and they had, at that moment, recently rioted against the conservatism of the academy, which at that time still had professors who had been acting Nazis. This exhibition caused such controversy that the Kunstverein was eventually closed. The second exhibition was the 1986 *Dove sta Memoria* by Gerhard Metz, which was discussed because of its use of Nazi iconography. The third was Andrea Fraser's *A Society of Taste*, from 1993, where she used what later has become her brand of institutional critique, namely a Bourdieuesque investigation into the functioning of this particular type of art organisation, and how it interplays with the high bourgeoisie social life of Munich. There was information in the show, but not the way you would normally encounter documentary material in an historical exhibition, namely as photographs on the walls, or as maquettes. There were a limited number of photographs and a fairly short explanatory text on each show and one round-table designed by Liam Gillick per show. Not a whole lot in the first instance. Then we showed all our archival material, in terms of files, all the photo documentation that exists and through this project we actually managed to assemble all the photographs; we had them labelled for the first time. All the catalogues were available that were produced here and all the press clippings. The way the archive was organised was very much influenced by the Brazilian artist Mabe Bethonico's choice. She made a kind of journey through the archive and divided it into collections: exhibition files, catalogues, and photo-documentation and press clippings. She also wrote some shorter texts and excerpted things from interviews she made with our administrator, who has been here for twenty-five years. Some of these texts were then shown on the walls and she also set up a database, which is super useful, whereby any visitor to the show could ask how many times a particular artist has shown at the Kunstverein Munich, how many visitors the Kunstverein had in 1991, what were the exhibitions in 2000 and so on. There was always someone in the exhibition operating the computers, so people could get a printout of all of this. And in addition to this we also did three so-called talk shows — one for each of the exhibitions. We invited people who had been involved in the show at the time and also some younger people who we imagined would have interesting things to say about them. The talk shows were moderated by Søren Grammel and staged in the exhibition space as talk shows on television, filmed by several cameras, with an audience. They were later edited and they are now being sold as videos, as we decided not to make a catalogue.

Paul O'Neill:

At both Kunstverein Munich and Moderna Museet you encouraged a more flexible approach to the institutional framework, where the institution functions as a research centre, production site and a distribution channel. This is something that Charles Esche also tried at the Rooseum in Malmo with the museum operating as he puts it 'part community centre, part laboratory and part academy.' Are these isolated cases or are there new institutional models evolving and how do you see the primary function of the contemporary art institution?

Maria Lind:

There are definitely new models evolving and developing, but they have a hard time. I am not entirely optimistic in terms of the possibility for survival. One of the most important things today for curatorial practice is duration - which things can go on for quite a while? But to run these kinds of programmes like Charles Esche has at Rooseum or that we have done here, or what Catherine David has done at Witte de With in Rotterdam, has proven to be difficult in all three places. None of us are continuing and that's not a coincidence. There are other people elsewhere who are trying, but these are perhaps the clearest examples. I hope that they can survive, but it's hard because the audience are not prepared and it's, for instance, quite difficult to get press coverage on these types of events, because the press is still needing and expecting maximum contact surface, meaning they more or less only write about big things which many people can see. So if it is a one-evening event or a series of events where a critic has to come back several times, it is very unlikely you will get coverage.

Paul O'Neill:

In some ways this comes back to the question of amnesia.

Maria Lind:

Yes, this practice is running much bigger risks of becoming forgotten, absolutely. I believe art criticism today doesn't do its job, so to speak, in terms of developing formats or ways of writing that fit this kind of practice. We are not doing this because we think that this kind of practice is so new and experimental. It is a response to the art and if we are not responding to the art, then what's the point? Much more interesting work is being done today in terms of curatorial practice than in terms of writing about art, but I hope that the art writing will catch up somehow as writing offers a particular, often more precise, way of developing ideas. It probably won't happen within the framework of the established art magazines.

Paul O'Neill:

In her essay *Harnessing the Means of Production*[2], Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt critiques this new institutionalism

for what she believes is as a co-option of process-led art practice into the curatorial framework of the institution. Do you think this is an unfair critical analysis?

Maria Lind:

When she talks about the co-option of process-led art practice she is mainly criticising institutions like Tate Modern and the ICA, London. She is also criticising Rooseum and the Kunstverein, but less so than the others. Unlike her, I don't think the institution itself, per se, is suspicious. I think you can do a lot of good things with the institution. I am inclined to agree with Roberto Mangebeira Unger, the Latin American professor of law and activist, who is calling for a new institutionalism, a kind of renovation, and reinvention of the institutions. He argues that in both the neo-liberal societies and the social democratic societies the institutions are in crisis in general, but that we shouldn't give them up, we should reinvent them from the inside. But where Rebecca has a point is in terms of 'duration', because where have these attempts to reinvent the art institution survived? The DIA art foundation maybe, but elsewhere it's sadly rare. They might be allowed to exist for a while, or they mutate into something less challenging, something more streamline, and that is a problem. I don't think there is an inherent opposition between artists and institutions. Institutions have for a fact exploited artists, but not all institutions do it all the time. There are other ways of reconfiguring this relationship.

Paul O'Neill:

Time, rhythm and different speeds of activity seem to be crucial to your programme at the Kunstverein. One of the projects you instigated is the 'Sputnik Model' as a means of developing slower, on-going, and more long-term relationships with curators, artists, writers and cultural practitioners. How have these 'Sputnik' or 'partner' projects developed as part of your programme? And how have these partnerships affected the way in which the Kunstverein operates as an institution?

Maria Lind:

When we started, the curatorial team consisted of myself, Søren Grammel and Katharina Schlieben. And we invited fifteen people as Sputniks, most of them artists, a couple of critics and curators as well. And they were invited to travel with us; the word means travelling companion in Russian and we also asked them to think about a project, each of them, and that could be very different depending on who they are and what they do. They were all invited for a meeting here before the programme started in the winter of 2002. Most of them came and since then the collective meetings have mostly been via email. Some have been very engaged and have interacted in various ways, other have kept quite quiet. That was interesting because people who I thought would be more active were not, for various reasons. I think at least a couple of people felt uncomfortable with the very openness of the situation, as there was no budget framework, time limit, or spatial limitation. The Sputnik project that has had the greatest impact on our everyday life working here at the Kunstverein is Sustersic's lobby, which is the first interface between the Kunstverein and the audience. It looks very different to how it used to look and is more inviting, comfortable and flexible than it used to be. This is where we do plenty of events, including lectures, screenings and talks and it is also where we hang out and where, at times, we work. Each member of the curatorial team is on duty here in the lobby handing out information once a week and we also use it for our meetings. Another project that has followed us, literally, is Carey Young's *Viral Marketing*, which until now has had four parts. She has made various interventions into the communications structure of the Kunstverein. The first was a 'negotiation skills' course where we, as the team, were the raw material. A trainer, who is usually working for Siemens, spent a day with us trying to teach us how to negotiate better. In Carey Young's terms, of course the question of how effectively we are communicating and negotiating with sponsors, members, artists, audience, press and so on is something that has a real effect on how the Kunstverein is operating. Some of us felt this was a learning experience, some felt that they didn't learn anything from the day. This was documented one year after the event when Carey came back and made interviews with all of us and I liked that; she gave us some time to digest and then after a year we could give a report on when and how we had possibly used these skills. There was a moment of reflection upon reflection.

Paul O'Neill:

In some way, there seems to be a parallel between archival research and the kind of ever-changing nature of the part played by serendipity and chance in the temporal process of exhibition making?

Maria Lind:

Yes, I think it is important to create a structure, but it mustn't be too tight. There must always be room for manoeuvre, space for playing and the Sputnik model has provided some of that, I think. We have given people time.

Paul O'Neill:

One of the things that struck me at the Kunstverein was how soft or quiet certain aspects of the display were and how busy other parts were. In the Teasing Minds exhibition for example: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's single video projection occupies a very large space on its own. The projected image is so vague and without the lights off it is almost not there. Whilst in the adjacent spaces with projects by Bik Van der Pol, Ibon Aranberri, Copenhagen Free University and others there is an abundance of information in the form of literature, audio works, video interviews, seating etc. A very slow and contemplative space is produced next to a rather congested, hyperbolic display that demands a lot of involvement, reading, viewing and participating. Is this a dichotomy that you are conscious of?

Maria Lind:

It is very conscious. I think it is exciting to encounter things in different ways and this is one way of doing it. The video work in the first space by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster must be shown in a very bright space. It is an overexposed video itself, so you should almost not see it. It is like you have some dirt in your eye, which is annoying you, and then you realise there are some figures running around in a very bright landscape in the video. The *Teasing Minds* project evolves around ideas of failure, mistake and thinking something is missing. Everybody has contributed different parts and I can say that somehow the whole is like what Philippe Parreno sometimes calls 'narrative cloud'. So there is a narrative cloud going on, but within this there is openness at the same time as there is quite a lot of precision. I wanted to include this very video, because of its otherness. You look at the video and you think that must be people of vacation running around on a beach, having a good time. You see some kind of constructions looking like beach huts or something. Then you realise, no, there is no sea here, no water what so ever, this must be something else, probably a desert. When you look closely at the title, you

understand that it is a work from an American desert where they have made nuclear tests, which is of course a repressed part of recent history and it has paradoxically enough become a tourist site. That was important for me to have as an entrance to the project and then this density in the middle, and then at the back, Andrea Geyer's work. *Parallax* is a complex slide installation looking at notions of citizenship after September 11th from an American perspective, but using two big cities as its stage: New York and Los Angeles. She uses newspaper material, information from news agencies and photographs she has staged and taken, with a female protagonist moving through these two big cities. There you have something that is kind of missing in the discussion about how citizenship has changed in the US. You get bits and pieces but you don't get it as a developed discourse. It is very important that these two works are the beginning and the end of your trajectory through the space. The middle part is more about reading, listening and talking; a workshop space. One thing does not exclude the other throughout the display. Art is there for discursive reasons, but art is also there for contemplation, it is there for critical investigation, like in Andrea's work. I am distinctly not interested in judging things, for me its much more exciting to plays things off one another. It is important to mention that *Teasing Minds* is a curatorial collaboration between Bik Van der Pol, the architecture group Stealth, the Kunstverein curator Judith Schwarzbart and myself.

Paul O'Neill:

This brings me to the question of performativity, which can be understood as the constitution of a meaning through practice or a certain act. In the short essay published on the Kunstverein website: "Reflections on the concept of the performative" written by Katharina Schlieben, 'performative-curating' is represented as a dynamic process of mediation and self-reflexivity where the 'per-formed' events remain transparent about their production process whilst remaining open-ended and unfixed – a kind of materialised thinking through speech acts. Could you expand on how certain concepts of the 'performative' link to your ideas about contemporary art curating? Have you used the concept of 'the performative' as a testing site in relation to your curatorial practice and activities at the Kunstverein?

Maria Lind:

For me, the notion of performative curating came up in discussion with Søren Grammel before we started here in Munich. When we were trying to find words simply in conversation to describe what we meant when we were having a focus on the pre- and the post-, of how things come about. I think in my case, it's also a materialist, pragmatist position, being concerned with conditions and means of production, and with the fact that things don't only come about before they enter the institution, they also come about from scratch within the institution. For me the performative relates to a pragmatic interest in the means and conditions of production.

Paul O'Neill:

Does the performative represent a demystification of the contextual thinking behind a curatorial idea and how that manifests itself in different formats of its production and mediation?

Maria Lind:

Yes, but it is not that we have used the performative as a focal point here. It is something that has come up when we have struggled to describe what it is we have been doing. Its on the side of the practice, it is not that we try to be performative, but rather that we operate in a way that we find appropriate in relation to the art we are involved with. When we then call it performative, it is just a designation, which certainly can be elaborated. At the moment I am not so concerned with investigating the notion of the performative in curating but rather to carry on doing projects, which may or may not be described as performative.

Paul O'Neill:

It has become a slippery term for curating, like 'doing as thinking' and 'thinking as doing' within the exhibition-project. The exhibition as a speech act becomes a kind of vessel for visibility of the curators' thinking and doing. Is this not too vague?

Maria Lind:

If you want to make a parallel between this and what we have done here at the Kunstverein. I'd say that it is much more pragmatic than a simple act of naming. In the sense that it is about doing, testing something that you don't know beforehand. We might be able to give it a name afterwards, but while we are doing it we can't really. Moreover I don't think we should be able to name it because we don't really need to. If you make the parallel to speech acts, to me there is more to showing the love in what you do and how you do it than merely saying 'I love you'. So it is less about talking and more about doing and thereby not about making a promise. But you test it afterwards against the result. Does the result match with the expectation?

-

01 Mary Anne Staniszewski *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge: MIT Press 2001

02 Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt "Harnessing the means of production" in: Jonas Ekeberg (ed.) *New Institutionalism, Verksted no.1*, Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway 2003

THE CURATORIAL FUNCTION – ORGANIZING THE EX/POSITION

OLIVER MARCHART

The idea of Public Art, of art in a public space or in the public interest, has thrived over the past two decades. Art has departed its accustomed place in art institutions and moved into the open. Not just outdoors in nature, which Land Art had done long before, or in the exterior spaces of architecture, in order to furnish facades or urban space, but into the open space of the *political public sphere*. That public sphere has more to do with the *freedom* to act politically, or of political action, than with the fresh air of 'open nature' or the space of urban traffic under the 'open sky'. In other words, art practices have emerged, for which it is more important to be connected to political practices than to art institutions themselves. That, in turn, necessarily has effects on our concept of the public sphere and on our concept of the institution as well. We are faced with the question 'what is it, about Public Art, that is public?' Indeed, 'what is political about political art?' While thousands of catalogue texts shed light on individual projects from theoretical perspectives as well, this fundamental question is only rarely raised and almost never answered adequately. The situation is almost sadder when it comes to answering the question (when it's asked at all) of the curator's task in such cases of the production of political art. The roles of 'curator' and 'artist' often become blurred in this kind of praxis in particular. If we begin not with the individual, empirical individual but with the *function* that is fulfilled by certain activities, we may come closer to an answer. In the following text I would like above all to raise the question of the *curatorial function*. And, to get right to the answer, I would like to defend the following thesis: the curatorial function lies in the *organization of the public sphere*.

That answer is trivial only if we believe that an exhibition or an exhibition space is already a 'public sphere' simply because it is accessible to the 'public'. Universal access is, however, only a minimal criterion, and even that often goes unfulfilled. Our normal use of the term *public sphere* frequently blinds us to its true meaning. For example, the mass media are considered 'public spheres', even though hardly any normal people have access to them, apart from letters to the editor and call-in shows. And even exhibiting institutions rarely fulfil this criterion, unless one understands a space for which anyone may pay an entrance fee to be a public sphere, to say nothing of 'invisible' exclusions, qua social distinction, for example. In fact, the discussion lacks the sufficient criterion with which the public sphere in the true sense can be described. For it is not accessibility alone that turns a space into a public sphere. It is not the fact that that one is admitted into a collection or an exhibition after paying a small fee, or even for free. A lot of people can stand around in a room and stare at the walls without a public sphere resulting from that alone. A public sphere results if and only if a debate breaks out among those standing around. A debate is not a discourse 'free of domination' and guided by reason that aims at an ultimate consensus, as Habermas describes it; rather, a debate takes place in the medium of *conflict*. Only at the moment when a conflict breaks out does the public sphere emerge, with the breakdown of the consensus that is otherwise always silently presumed. The essential criterion for a public sphere that can be considered a true *political* sphere, and not just a simulation of a public sphere, is thus conflict or, to borrow a term from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *antagonism*.[1]

If therefore the curatorial function consists in the organization of a public sphere, then one might conclude that it too must consist in organization of a conflict or antagonism. But to do so would be to let oneself in for the first problem; for antagonism in the strict sense is something that cannot be 'organized' at all. The antagonism that ultimately generates a public sphere can break out anywhere at any time, but it cannot simply be organized; a look at 'politics' proves that. Politics is by no means the best terrain for conflict. On the contrary, institutionalized politics is generally dominated by consensus, mutual agreement, administrative bargaining, and, when push comes to shove, a mere exhibition fight between state functionary elites that have joined to form parties that are scarcely distinguishable. Politics consists of well-coordinated, sedimented, institutionalized rituals that are not normally shaken by any conflict, precisely because (pseudo) conflict is itself a fixed and predictable element of this ritual. And yet, unforeseen by anyone, a real conflict can suddenly break out. Revolutions are the most obvious example, but the emergence of new political players, like the revolt of 1968, the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, or today's anti-globalisation movement, can provoke a conflict. In reality, therefore, conflict is neither a privilege of a single

01 See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso 1985

social system, like that of politics, nor can it be narrowed down to one system. Antagonism, as a feature of the *political* (and not simply of *politics*) and hence of the public, can emerge in any social system or field, even in the field of art, which then becomes political and 'opens up'.[2] It is, however, impossible to 'organize' the antagonism *as such* if it is precisely the antagonism that cuts short every institution and hence 'organization'. That leaves us with two possibilities: either we abandon the thesis that the function of curating consists in *organizing* the public or we cling to it because we nevertheless consider it necessary. In that case, however, the first thing one has to recognize is that the organization of the public sphere is an impossible task. Consequently the curatorial function, the organization of the public sphere, consists in *organizing the impossible*. 'Curating', in the sense of producing a real public sphere in the field of art, means organizing the impossible. This assertion can be understood in a variety of ways. One variant is that a truly political sphere cannot be produced *in* the field of art. The reasons is not simply that antagonism cannot, on principle, be organized but also that an antagonism always oversteps boundaries between social fields. A conflict that breaks out in the art world alone will revolve exclusively around artistic questions. But the resulting public sphere would ultimately be only a public sphere of *art*, for example, a *specialist* public sphere of art criticism that would move entirely within the parameters of the art and would interest no one else. Thus it would not even satisfy the minimal criterion of universal accessibility, which knows no boundaries between fields.

The other, more optimal variant, which does not however preclude the first, would be the following: the impossible element that is organized by the curatorial function is the political element. Politics, in the sense of a genuine realization of the political, is *always* a praxis that aims at the impossible; namely, at whatever the hegemonic discourse defines in a given situation as impossible. Curatorial praxis that becomes, or wants to become, political praxis must therefore set the same challenges as political practice. Not in the sense of institutionalized politics but in the sense of emancipatory *counter*politics, which of course always insists on the necessity of the supposedly impossible; that is, of what has been declared impossible by the hegemonic formation.[3] In the construction of this *counter*, in the construction of a *counter*hegemony, lies the true potential for antagonism. In other words, an antagonism can never be compelled by organization, but is possible to construct a *counterposition* to the dominant position from which an antagonism can then arise. To be a little more specific, from the perspective of a *political* art praxis, this has consequences not only for our understanding of the curatorial function but also for the function of exhibitions and art institutions. But, let's stick to the question of organization for another moment. What would, from a political perspective, correspond precisely to the model for the figure of 'the curator' or to the curatorial function? One answer can be found in the work of Antonio Gramsci, the original inventor or developer of hegemony theory. The figure of the 'curator' in the field of art corresponds precisely to the figure that Gramsci called the 'organic intellectual'. Organic intellectuals give 'homogeneity and an awareness' to a hegemonic function. Gramsci describes it by reference to the hegemonic rise of the bourgeoisie: "the capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc."[4] All these organic intellectuals are thus not intellectuals in the traditional sense, that is, lots of little Sartres sitting in the café, but rather essentially *organizers* of hegemony. They *organize* the hegemony of the bourgeoisie; they represent the cement in the hegemonic bloc, whereas the 'traditional intellectuals', Gramsci's opposed term, have largely lost this function and thus imagine themselves to be 'freely floating' and non-partisan.

But not only the maintenance of the *hegemonic* bloc but also a *counter*hegemonic effort demands the labor of organized intellectuals. Gramsci, one of the cofounders of the Italian Communist Party, saw this as the true path for the proletariat to dissolve the bourgeoisie: not by storming the Winter Palace just once but through protracted and arduous building up, the arduous organization of a counterhegemony in everyday life. The point is to develop a 'new stratum of intellectuals': "The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator."5 Therein lies the real distinction from the figure of the traditional intellectual and hence of the traditional curator. The figure of the 'curator' as curator is traditional in Gramsci's sense; it has survived itself. And that affects not only the empirical social group but also its true *function*, Gramsci himself spoke of the 'intellectual function': both the classical sense of curating as the cura (care) for the collection and the modern, post-Szeemannian sense of the individual genius curator in the art world are 'traditional' and not 'organic' activities. As *organic* intellectuals, by contrast, the curator's true standpoint is in contexts *outside* the field of art. They are active organizing in social and political contexts *beyond* the art institution, and they connect them to the field of art. That

02
This relationship between art, conflict, and 'public space' is developed at greater length in the following texts, among others, by the present author "Neue Kunst nach alten Regeln? Begriffsklärungen zu 'Kunst im Außenraum', zu 'Public Art', 'Polit-Kunst' und 'Kunst als Sozialdienst'" in Markus Wailand and Vitus H. Weh (eds.) *Zur Sache Kunst am Bau*, Vienna: Triton 1998, p. 102–109; "New Genre Public Net Art: Einige Anmerkungen zum öffentlichen Raum Internet und seiner zukünftigen Kunstgeschichte" in Hedwig Saxenhuber and Georg Schöllhammer (eds.) *Ortsbezug: Konstruktion oder Prozeß*, Vienna: Edition Selene 1998, p. 41–60; "Art, Space and the Public Sphere(s): Some Basic Observations on the Difficult Relation of Public Art, Urbanism and Political Theory" in Andreas Lechner and Petra Maier (eds.) *Stadtmotiv*, Vienna: Edition Selene 1999, p. 96–158, available online: www.eipcp.net/diskurs/d07/text/marchart_prepublic_en.html; "Zwischen Forum und Basar: Zum Paradoxon institutionalisierter Öffentlichkeit" in Forum Stadtpark (ed.) *Zwischen Forum und Basar: Beschreibungen und Befragungen zur (Re-) Strukturierung des Kunstbetriebes*, Vienna: Edition Selene 2000, p. 9–18; "Poster-Politik. Kriegsplakate und die politische Vorgeschichte der Public Art" in Otto Mittmannsgruber and Martin Strauss (eds.) *PlakatKunst: Über die Verwendung eines Massenmediums durch die Kunst*, Vienna: Springer 2000, p. 68–87; "Media Darkness: Reflections on Public Space, Light, and Conflict" in Tatiana Goryucheva and Eric Kluitenberg (eds.) *Media / Art / Public Domain*, Amsterdam: De Balie – Centre for Culture and Politics 2003, p. 83–97; "Der Apparat und die Öffentlichkeit: Zur medialen Differenz von 'Politik' und 'dem Politischen'" in Daniel Gethmann and Markus Stauff (eds.) *Politiken der Medien*, Freiburg: diaphanes 2004, p. 19–34; "Hegemonie und künstlerische Praxis: Vorbemerkungen zu einer Ästhetik des Öffentlichen" in Ralph Lindner, Christiane Mennicke and Silke Wagler (eds.) *Kunst im Stadtraum: Hegemonie und Öffentlichkeit*, Dresden: Kunsthaus Dresden, Berlin: b_books 2004, p. 23–42; "Die Institution spricht: Kunstvermittlung als Herrschafts- und Emanzipationstechnologie" in schnittpunkt, Beatrice Jaschke, Charlotte Martinz-Turek, and Nora Sternfeld (eds.) *Wer spricht? Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, Vienna: Turia + Kant 2005; *Ästhetik des Öffentlichen: Eine politische Theorie künstlerischer Praxis*, forthcoming from Turia + Kant in Vienna

03
It is necessary to add immediately that not every insistence on the seemingly impossible, not every counterpolitics or counterhegemonic effort is in itself emancipatory, but every *emancipatory* effort necessary attempts the (seemingly) impossible.

04
Antonio Gramsci "Intellectuals and Education," trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith in *An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, David Forgacs (ed.) New York: Schocken 1988, p. 301

05
Gramsci "Intellectuals and Education", p. 321

means that the curatorial function is essentially *collective*. Organizing is a collective activity. One cannot establish a political counterstandpoint, a counterhegemony, on one's own; that is the illusion of the traditional (great) intellectual. However, organization can only be part of a broader collective political project. Even if the emancipatory element may be more modest today than in Gramsci's day, it will never be a solely individual effort but always a collective one. In short, an 'organic intellectual' rarely, indeed *never*, appears alone. And that is the case, however much it might seem to contradict common sense at first glance, the curatorial subject, the subject of the curatorial function, is *not an individual* but rather a *collective*. Curating is a collective activity.

Of course, in the end it is still an open question as to which master, that is, which hegemonic formation, organic intellectuals serve. It is by no means always necessary that they serve emancipatory politics. The curatorial function can also serve the hegemonic formation of post-Fordism. For example, Beatrice von Bismarck notes in reference to Yann Moulier Boutang that today's curatorial practice is closely related to the tasks of efficient management. The curatorial tasks of organization and communication are roughly comparable "to those of book or music publishers, of content managers or archivists, and hence of professions that, as 'increasingly intellectualized abstract work', correspond to the definition of immaterial work."6 In the organizational forms of material work, the 'the curator', as an organic intellectual, becomes a post-Fordist *Ich-AG* [literally, 'Me, Inc', a subsidized one-person corporation under German law. *Trans.*]. But the 'curatorial' organization of a political public sphere differs fundamentally from the organization of one's own economic exploitation. What is the difference? In a word, and at risk of making a lame pun: it is not about ex-ploitation but rather about ex-position. That means that when it is organizing a political sphere the curatorial function is not primarily a function of the economy of the field of art, which is in turn part of the general economy. A forum in the political sense should not be confused with a bazaar in the economic sense. Although the two can overlap in reality, they should be strictly distinguished in terms of their *function*. The political function of a public sphere is absolutely at cross-purposes both with the institutional function of museums or galleries (as ideological apparatuses of the state) and with the economic function of the art world as a marketplace for commodities (so-called works of art) and services (of creative individuals). The only place in this dilemma where the curatorial function, while not directly producing the political sphere, at least appears to make it easier, challenge it, or even make it possible, can only be the exhibition. But not in the traditional understanding of what happens in a normal exhibition space. An exhibition in the usual sense, that is, artistic works or actions within the local or institutional framework of the art field, is never *in itself* a public sphere. Even an action in urban space is not in itself Public Art in the political sense. For an exhibition to become a public sphere, something must be added: *a position*.

Jérôme Sans seized on one part of this political aspect of the exhibition when he distinguished between 'exhibition' and 'ex/position'. According to Sans, the French word *ex/position* alludes to the aspect of the ex-position as a *positioning* and commitment: "An exhibition is a place for debate, not just a public display. The French word for it, *exposition*, connotes taking a position, a theoretical position; it is a mutual commitment on the part of all those participating in it."[7] As a practice of exposition, the curatorial function is a form of taking a position, of consciously *taking up* a position. But of course not just any position will do, not even a purely theoretical one, as San suggests; it must be an antagonistic position coupled with political and collective praxes. From this perspective, the inflationary use of the term 'artistic position' observed recently is almost an improper use and at the very least a depoliticization of the word 'position'. This is particularly true when 'position' is used to describe the work of artists who most certainly do not *take up* a position. One doesn't simply have a political position; it has to be taken up. What the art field understands as a 'position', by contrast, is the difference between particular artists' names, now ossified into mere labels or trademarks, and other artists' names, equally ossified into labels or trademarks. The logic is differential because the point is to distinguish something from other 'positions' in the field of art. It is not 'equivalential', as antagonistic logic is. That is to say, it is not at all about *joining* a political chain of equivalence: a coalition, a collective, a movement, a counterhegemonic effort that constructs its equivalence only as an external antagonism.[8] At the moment of antagonism, the competitive struggle for differential 'positions' disappears and makes room for the solidarity among all who unite against a common enemy.

The way the term 'artistic position' is used in the field of art follows the logic of the market, not the logic of politics. Artists' names are understood as labels in the marketplace for art. The term 'position' is merely a euphemism for this trademark logic. That is what makes it so disagreeable. No one would ever be so pretentious as to describe the corporate identities of Wienerwald[9] or Burger King as 'positions', as 'fast-food

06 Beatrice von Bismarck "Kuratorisches Handeln" in Marion von Osten (ed.) *Norm der Abweichung*, Vienna: Springer 2003, p. 87

07 Jérôme Sans "Exhibition or Ex/position?" in Carin Kuoni *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art*, New York: Independent Curators International 2001, p. 146

08 Laclau and Mouffe *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*

09 Wienerwald is a popular Fast-food restaurant operating in Austria and Germany. (editor's note)

positions', say. Political concepts are used loosely in the field of art, not least because they can be converted into the capital of radical chic. But political praxis is not a question of mere self-description, that is, whether a particular artistic or curatorial praxis calls itself political or acts as if it were, but rather one of genuine function. This political function of art, I have argued, consists in the paradoxical attempt to organize a public space. More specifically, it consists in marking a counter*position* as an element of a broader attempt to produce a counterhegemony. Only as an *ex/position* does an exhibition become a public sphere. As such, it then *automatically* counteracts the logic of the institution. As an ex/position, an exhibition necessarily has a deinstitutionalizing effect, because the true task of institutions consists in the suppressing or at least domestication of conflicts, which are supposed to be accommodated to regulated processes and procedures. The publicness of antagonism always has something disruptive in relation to the logic of the institution and the dominant ideology: it interrupts regulated processes, responsibilities, and hierarchies. The forms of action that have been demanded by the institution under post-Fordist conditions: like teamwork, creativity, and 'participatory management' are dissolved and they reaggregate to form new solidarities both inside and outside the institution. Indeed, every genuine antagonism breaches the walls of the institution. Dropping the metaphors from the world of construction, one might say: the exhibition (ex/position) leads to an *opening of the institution*. That is to say, the ex/position, which is nothing other than the breach in the walls of the institution, leads into the open space of the public sphere. As ex/*position* it is a *positioning*: taking a position. As *ex*/position it leads *out* of the institutions of art and the field of art, and into political praxis. The curatorial function, understood as the organization of a public sphere, thus consists not least in the political opening of the institution of which it appears to be part.

Translated from the German by Steven Lindberg

EXHIBITIONS AS CULTURAL PRACTICES OF SHOWING – PEDAGOGICS

DOROTHEE RICHTER

This article was written for the exhibition project *Ausstellungs-Displays* at the Institute of Cultural Studies in Art, Media and Design of the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst in Zurich.

Creating exhibitions today can be seen as an assembly of cultural practices that lead to certain displays. These displays are at once the presentation and performance of objects and structures. They place objects and subjects in a certain relationship to one another and are thus elements of communicative processes. They are founded in discourses and produce discourses, thus generating meaning.

DISPLAY: DEFINING A CONCEPT

Even as recently as the early 1990s, the English word *display* was not particularly widespread in reference to exhibitions in the German-speaking world. The concept of *Inszenierung* (presentation, staging) was popular from about the mid-1970s on as well as *Ausstellung* (exhibition). The word *Inszenierung* is derived from the French *mise-en-scène*, or 'putting on stage', and hence suggests the world of theater, cabaret, opera, and later film and only then, by extension, the exhibition (as medium). By contrast, the term *Ausstellung* is related to *zur Schau stellen* (putting on display) and hence with presentation and exhibitions at annual fairs.[1] Walter Benjamin derived the concept from the culture of display and fairs and alluded in that context to an ancient culture of eventful displaying and enjoyment.[2] The English word *display* has been used in German-speaking lands for exhibitions only recently, for about a decade. Its semantic context of presentation display, display and packaging, advertising and computer display points to new economies and new conceptions of (re)presentation based on a particular 'screen', a 'user interface'. *Display* can be used in English to refer to a computer screen and the visual presentation of facts. The semantic horizons of the word already point to a primacy of the surface against a complicated, difficult, and unintelligible background.[3] Understood in this way, a study of 'exhibition displays' already transports us into certain conceptions of the manner of performing objects and subjects within an exhibition. If we think of the complex consti-tution of exhibitions in the sense of a social and politically located and effective apparatus, then we can view the *dominance of phenomenalism* as an effect of this apparatus.

SEEING AND PERCEIVING AS HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

When we study exhibition presentations using discourse analysis, it is necessary first, in the process of making distinctions within this sphere, to point to the fundamental historical constitution of seeing, showing, and perceiving. Behind this is the idea that this analytical process itself belongs to the practices of the production of meaning. In analyzing discourse, speech and material manifestations are seen as intertwined, mutually generating practices. The history of the origins of the museum and the art space was central to the constitution of a notion of the bourgeois public sphere. The first public display of art was during the French Revolution, when the common people, the people of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity', were shown art taken as spoils. The paintings, furniture, and art objects taken from the defeated class, the nobility, were presented publicly in the Louvre. Already inscribed in this first spectacle were both appropriation and affirmation. In accordance bourgeois concepts: of the autonomy of art, of the subject conceived of as autonomous (as well as male and white), of the subject of single-point perspective and as 'thing in itself', and of a unassailable object that is elevated per se; the bourgeois art museum evolved over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a space of showing and displaying, that illustrated and promoted these concepts. Following Foucault, it is possible to understand the technologies of displaying and commenting as a practice within which certain subjectivities are produced and certain hierarchical relationships organized, as has been shown by, among others, Marion von Osten with reference to the work of Tony Bennett.[4]

Also inscribed in the bourgeois space of 'displaying' are concepts and effects of gender difference that since the Renaissance have centered around establishing distance and around the male subject of single-point perspective. 'Woman' becomes an object, a thing observed, a thing available, the character of the commodity attaches itself to her image. Against this backdrop, we are meant to understand that the gaze is, as a rule, associated with the male, while the thing seen, presented for view, is associated with the female.

-

01
See Anna Schober *Montierte Geschichten: Programmatisch inszenierte historische Ausstellungen*, Vienna: Jugend & Volk 1996, p. 9

02
Walter Benjamin "Food Fair: Epilogue to the Berlin Food Exhibition" trans. Rodney Livingstone, in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (eds.) *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927–1934, Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1999, p. 135–139

03
See Michael Barchet et al (eds.) *Ausstellen: Der Raum der Oberfläche*, Weimar: VDG 2003

04
Marion von Osten "Producing Publics – Making Worlds! Zum Verhältnis von Kunstöffentlichkeit und Gegenöffentlichkeit", elsewhere in this volume

Seen structurally, 'woman' occupies the location of the seen, the viewed. Like many contemporary art historians, Anja Zimmermann has described it as follows: "... that means the position of the person who is 'in' the painting and thus 'is' the painting and the position of the person who looks at the painting are gender-specific positions. Not in the sense of an assignment to specific subjects but in relation to the significance of this regime of the gaze for the definition of gender difference itself."[5] Eroticizing the gaze, the desire to view, is now as much as ever the indispensable prerequisite for addressing the thing one desires to see: the fact that the thing displayed becomes sexually loaded is a consequence of this structure. This culturally anchored regime of the gaze is also the matrix on which contemporary displays unfold. They are based on displays as one of the unnamed, unconscious hierarchical arrangements. The status of an object that cannot reflect on itself but is rather merely a bearer of representations is attributed to the non-whites, who also become the *other* of the autonomous male subject. The techniques of self-disciplines of the 'autonomous', bourgeois subjects form and are formed by seeing and being in the image; there is always an imagined observer; even the subject is to some degree always at risk of becoming an object.

THE APPARATUS OF SIGNS AND THE GRAMMARS OF DISPLAY

The exhibition space and the exhibition display are, however, only parts of a larger setting or apparatus, if you will. This idea picks up on the concept of what Louis Althusser called 'Ideological State Apparatuses'.[6] The concept of the apparatus describes the principal material or textual, that is to say, discursive, constitution of the dispositive 'exhibition' and points to its function as an 'educational' model. The display would thus be only the user interface of a differentiated process of production from material, the pro-duction of knowledge, and the rules of discourse and ideology inscribed therein. Borrowing Foucault's perspective of the order of discourses, one could name external and internal mechanisms of exclusion that try to rein in the unpredictability of discourses and events by means of procedures of classification, by ordering the principles of distribution, types of speech, the commentary and function of the author and various disciplines. This also refers to the 'will to know' and is thus an academic, analytical approach to the object exhibition and thus ultimately to disciplining, the stemming of the 'murmur' of discourse in which the resistant and deviant are expressed. On the one hand, the function 'exhibition' is conceived as the product of a process to control, select, organize, and classify meaning, which then reveals itself to be a material setting. The concept 'apparatus' incorporates: the material location, the exhibition space, the exhibition hall, the museum and the respective architecture, concepts, budgeting, the respective concept of publics, the hierarchical organizational structure of the staff, the working conditions of the employees, education of the employees, the connections to the sites of social consensus-building such as committees for cultural policy and interest groups, the production and the deployment of the media, the concept of subject and object that the display offers, the ideological composition of reaching, the ennobling of the object, the possibility of the viewer's passivity/activity, the opportunities for subsequent action by those who have seen it, the budgeting and financing of the exhibition project, the people who commissioned it, the way the exhibition product is discussed, the narration of the display, the gaps in the display, the performance of the objects, the exhibition architecture, lighting, labels sounds, the exhibition spaces open to the public in relation to backstage, organizational and storage spaces.

The concept of the apparatus also points out that the formation 'exhibition', its setting and its elements, constitutes a historical setting and cannot and does not wish to claim to be a formulation of totality. Moreover, the concept can be connected to the Freudian idea of the psychological apparatus and thus opens up new possibilities for the viewer's perspective to connect to it. The site of contemporary exhibition is a communicative space in which psychological, aesthetic, social, and political spaces interlink. It is one of the discursive spaces within which the conversion from social and cultural capital to economic capital (and vice versa) that Bourdieu describes can take place, and, as Isabelle Graw has shown, in art exhibitions this happens with a certain reciprocal dependence on the stock market. Nevertheless, a potential for resistance exists in this space, as a kind of surplus discourse. The axes of affirmation and resistance should thus be understood as relationally and historically related. Every act of exposition goes hand in hand with an ennobling of the objects; they and the way they are handled are equally always a means of distinction. The apparatus of the contemporary exhibition should thus be questioned along the parameters developed here. In exposing the rules of discourse, what matters is who speaks for whom, what ideology is put on view, what and who is suppressed and excluded, and what relationships of desire form the matrix of the exhibition. This can be studied, with no claim to completeness, by questioning and comparing the elements described, the symbols and grammars of exhibitions.

05 Anja Zimmermann *Skandalöse Bilder, Skandalöse Körper: Abject Art vom Surrealismus bis zu den Culture Wars*, Berlin: Reimer 2001, p. 119

06 As Oliver Marchart shows in his essay "Die Institution spricht", this concept can be applied to contemporary cultural institutions: "Whereas we normally include with the 'state' such institutions as the government, the administration, the army, the police, courts, prisons, and so on" Althusser extends our concept of the state considerably. He defines the institutions just named 'Repressive State Apparatuses', because in case of emergency they can all fall back on the state's monopoly on violence. According to Althusser, however, Ideological State Apparatuses – abbreviated ISAs – also belong to the state. Under this category Althusser subsumes the religious ISA (the churches), the school ISA (public and private educational institutions), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system including the parties), the trade-union ISA, the information ISA (the media), and finally the cultural ISA (Althusser includes here 'literature, art, sports, and so on'); see Oliver Marchart "Die Institution spricht" in Beatrice Jaschke, Charlotte Martinez-Turek and Nora Sternfeld (eds.) *Wer spricht?: Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2005, p. 34ff. Marchart's list does not include the omnipresence of advertising, which Grasskamp has called totalitarian, or images from the mass media.

07 Pierre Bourdieu *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996, and Pierre Bourdieu *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1974, [a collection of essays including (French listed where no English available): "Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge" in *Social Research* 35, no. 4 ,1968, p. 681–706; "Condition de classe et position de classe" in *Archives européennes de sociologie* 7, no. 2, 1966, p. 201–223; "Intellectual Field and Creative Project" in *Social Science Information* 8, no. 2, 1968, p. 89–119; "Postface to Erwin Panofsky – Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism" in Bruce Holsinger *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005; "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception" in International Social Science Journal 20, no. 4, 1968, p. 589–612, Trans.]

VIEWERS: THE IMPLIED ADDRESSEES OF EXHIBITIONS

Exhibitions are communicative situations that are produced in order to convey content. Exhibition is thus based on a didactic idea whose emphasis or retraction can, however, vary considerably depending on the type and the historical development. The visitors remain the unknown entities of an exhibition. On their side lie the tasks of achieving a synthesis of the visual formal impression, reading labels, perceiving material, media offerings, producing memories and associations.[8] The exhibition institutions present themselves to an ideal viewer about whom certain assumptions are made. It is assumed in principle, for example, that the viewers have a store of images that has been influenced by Western culture. A certain frame of reference, certain conventions of perception, have to be brought with them in order to construct chains of associations and meaningful connections. Various authors assume that the ideal viewer is also distinguished by a certain ritual behaviour, what Eva Sturm has called the 'gesture of viewing': the viewers move about in expressive surroundings, observing intently, holding back, passive vis-à-vis what is shown.[9] Museums and other places that store objects of special value, place them on pedestals, hang them in frames and place them in display cases. These things are protected from 'dust, theft, dampness and wear and tear' and above all from the viewers' grasp.[10] If we accept Walter Grasskamp's argument, viewers experience something astonishing, things that cannot be touched or sold. The objects shown thus obtain a quasi-religious value, that of a sacred, worshipped object. This is how Benjamin understood the shift from cult value to exhibition value.[11] The basic synaesthetic equipment of human beings, Grasskamp argues, allows them to connect the sensations of difference sense organs. The museum (the site of exhibition) bans haptic experience; visitors must control and curb their movements. The museum conveys as experience the primacy of the distancing sense of vision, as well as the primacy over the subject of the object, which thus devalues the former, as it were, and, as mentioned at the beginning, puts it risk, as an object that is to be observed further, of suddenly changing its status from the subject to the object of the gaze.

In some ways, therefore, all of the media employed in exhibitions for purposes of animation attempt to close this gap and thus seize the viewer's attention. The situation at auto shows or other trade fairs is not fundamentally different from this matrix: although people are permitted to touch the objects, they may do so only in a very limited, controlled and ritualized form.[12] Even if someone wants to purchase something, the desire most be temporarily postponed. The communication structure of exhibitions, according to Anna Schober, is thus in principle closer to that of mass media than of educational facilities: content is broadcast to a heterogeneous auditorium; the members of the audience are neither involved in direct communicative exchange nor, as a rule, connected to one another by social networks.[13] According to a study, visitors spend an average of eight seconds in front of an object in an exhibition, no matter whether it is an art exhibition or a boat show. From a historical perspective, a neutralizing exhibition style became increasingly common during the 1970s, one that conveyed a claim of objectivity; today, there is more of an effort to involve visitors emotionally. This may also be connected with a general tendency away from an educated elite as audience in favor of a mass audience. As Bourdieu has shown, the understanding of culture is class-specific and functions as a means of distinction.[14] Exhibition institutions are fundamentally confronted with the problem that they are presenting to a heterogeneous audience but must at the same integrate all the various groups (at least when faced with the goal of maximising attendance figures). Institutions attempt to solve this problem in different ways.

IDEOLOGY AND THE WAYS IT FUNCTIONS: IS EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY POSSIBLE?

What does it mean for a specific visitor that an exhibition is addressed to an audience, and how are they influenced by the setting? Individual aspects of the messages that the visitor-subjects receive as subtexts of exhibitions have already been addressed above. The visitor is addressed as a white member of Western middle-class society; as a viewer he or she is located in a 'male' position; he or she is increasingly addressed as a member of a large crowd that (generally speaking) is not differentiated but rather infantilized. Oliver Marchart has proposed relating Louis Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatuses', or ISAs, to exhibition institutions as a way of distinguishing their preformulated assumptions as either 'dominating' or 'emancipatory' pedagogy. If we examine Althusser's concept more closely, it is evident that he conceived the formation of subjects in a highly complex way.[15] Althusser viewed art and other institutions as apparatuses that convey ideology in materialized form. The material existence of ideologies may be thought of as rituals and practices and thus connected as spaces, architecture, structures and objects, each of which is performed or produced by the individuals anew. As it relates to the situation of an exhibition, this means that not only curators but also artists, visitors, cleaning personnel, guards and so on

08 See Schober *Montierte Geschichten*, p. 95

09 Eva Sturm *Konservierte Welt: Museum und Musealisierung*, Berlin: Reimer 1991, p. 9

10 See Walter Grasskamp "Unberührbar und unverkäuflich: Der Museumsshop als Notausgang" in *Konsumglück: Die Ware Erlösung*, Munich: Beck 2000, p. 143ff

11 Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (eds.) *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938–1940, Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1999, p. 251–270

12 See Katharina Tietze: special personnel are hired for auto shows to clean the cars of signs of having been touched. Interestingly, most of them are men.

13 See Schober *Montierte Geschichten*, p. 28ff

14 Pierre Bourdieu *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1986

15 Louis Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, London: New Left Books 1977

produce through their actions the material form of the Ideological State Apparatus. Seen in this way, all those involved are both actors and addressees of the ISA, even if they may have different opportunities for access. The complexity of the way in which, according to Althusser, the ideology of cultural institutions is conveyed in a continuous process and form subjects as individuals as a lasting process, will be outlined only in brief here. First of all, he distinguishes between Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses; both systems serve to maintain the relationships of production in the interest of certain classes or groups. He defines as 'Repressive State Apparatuses' the government, the administration, the army, the police, courts, and prisons. They are all based on a violence that can be enforced directly. By contrast, Ideological State Apparatuses get individuals to agree voluntarily to the existing relationships of production. Althusser himself points to parallels with Gramsci's concept of civil society.[16] Althusser defines the following institutions as ISAs:

01 the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches),
02 the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private "Schools"),
03 the family ISA,
04 the legal ISA,
05 the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties),
06 the trade union ISA,
07 the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.),
08 the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.).

Although, if we follow Althusser, the Repressive State Apparatus works above all on the basis of violence and the Ideological State Apparatus on the basis of ideology, each of these apparatuses uses both methods; this results in constant, subtle links between violence and ideology. In contrast to the relative homogeneity of the Repressive State Apparatus, there are many different ISAs. These are often private institutions. To ensure the dominance of a group or class over the long term, it is necessary to support it with a universally recognized ideology. ISAs are thus not just, to use Althusser's terms, objects of struggle but also sites where the 'class struggle' is carried out, or, as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau will later describe it, a place where a number of antagonistic relationships fight it out. It is worth noting that this disproves on a theoretical level the often-stated suspicion that critique in the cultural field is powerless or has only symbolic meaning. At the same time, it becomes clear the extent to which politics must necessarily possess symbolic (ideological) character. Although Althusser shows, in keeping with the Marxist tradition, that in the final instance consciousness (that is, all ideological relationships) is dependent on the base, on material relationships, nevertheless within a certain perimeter there is also a counter-movement that consciousness influences being.

As it relates to exhibitions projects, one interim result of this argument is that it makes sense for a leftist project to address visitors in new ways and to incorporate the production of meaning in different ways, even if it is the case, as is often lamented today, that technologies of project work are also employed in other branches of immaterial work to the benefit of the corporate capital. How does the influencing of subjects by ideology function? First of all, Althusser makes it clear that what people represent in ideology is not their real living conditions, but rather primarily their relationship to those living conditions: "what is represented in ideology is… not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of these individuals to the real relations in which they live." This explanation goes beyond the production of ideology through cultural hegemony; even alienation is not a sufficient explanation here. When Althusser wrote this essay around 1970, he saw the apparatus of the schools as the dominant ISA in the formation of capitalist society. Today, in 2006, when, for example, adults in Germany on average watch more than three hours of television a day, the mass media can be seen as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus, which also have the task of stimulating consumption. The fundamental function of all ISAs is to constitute concrete individuals as subjects. As Terry Eagleton has noted, Althusser based the constitution of the subject on the Lacanian institution of the imaginary. Like the mirror stage, this formation is based on a structure of a failure to recognize. According to Althusser, constitution by means of Ideological State Apparatuses occurs by means of four steps in mirror symmetry: the appellation of individuals as subjects (which he describes as pre-figuration, analogous to a family expecting an unborn child, as described by Freud and Lacan), the subjugation to the SUBJECT (which can also be called, following Lacan 'the Great Other'), the recognition of the mirror situation between subjects and the SUBJECT and the subjects among themselves as well as the subject's recognition of itself, and, the fourth step, the absolute certainty that everything is indeed like that and the subjects acting accordingly. The subjects work 'all by themselves'. This model represents a kind of ideal case, that is, a situation of a failure to recognize that is threatened by ruptures. For, if we follow Freud and Lacan, the constitution of the subject is never possible without loss; it occurs through breaks

16 Althusser refers to Gramsci, who explained that the distinction between public and private goes back to law. The state, which is the state of the ruling class, is neither public nor private; it is rather the condition for distinguishing between public and private. For that reason, Althusser is concerned only with how it functions. Private institutions can also function as Ideological State Apparatuses.

and ruptures that survive as latent fractures. The subject as a construction thus always remains susceptible to breaking down. If we summarize Althusser's theoretical concepts and apply them to the field 'exhibitions', it means that subjects of educational institutions are primarily situated as subjects of instruction and entertainment.

In the process the values of the dominant Western social system are communicated; the subject is positioned as white and male and stands in a relationship of desire relative to the objects presented for view. As a rule, one important subtext of exhibitions is that the subject is and remains a passive viewer. He or she is a passive consumer of 'aesthetic productions' that cultivate his or her taste into that of a refined connoisseur and consumer. Subjects are addressed individually, not as a group in which they could exchange things and articulate common interests. As a rule, the subjects of the exhibition are shown how to control and postpone their needs, or merely displaced in the direction of viewing pleasure. They 'learn', much as they did in school, to move their bodies in controlled ways. They learn to separate the levels 'intellect' and 'action'. They also learn to separate the various social fields (art, politics, public, private, kitsch, high art, etc.). If we relate all this to the post-Fordist concept of 'immaterial work', all areas are subjected to the primacy of economic profitability. All of this should not be thought of as a unique situation, but rather as a continuous practice that is communicated by rituals and settings in which subjects take part and which they acknowledge. It is what Pierre Bourdieu calls 'habit': the way in which exhibitions are appropriated, how social codes are used to speak about exhibitions and other cultural events, how exhibitions are enjoyed and formed. Bourdieu sees this 'educational capital' as a historically constituted and socially conditioned system of schemas of perception, expression, and thinking. Seen in this way, there is absolutely no difference between mass media and presentations in a museum or other art institution. As a matter of principle, both locate the viewers and visitors in a position of passive enjoyment and mark them as subjects of a cultural paradigm.

Oliver Marchart has outlined, on the basis of his theoretical analysis, possibilities of emancipatory pedagogy; he proposes (a) interruption and (b) anticanonisation. The interruption is thematised along with the naturalisation effects described above. Anticanonisation would use the definitional power of exhibition institutions in order to expand the canon radically in terms of both form and content.[17] Addressing the same questions, Nora Sternfeld refers to historical concepts of pedagogy that made self-empowerment a goal. She identifies four essential criteria: First, the idea of a natural talent is called into question. Second, one urgent pedagogical goal is to develop an awareness of one's own situation. Third, this is achieved by addressing social relationships that reveal the mechanisms of exclusion and exploitation. Fourth, it is essentially about creating the preconditions for changing these social and political relationships, that is to say, the pedagogical project must go hand in hand with a political practice. Sternfeld also examines talk about the emancipatory in the communication of art and culture. In this view, the task of communication today is seen as making accessible an awareness of the criteria outlined above and to permit counter-narratives. As a result, this view of communication focuses on opening institutions to political practice and organization. This concept will necessarily bump up against institutional boundaries that distinguish, and that is precisely what separates emancipatory practice from merely participatory practice.[18] The field of putting on view is a contested place; new attributions are not just discursive acts but also political and strategic projects. This is all the more true if we assume that Ideological State Apparatuses, the production and circulation of images, symbolic actions, and all forms of representation of political and social relationships have concrete effects and produce concrete subjects.

17 See Marchart "Die Institution spricht"

18 See Nora Sternfeld "Der Taxispielertrick: Vermittlung zwischen Selbstregulierung und Selbst-ermächtigung" in Jaschke, Martinez-Turek and Sternfeld (eds.) *Wer spricht?: Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, p. 15-34

Title of exhibition: *Curating Degree Zero Archive*
Place: Touring project, various venues
Date: 2003 – Present day
Curators: Barnaby Drabble and Dorothee Richter
Display and interpretation: In collaboration with various designers, curators, artists, fine art and art history students.

CURATING ART AFTER NEW MEDIA – ON TECHNOLOGY, TRANSPARENCY, PRESERVATION AND PLAY

BERYL GRAHAM AND SARAH COOK IN AN INTERVIEW WITH BARNABY DRABBLE

Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook started working together in the North East of England in 1999. They founded the website CRUMB, based on a shared interest in the questions associated with the display of computer-based and interactive art-works in museums and galleries. The site, a resource specifically aimed at curators dealing with the issue of exhibiting new-media art, houses a collection of material ranging from academic papers on the subject, interviews with curators and administrative reports and technical advice and information. The CRUMB discussion list has around six hundred subscribers, divided more or less equally between North America and Europe. The email facilitated discussion is free of charge and open to all; Cook and Graham do not edit the contributions but mediate its content by proposing themes for discussion on a bi-monthly basis and inviting specific practitioners to take the lead on these.

Barnaby Drabble:
Is CRUMB a curated site?

Sarah Cook:
I guess the first thing to make clear is that CRUMB was established to fulfil a need. Before its existence there wasn't anywhere you could go to read the reports from conferences that have taken place or texts dealing with the issues of the exhibition and presentation of new media art. So in that sense we do collect together information and put it in one place. The other need that it has filled is to encourage curators to engage with technology and to share information and their research before they put the exhibition up. Personally I have observed that working on an exhibition tends to be very private in the initial research stages, with all knowledge held back until the exhibition goes public. Furthermore, the tendency is that at the point of display, we choose to share only knowledge about the art itself and not knowledge about how the exhibition came to be. We wanted in some way to move to that public stage a little earlier in the process. Sometimes I think of CRUMB as a support group.

Obviously the mailing list is not in any way curated. We pick topics that need discussing and in that sense we are acting as editors, in the same way that if we were doing a journal we might pick a different topic for each journal issue we put out. But we don't explicitly point to particular art content, so if you are taking the strict definition of curating as the presentation of art I don't think it's that either. It is about resource sharing and professional development and it tries to make public those stages of a process that are often not public.

Barnaby Drabble:
Aside from the needs it is clearly fulfilling, were there additional, perhaps individual, reasons behind setting up CRUMB?

Beryl Graham:
Yes, for me it stemmed very much from my own professional experience. I had organised a show called *Serious Games*[1] for the Laing and the Barbican Art Galleries in London in 1996, and this, alongside other shows from the early nineties, was very much the first contact for museums with any kind of computer based work. This process was full of challenges, not primarily technical ones, as you might expect, but other challenges that went all the way from research through installation to the press-work and critical response to the exhibition. Because putting on those shows almost killed me, I decided that other curators might actually appreciate some sharing of knowledge and information about this kind of thing.

Sarah Cook:
While working at the Walker Art Center (in Minneapolis) in the visual arts department, I managed information around the works that were in the permanent collection. At the time, Steve Dietz was upstairs working on Gallery 9 and essentially collecting online works of art. I became increasingly aware of a really fundamental disconnection between those two departments and the challenges of getting the curators who dealt with the actual gallery spaces to consider that what Steve Dietz was doing was curatorial, and not simply educational or presentational, and therefore could have an impact on the collection of the Walker. I came to understand those who already felt that new media art was something that deserved to be curated along with the other visual arts, and part of my agenda with CRUMB was to create a place where people could become familiar with new media art in such a way that they understood it as a part of curatorial practice, as something that could be curated.

Barnaby Drabble:
Picking up on an element of Steve Dietz's address at this years ISEA conference[2] he summarised the ups and downs for new media art practitioners in the past few years. And from what he said one gets the sense of a close knit community, a hermetic scene if you like, which is defending its boundaries and fighting for its importance or its equality within institutions. Is this a fair reading of new media art today? What are the strengths and the weaknesses of having this scene feeling in new media art at the moment?

Beryl Graham:
Well I am not sure that I would agree with that, because I am not sure that it is that close knit or that it is defending is boundaries. In fact it tends to be without boundaries by its nature and to be really quite free flowing. Indeed I think this lack of boundaries is sometimes one of the things which galleries find challenging about it, new media art often wants to merge with other kinds of art forms and everything from activism to fine art is some how now connected by new media.

Sarah Cook:
I disagree here as well. Steve Dietz was proposing that while there was necessarily, for a period of time, an area where new media was really only speaking to its peers, that this was no longer necessary or appropriate. Like with any emerging discipline in whatever field, there is a point at which having its own category can be useful because it allows people to become familiar with it and get a handle on it. At the most practical level this might mean the Arts Council will have a particular grant that

will support this particular practice, even if only at first recognising that something is going on out there that they don't know that much about yet. This occurred in the Northeast when the Arts Council of England hired Michelle Hirschhorn to actually identify new media as a discipline of art practice, because at the time it was within a department supporting publishing and broadcasting. I think what Steve was getting at or suggesting was that there has been this initial period of self-organisation and then a period of exploration by museums and funding bodies trying to adopt it, and then in some instances rejecting it again. He was talking about a discipline and the institution's relationship to this, not about a hermetic scene.

Barnaby Drabble:

But, the nature of many of the artists, producers and curators involved in new media is that they are networked internationally and they are very media-savvy, so there is a community and as CRUMB shows this community is online. Do you not think that this community might appear closer knit from the outside to traditional art practitioners and curators?

Beryl Graham:

I think that it is quite easy for mainstream curators to be absolutely unaware of this because it is totally invisible to them if they are not aware of that network. Then I think that it comes as a shock to them that there is this whole group of people who care about what might happen to the Walker's Collection of net art (for example) and are surprised when they get hundreds of emails about it.[3]

Sarah Cook:

I would like to point out that such networks exist not that differently in the offline world. I mean if you come from a small town in Iowa and you visit New York you have this sense that New York maybe the centre of the art world. But how long does it take you to actually break into that network and to discover which of the hundreds of galleries are the ones that you're interested in or which curators relate to your practice? Perhaps the main difference with the offline art world is that there is this long standing tradition of publishing and criticism and available tools that enable people to find their way in and out. That has been less the case with new media.

Barnaby Drabble:

From my reading there seem so many definitions of this term new media, when you use it what artistic activities are for you referring to?

Sarah Cook:

Briefly, one of the fundamental things we have to make clear when talking about new media art is how any definition relies on the relationship between the technologies of production and the technologies of distribution. For us New Media Art considers distribution as an integral part of the way in which the work is produced. With this in mind you can easily distinguish between new media art and say contemporary photography, where you may use a computer to edit a photograph but when you eventually print it out it exists in 2D form and is distributed as such. For our concerns we are interested particularly in work that seems to indicate the further potential of the technology itself, and here one might think about the point at which you engage with computer code or internet technologies. At first this definition also helped us to get some necessary distance from the notion that if you painted a lot of paintings and then scanned them and put them onto a website you were creating new media art!

Barnaby Drabble:

In relation to this observation of the important relationship between production and distribution in new media art, I have a question about what Mark Tribe calls a 'fuzzy line'[4] between making and curating. The fuzziness of this line has provoked a considerable amount of conflict of opinion between curator, artists and critics in recent years. Is this problematic for the curator as a creator as marked in the field of new media art as it is in other fields of art practice?

Beryl Graham:

I think there are fuzzy lines but they are not necessarily between artists and curators. I wouldn't call myself an artist/curator and I don't think that it necessarily applies to new media more than other kinds of contemporary art practice. But there is a certainly more fuzziness between other roles, for example between the interpretation person for the website and the website as a site for displaying art, between the technical departments and curatorial departments, and of course between the curatorial departments themselves how they might move between photography-based work, digital media and sculpturally-based interactive work for example.

Barnaby Drabble:

Your answer seems to deal with the institutional model of how this material is dealt with. In other cases we can observe micro-institutional models with sites, which present new media art works, and which are also programmed, interpreted and curated by the artists themselves. This form of self-publishing is perhaps a clear case of where this fuzzy line does exist.

Sarah Cook:

I remember a remark by Lynn Hershman that she used to have to write reviews under a pseudonym, because no one was writing them for her![5] But seriously, on the one hand it is impossible to ignore the peer review network, which all net-based new media artists have grown up with. And essentially this takes the form of using the network to exchange works of art with fellow artists, as opposed to being at an art college where you all study in one building and you walk into one another's spaces to see what everyone is up to. It might be better to see this as file exchange, rather than curating. In fact this is where things like the bulletin board system really originated. On the other hand it is important to understand that making new media art is a very collaborative process, it also involves teams of people, whether they are engineers or scientists working with arts, or designers, programmers, etc. So at some point in that, the role of project manager, or producer, or commissioner can in some ways be perceived as an artistic role. They are after all creating this team and shaping the way in which the team produces the work.

Barnaby Drabble:

Is there is something to be learnt by curators working with other media, from the models being thrown up by curating new media?

Sarah Cook:

Absolutely, I think *Database Imaginary*[6], the exhibition I curated in Banff with Steve Dietz and Anthony Kiendl, is a really good example of this. I feel as though we've broken a major rule of curatorial practice by including on the website photographs of us installing the show. This

reveals what is behind the scenes and at the same time provides incredibly useful information. It is also clear that no matter what the art form is, when you're putting up a show you're dealing with a lot of the same issues: you're still figuring out what's going on the labels; where the work is going; how are people going to find it and what the nature of engagement by the audience will be. I think that maybe that's the level at which you see so many of the different things that people can learn about exhibition creation through new media.

Barnaby Drabble:

Susan Morris has described in a report the common characteristics of new media art as being, and I will list them here: fluidity, tangibility, liveness, variability, replicability, connectivity, interactivity, computability, and chance[7]. I was looking down this list when I first read it and realising just how radically incompatible all of these things are with, let's say, traditional procedures of collecting, exhibiting and archiving which the museum partakes in. When I look at this and consider the propensity for artists and curators within the field of new media art to question their under-representation within the institutions themselves, I can't help thinking that this wish to be in the museum exhibits a misunderstanding of the potential of these practices. Am I right in perceiving a kind of conservatism within this potentially radical practice?

Sarah Cook:

Firstly, Susan Morris' list is just one list. Mark Tribe's list has nineteen behaviours[8]. Steve Dietz had three at one point: connectivity, computability and interactivity[9], which I believe he's now recoiling from. Secondly, in relation to the question of archiving, the Variable Media Initiative has suggested six behaviours of works of art that cause challenges for exhibition and preservation. They are looking at what they call variable media, everything from Eva Hesse to Dan Graham, sculptures to light boxes and performance-based work to new media. Amongst other things they raise the question: if one of the behaviours of the work of art is that it is participatory then how do you preserve it? Thirdly, about under-representation and whether this is a conservative part in relation to radical practice: I don't think that the artists are worrying about under-representation so much as the curators or the institutions. They are worried that they are missing this emerging field of art practice that they might not have known about and they are also worrying that if there isn't a history written there won't ever be. We are really aware of how that's happened with other forms of art practice, like performance and video work that has not found its way into collections and results in situations like the one we now suffer in the UK, where the only video art history that we have access to is the American one.

Beryl Graham:

I agree and would add that if this practice is not represented in the museum discourse then it does become much more difficult for researchers to later develop critical theory about it or to come up with a balanced critical response to what follows.

Sarah Cook:

There is a particular moment that Charlie Gere has written about in the late sixties and early seventies when conceptual art and minimalist art practice was first really accepted by the museum; this was the time of the Software show at the Jewish Museum and the Information show at MOMA.[10] Those exhibitions included minimal and conceptual art practice alongside essentially network-based art practice, including works involving computers as well as fax machine projects and together these were thought of the art that was suggestive of the information age that people told us we were heading into. What happened was that the museum really adopted conceptual art and minimalist art and they stepped away from systems art. It is easy to see that one has a very well-documented history and the other has not.

Barnaby Drabble:

I wanted to come back to the relationship to early conceptual art which was certainly considered to be critical and radical in its time and encompassed not only institutional critique but also openly political material and activism, both things which, in a co-authored article, you have referenced as roots of present day new media art. Could you explain maybe how that passage has happened?

Beryl Graham:

One of our colleagues at CRUMB, Ele Carpenter, is writing her PhD about the relationship between activism and net art. She has pointed out that there is actually quite a lack of crossover between the two knowledge bases in lots of ways. Yes, there is certainly a lot debate about activism in the new media field and we can trace this back to the activities of the whole generation working with the early internet. As soon as the net stopped being a purely military technology, it started being used for ecological activism and for getting participatory projects going. There is also the way of working — new media artists and activists tend to have a similar collaborative and collective nature, which Sarah mentioned earlier. So history links the two in various and different ways. But, once you consider relationships to the fine art context, activist histories have always sat really uncomfortably in the gallery setting. As an example I think of the community art photography projects of the 1980's, which I experienced firsthand, where it certainly seemed strange to be placing the results in a fine art gallery, divorced from its media workshop production history. Equally there are parts of new media art that have never had any kind of an activist history, take artists working with landscape digital video installation, for example.

David Ross has written quite interestingly about tracking the history of early video art from an activist expectation, that it was going to 'change the world' to a more fine arts orientated practice. He also suggests that there is possibly a parallel in the development of new media.[11]

Sarah Cook:

I think this process rings true, certainly with the rise of experimental TV studios there was the idea at one point that cable access TV could essentially be a video art channel. Julian Stallabrass has written really quite usefully on this topic by bringing in a more fundamental issue, which is that of economics.[12] Essentially he maintains that when artists started to engage with new technologies they were looking for what the economics of it were: what you have access to; what you have to pay for access to; and how you use that. As such, a lot of activist-type projects are essentially manipulations of the existing technologies in order to make work, which suggests that the technologies are proprietary, and I think that's quite significant. As far as I know, there isn't really an equivalent of that within art history (and I don't think the colour field painters of the 60's went to house paint specifically because of economics!). In the

light of this it is interesting to observe projects that are moving away from an interest in the World Wide Web, as the public face of network computing, towards software and code-based art to try and suggest that there are other ways of networking computers that aren't just web-based. Certainly works like Shredder or Webstalker have really tried to breakdown the idea of the browser altogether, as something that has become a commercial feature of our daily lives. I think you could call that activism, because it is a deeper investigation of the economics of new media networking.

Beryl Graham:

And a lot of artists are, as you know, making work that is inherently critical of the technology itself. For example groups such as Critical Art Ensemble work with anything from biotech to the Internet in order to be critical about the powerful nature of the very technology that they are using. In a lower tech way artists like Alexei Shulgin, the Russian artist, have done some very ironic, clever pieces that point out just how lame a lot of the technology is, undermining the utopian power of technology.

Barnaby Drabble:

It is interesting to see this word 'filtering' being used so frequently in the field of new media art, almost interchangeably with the word 'curating'. With its scientific connotations I was also thinking about Hans Ulrich Obrist's use of the word catalyst in relation to curating projects.[13] What do you think about either of these analogies? Are they interchangeable with the term curating?

Sarah Cook:

I try not to use filtering interchangeably with curating. I think it is one particular methodology that sits within the curator's practice and I would hope that curators' practices are always responsive to particular time and spaces. For instance if you are doing something on the web and an institution asks you to select work that is representative of the diversity of practice in that country or region then adopting a filtering methodology might be appropriate. But I certainly wouldn't think the way in which I had co-curated *Database Imaginary* in Banff was simply filtering. I responded again to time and space, but chose clearly to 'curate' the show. Perhaps this term 'filtering' is left over from the 'dot com' boom, when it arose to deal with the notion that with content portals being established, there would be a need fill them up by 'mining' the contents that were out there. I remember Iliyana Nedkova commented at the time that it was potentially more lucrative than straight-up curating because the dot com portals certainly had money for you to be their filters.[14] But there was this flip side to this lucrative possibility and that was essentially that you were being 'outsourced' by them with all the implications that brings.

Beryl Graham:

Filtering does tend to infer a really quite old-fashioned connoisseurship role for the curator, which is kind of different from being an editor; there is an element of curating where you are aiming to help your viewers understand the art work, in the way that you select, governed by how you present it. I think the catalytic role is important as well: CRUMB itself as a website is mostly about gathering and editing and putting together, but we also initiate things which are outside of the website. We don't actually present artwork on CRUMB but we do independent projects, like the seminars on curating new media we did for the BALTIC, or independent exhibitions. Obviously in these situations we are less editorial and more catalytic.

I am interested how a lot of the debates about curating and research crossover. The debates in research revolve around a dual role; you are either a god or a servant: you could have your god-like research knowledge which you deign to give to the world, or you're a servant who is gathering information to share with other researchers and promote the growth of knowledge. So you know you can either be filtering or catalytic, and I think often both at the same time.

To move on, I wanted to just reference the interview with Peter Weibel which Sarah conducted in 2000.[15] He interestingly claims that the challenge for curators of new media art is greater than for curators of traditional media, mainly because the infrastructure of the market — critics, curating, the independent scene, the music scene, the museum, etc — isn't there, or certainly not in the same scale. So it's difficult to find out where the guides are for who is good and who is not; the canon isn't easy to find. And he claims that in the absence of this that the most important tool for the curator is theory and I am interested to know whether you agree that new media curating is a more theoretical pursuit than other forms of curating?

Sarah Cook:

I think with that interview you can see where Peter Weibel and I start to disagree. I don't agree that theory is a tool in any form of curatorial practice, let alone new media. When I was doing an MA in Curatorial Practice (and I am not sure if it's as prevalent in any other curatorial courses) we had a critical theory class and a philosophy of aesthetics class. What resulted, it seemed to me, was that the course leaders wanted us to be able to work with certain theorists and philosophers and encouraged us to do shows about non-linear narrative (or whatever the theory de jour was). I think this became just a very easy gloss with curatorial students saying "here's a bunch of art I'm interested in, how do I tie it together? Oh, here's some interesting theory that will do the job!" However, having said that, I think what Peter Weibel does at ZKM is to come at it from the other direction, which is to be commended. He goes out to find theorists and philosophers, like Bruno Latour, and says, "all right let's talk about how knowledge is made public" and then they curate a gigantic exhibition. This is admirable, as it is a contribution to scholarship in quite a serious way. Personally for the practice of the curator in relation to theory, if it doesn't start with artwork then you're really in trouble.

Barnaby Drabble:

What would you see as the most important tool for curators of new media art, if not theory?

Beryl Graham:

I think I agree with Sarah, that it has to start with the artwork. I feel as though I've been embedded in photography theory which I might unconsciously use as a tool early in the curatorial process, but I don't tend to be led by theory because it's not necessary useful for the audience who's going to be looking at the work, they have to be looking at the artwork first and then articulating the point behind the show. So maybe that is the most useful tool: the ability to collaborate, to network and to connect, and by connect I mean to connect ideas or to connect the right kind of people to work together. The

thing about theory is that fashions for theory change, as often as fashions for art do.

Barnaby Drabble:
So you are suggesting that theory is a tool in the state of being a curator but maybe not actively in curating exhibitions?

Sarah Cook:
Yes, I think that's true.

Barnaby Drabble:
I will move on to my final question, which again brings us back to Steve Dietz's recent address at the ISEA. Calling for a new inclusiveness, and stressing that new-media art needs to move on, he asks us to assume a moment of 'art after new media'. I want to know if you agree with this observation. Has new media art really won what it set out to win?

Sarah Cook:
Well, he was being deliberately provocative because he is the director of the next ISEA, so he is tasked with the sole responsibility of organising one of the world's biggest new media festivals. Right now, interests within new media are ranging from mobile technology to architecture and I am sure that Steve is trying to promote a cross-disciplinary curatorial approach when he talks of what is now appropriate.

Beryl Graham:
I have always tried to present new media along side other art forms, just to get people to make those connections and to not have it exclusively what Lev Manovich would call 'Turing-land'[16] which is the kind of art-science-new-media specialist land as opposed to the arts in general. So I always try to do that, have it not exclusive, but I think that new media is hardly ubiquitous in arts organisations. As Sarah said, the number of specialist new media curators in institutions is tiny, as a result lots of people still haven't seen any of this kind of artwork, so I don't think new media has won. I don't think it wants to win exactly, but it may want to be included, to be allowed to play too.

This interview was conducted in Sunderland, November 2004.

-

01 Carol Brown and Beryl Graham (eds.) *Serious Games*, Barbican Art Gallery, Tyne and Wear Museums, London 1996

02 Steve Dietz, Opening speech, ISEA Conference, 2005

03 Kathy Halbreich's response to the net art community's concerns regarding the future of new media at The Walker Art Center, 2003, available online: http://www.mteww.com/walker_letter/halbreich_letter.html

04 Mark Tribe in Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham (eds.) *Curating New Media*, Third Baltic International Seminar, May 2001, available online: http://www.newmedia.sunderland.ac.uk/crumb

05 Lynn Hershman, Unpublished notes from presentation at conference "Sins of Change, Media Arts in Transition", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA, April, 2000

06 Database Imaginary, available online: http://databaseimaginary.banff.org

07 Susan Morris "Museums and New Media Art", Rockefeller Foundation, available online: http://www.rockfound.org/Library/Museums_and_New_Media_Art.pdf

08 Mark Tribe, Talk at Goldsmith's College as part of the "Intensities" Symposium, 2004

09 Steve Dietz "Signal or noise? The network museum" in *Webwalker #20: Art Entertainment Network*, 2000, available online: http://www.walkerart.org/gallery9/webwalker/ww_032300_main.html

10 Charlie Gere *Digital Culture*, London: Reaktion Books 2002

11 David Ross "Transcription of Lecture by David Ross, San Jose State University, March 2nd, 1999" in *Switch*, available online: http://switch.sjsu.edu/web/ross.html

12 Julian Stallabrass *Internet Art. The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*, London: Tate Publishing 2003

13 "In a certain sense, the curator is a catalyst and must be able to disappear at a certain point." Hans Ulrich Obrist in an interview by Robert Fleck in *Artforum*, May 1995

14 Iliyana Nedkova in Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham (eds.) *Curating New Media*, Third Baltic International Seminar, May 2001, available online: http://www.newmedia.sunderland.ac.uk/crumb

15 Peter Weibel in an interview by Sarah Cook, Karlsruhe, 2000, available online: http://www.newmedia.sunderland.ac.uk/crumb/phase3/pdf/intvw_weibel.pdf

16 Lev Manovich "The death of computer art" at *Rhizome* 1996, available online: http://www.rhizome.org

Title of exhibition: *Database Imaginary*
Place: Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, Banff, Canada
Tour: The Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, Canada
The Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto, Missassauga, Canada
Liane and Danny Taran Galery, Saiyde Bronfman Centre, Montreal, Canada
Date: Banff - November 14, 2004 - January 23, 2005
Regina - March 19, 2005 to May 1, 2005
Missassuaga - November 3 - December 18, 2005
Montreal - February 10 to April 2, 2006
Curators: Sarah Cook, Steve Dietz and Anthony Kiendl
Artists: Cory Arcangel, Julian Bleecker, Scott Paterson and Marina Zurkow, Natalie Bookchin, Heath Bunting & Kayle Brandon, Alan Currall, Beatriz de Costa, Jamie Schulte & Brooke Singer, Hans Haacke, Graham Harwood/Mongrel, Agnes Hegedus, Pablo Helguera, Cheryl l'Hirondelle Waynohtew, Lisa Jevbratt/C5, George Legrady, Lev Manovich, Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, Muntadas, Philip Pocock, Axel Heide, onesandzeros, Gregor Stehle, Edward Poitras, David Rokeby, Warren Sack, Thomson & Craighead, University of Openess, Preemptive Media and Angie Waller

PRODUCING PUBLICS – MAKING WORLDS! ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ART PUBLIC AND THE COUNTERPUBLIC

MARION VON OSTEN

"Publics are queer creatures, as you cannot point at them, count them, or look them in the eye. You also cannot easily avoid them."
Michael Warner *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York 2002, p. 7

In the modern and post-modern eras, the publication, conveyance, and with them the institutionalization of the fine arts have been characterized by a whole series of crises. Among the more well known are the cyclical fluctuations on the art market. On the other hand, to this very day, artists' critiques of the art scene and its conveyance context appear to have little significance for the reception and production of art and culture. And this is the case despite the fact that, since the advent of modernism, artistic approaches have not only referred back to their own medium in the sense of 'l'art pour l'art'. They have also concerned themselves with the respective current discourses on culture not comprised within the framework of the art scene, and with the narrowly defined conveyance structures of the institutions as well as the exclusive audiences addressed by those structures. Marcel Duchamp and the Surrealists, Marcel Broodthaers and Concept Art are as representative of this protest against the institutional framework conditions provided by the capitalist societies of the West as the American painting of the 1960s, Minimal Art, and the neo-conceptual and contextual art of the present. When artistic concepts are understood as responses to the art-conveyance complex, it becomes clear that the hegemony of the Western high culture: its power centres and rituals, as well as the division of labour and the decision-making authority that go hand in hand with that culture, are constantly being challenged by a wide and variegated range of players. In the process, the artists' conflict-laden protest has taken place on the one hand in the form of criticism of the selection criteria of curators, juries and art educators, on the other hand as criticism of the mode of depiction, i.e. the framing of the artwork by the art space itself. Moreover, to an extent, the cultures of everyday life, the contributions of the pop and sub-cultures of the post-war period, have been brought back to the art space, thus serving to open that space symbolically for a new public. And the post-war era also saw the establishment of an international politicized scene of culture-makers, artists, musicians, theatre people and filmmakers who offered an alternative to the institutional discourse, represented new contents and addressed new publics in self-organized spaces and collaborative projects. The social movements since the 1970s and the diasporic contexts in the metropolises, for example, succeeded in positioning themselves primarily in such spaces or created such spaces themselves. There, in turn, alternative art practices developed. Culture-makers from the global South and East who have stood up for individuality and modernity in their work and demanded a place in the institutions of high art have also decisively influenced the Western art system and its Richter scale.

The crisis of art's institutionalization is therefore distinguished, on the one hand, by struggles between the producers of culture and their conveyors and institutions over importance and resources, on the other hand by the issue of action spaces outside the control of the bourgeois publics and their agents. These heated conflicts found entrance into art theory and the work of artists, but ultimately failed to bring about any decisive changes in the institutional framework conditions. The division of labour between curators and artists, critics and gallery owners and the related economy, for example, is amazingly constant. And the proportions of women and non-European artists have likewise been stable for twenty years, even if women work increasingly as curators and critics and even if exhibitions on feminist and post-colonial themes have come to be considered essential for good form. As we, in 2005, are able to ascertain, the hegemonic decision-making authority, the entity which ultimately dictates the discourses, has remained to a large extent in the hands of the art centres of the West and their institutions. Yet the art conveyors have not been left untouched by the institutionalization crises. They have learned to think contextually and to ensure that curators frequently hear the question as to 'who speaks for whom?' Because, as they know, the diversification of cultural articulation as formulated in the criticism of high culture also provoked greater specification for the representation of art and culture. The demand is for an expanded framework for reflection, encompassing the formation, constitution and articulation of knowledge and power. For the curators of today, art institutions and contemporary art events like the worldwide biennials are no longer empty containers or pure platforms for the representation of art,

but specific places which open up a historical and symbolic framework, and influence or even create the cultural position of the works exhibited within them. What this means is that the place where art is conveyed to the public must be understood as much in a political sense as the content of the artistic work, that this responsibility no longer rests solely on the shoulders of the artist who takes a 'critical stance', but is also borne by the curator, who 'publicizes' it in a specific context. Within this conveyance process, the curator moreover defines her/himself precisely on the basis of her/his involvement in the production of cultural meanings. The process of collecting, classifying and exhibiting artworks is not a neutral and independent method, but, as I would like to show in this article, one that is integrally and centrally bound up with the production of prevailing knowledge. The curatorial position and its power to decide and to select also means that it produces cultural values, and accordingly influences the public opinion. The curatorial decision is therefore actively involved in the process of the constitution of articulations and their meanings.

Thus it can be said that the contextualization and assembly of artefacts, discourses and approaches which artists once established as practices in reaction to the museum or art institution are now integrated in the art conveyance context, and the curators function almost like artists. The traditional difference between the curator's work and that of the culture-maker or the artist is that it is more or less taken for granted that the culture conveyor is paid for her/his work, which is viewed as a profession, and that the selection/production of knowledge takes place in a space that doesn't first have to prove itself as a public space (as opposed to the spaces organized by the artists themselves, which are all too happily proven guilty of being nothing but privatized family economies). For the art space and the art event operate on the assumption that they have a clear and unequivocal audience, an addressee, a public. For me, a culture producer who represents an approach in which curatorial action was developed as a critical artistic practice in order to challenge the institutions' division of labour and power of division, the questions that arise in this context are manifold. I cannot pose and answer all of them here, but would like, in this article, to propose a change of perspective which, firstly, conceives of the public as a fiction of the modern era in its genealogy, secondly as a means of making clear that the public is created by the place and practice of exhibiting and by curatorial decisions, and, thirdly, which asks exactly what brings about this positive reference to an art public, whom this public is actually supposed to address, and who constitutes it. Then, in the second part of the text, I will introduce several examples of practice that are more closely associated with the term 'counterpublic'. The aim of these deliberations is, possibly, to develop a criterion for the criticism of exhibition work which is based on the position of the culture producer as an involved player and producer of discourses and publics, and which does not carry on the opposition between artist and curator but attempts to politicize it. By examining the relationship between public and counterpublic, I would moreover like to initiate a debate, which reacts reflexively to exhibition practices as forms of 'publicization' and asks to what extent curatorial concepts, in dialogue with other cultural players, are capable of really generating diversified and contextual publics. In other words, publics which no longer merely meet the expectations of the abstract idea of a bourgeois public, publics which claim already to criticize the current exhibition concepts in their choice of themes.[1]

01

According to Michael Warner, the idea of a public as a cultural form, as a kind of practiced fiction of the type generated by the modern era on various levels, is an idea which differs radically from comparable conceptions of the public in earlier or non-Western societies. Moreover, the history of the emergence of the museum and the art space was absolutely fundamental for the constitution of this conception of the public.

The art gallery as we know it today emerged in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe in the context of the dissolution of the feudal system and the establishment of various civil institutions and disciplines: history and natural science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national and, later, international exhibitions, arcades and department stores, which were of central significance as locations for the development and circulation of new scientific disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology, ethnography, political economy, etc.) and their discursive categories (past, evolution, humanism, aesthetics, etc.). They owe their existence to the project of the European Enlightenment and played an equally constitutive role for the establishment of the 'bourgeois society' and the subject status of the 'citizen'. The British cultural theorist Tony Bennett thus conceives of the practice of display chiefly as a set of cultural technologies in the Foucauldian sense, technologies which permit the organization of a certain subjectivity: a citizen voluntarily practicing his right to educate and control himself.[2] At the begin-ning of the nineteenth century, this 'exhibitionary complex', as Bennett calls it, organized knowledge in a new way, by putting it on display for a larger number of people.

01
The history of display and of the publics which took shape within that context, for example, raises the question as to the extent to which these publics still exist today in this sense, as a universal category. Is it this specific bourgeois public which art spaces address today, or have the present-day publics not already been long diversified and strongly associated with contexts of content and public personages? What publics, if any, are still produced by art spaces and institutions for the conveyance of art? And how do they differ; in that they receive private and public funding, in that they contribute to the historiography of the avant-garde or the alternative culture; in that they accommodate more or less well-known curators and artists? What publics do art institutions want to reach today, what does the conveyance framework of the art space accomplish today over and above the representation of the works? Can new, specific publics form in these places? And can we use the art space as a place for trying out new publics and concepts of public, in view of the fact that this space continues to be perceived by a large majority as an exclusive space for a certain elite, and the fact that it cannot be taken for granted that it is accessible to culture producers from the southern hemisphere or other groups of the global society?

02
Tony Bennett "The Exhibitionary Complex" in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson und Sandy Nairne (eds.) *Thinking About Exhibitions*, London/New York 1996, p. 80–112

To that end, not only were specific spaces created, but display technologies, ranging from glass cases, hanging methods and stagings all the way to the well-known presentations of Africans or Asians in replicated 'villages' were also developed. As shown by Bennett, who cites the example of London in the period of the expanding British Empire, the first major exhibitions directed towards the 'masses' initially served to present the progress of technological developments and juxtapose it with the spoils from the new colonies.[3] The narrative shaped as a spectacle in the format of the 'public showing' structured a dichotomous, Eurocentric system and with it a large number of paradigmatic pairs of opposites with which the 'civilized world' defined itself: traditional versus modern, agrarian communities vs. urban and industrialized societies, subsistence economies versus accumulative economies, ritual objects and ornament versus the artwork and illustrative functions, oral communication versus written and printed language.[4]

Along with other educational programmes and institutions, the exhibition space, the museum and the gallery that developed in the European metropolises of the nineteenth century as architectural forms, created new formats for access as well as for exclusion. As places whose attendance was voluntary, as opposed to being dictated from above, they appear as a tricky form of disciplinary action, allowing the subjects to be judged according to their own initiative and commitment. While the new civil culture aspired towards dissemination, it also based its legitimization in its claim to produce universally valid knowledge which, since the nineteenth century, was to be generated only for a certain specific subjectivity: that of the intellectual (male) bourgeoisie. In the staging of knowledge in the exhibition space, on the one hand, a very specific concept of knowledge was made available to 'all', which, on the other hand, made a new form of exclusion and self-regulation manifest. Moreover, the latter was further reinforced by the circumstance that the exhibition space itself was organized around the eye of an imagined, ideal beholder. The ocular-centric organisation of the exhibition space had thus perhaps not become the place where the guards or the director could observe the activities completely, themselves unobserved, as Foucault shows with Jeremy Bentham's prison designs. Rather, the exhibition space of the kind initially developing only in Europe is characterized by the fact that the act of viewing had become an activity in its own right. This development went hand in hand with a re-evaluation of vision in general, also expressed in the development of optical instruments and toys, all the way to the invention of photography as a 'reproductive medium' or of typology as a discipline.[5]

An exhibition or museum is further distinguished by the fact that a panoptical situation only comes about in the act of examining the objects, since other visitors can likewise observe us, and vice versa. In the 'exhibitionary complex', a subject is thus created which, in the act of viewing (i.e. by entering an exhibition space) can change its status as an object of knowledge production to become a subject of knowledge, who studies the objects and thus enhances his/her education. At the same time, through the presence of others, he or she becomes an object of observation him or herself. This exchange cannot, however, be undertaken by everyone to equal degrees. For the universe of 'public exhibition' operates with the tendency to grant women and non-Europeans access merely as the objects of representation, but not as the subjects of the representation or knowledge. This status of 'non-membership' applied not only to exclusion from the production of (self) depictions, but also with regard to a gender specificity of the critical faculty. These circumstances are illustrated in a caricature by Honoré Daumier, showing a man and a woman viewing a sculpture, a female nude, in an 'exhibition salon'. In the situation of the spectator, the man is capable of achieving not only the physical distance but also the reflective distance, i.e. of performing the intellectual feat of identifying the object as art. 'She', on the other hand, is not capable of the same accomplishment, as is made evident by her remark that 'she' can interpret the figure only as a naked woman, but not as art. Daumier thus not only points to a class-specific exclusion (she is not a lady of the upper classes), but also to a gender-specific one, communicated by the drawing in threefold manner. First of all, 'she' is not capable of performing the act of reflection necessary in order to encounter art: Rather, the drawing portrays her as a signifier of that group of the population which is incapable of distinguishing art from the objects and acts of everyday life. Secondly, she is not only incapable of making this distinction because she lacks the necessary background knowledge, but for the very reason that 'she' identifies with the figure, with the figure's nakedness. That which is being 're-presented' concerns her, she cannot distance herself, but, in the terms of bourgeois culture, she 'reads' sculpture 'incorrectly' since she cannot abstract what she sees from herself and from reality. She thus acts in opposition to a fundamental prerequisite for the ability of understanding art. Thirdly, it is her identification, triggered by the figure depicted, which bars her from achieving the status of a 'suitable viewer'. For whereas 'he' knows to judge depictions of women as pure art and according to aesthetic criteria, she is deprived of the role of interpretation by virtue of her gender affiliation. In the regimen of male artist geniuses she is not conceived as a producer; and accordingly cannot counter the prevailing representations with one of her own. What is more, the caricature

03 The European culture of 'display', which formed hand in hand with the development of the exhibition space, is also described by authors of other cultures as being specifically European and something very unique. Timothy Mitchell points this out in his text "Die Welt als Ausstellung" ("The World as Exhibition"), whose title alone already indicates that the European viewing regime developed in the nineteenth century was concerned with more than a technology limited to museums and to the technology of exhibition, but also with a central discourse, by means of which the nations of Europe could define themselves in contrast to the nations of the global south. See Timothy Mitchell "The World as Exhibition" in Sebastian Conrad and Shahalini Randiera *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, p. 149-177, first published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1989, p. 217-236

04 Valentine Mudimbe *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1988

05 The constitutive element of viewership is psychologized not foremost as a cultural practice but as voyeurism, as curiosity, and thus naturalized. This is particularly evident in the texts and works of artists of the modern period. For a study of this issue which reaches further back in history, see Linda Hentschel *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag 2001

suggests, and derives its humour from the suggestion, that she is also incapable of being a suitable viewer for the 'artworks', (i.e., ultimately, of being a subject of knowledge). It is 'her' place to be depicted. 'She and it' can only be objects, and not subjects of knowledge, as opposed to her male escort. The non-membership in the public of knowledge subjects would appear to derive from the apparent impossibility of a 'self-representation', through the fact of the object status created by the depiction.

Pictorial production and the spatial contexts in which it is conveyed, as well as the symbolic arrangement of the space itself, can therefore never be viewed in isolation. Pictorial and spatial production are not only social processes as such, they also create social relationships. For that reason, they must be understood within the context of the social conditions in which they circulate and the production conditions from which they emerge. 'Objects' and their representation in pictures are not simply sign systems which are exhibited, but they also produce social interrelationships in their reception, consumption and the various means of using and interacting with them. In this interaction, they join the public to create identification communities and specific publics. At the same time, pictures and their meanings emerge from social contexts and develop an evidence of social circumstances by means of the way they are made visible or invisible. According to Irit Rogoff, the exhibition of pictures plays a major role in determining or perceptions and our thoughts, since its manifestations always communicate certain standpoints and hierarchies.[6] Museums and exhibitions thus produce not only new kinds of knowledge spaces, but also a specific mode of viewing: They teach the viewers to view and grant them access to specifically selected knowledge, or even refuse them that 'competence'. In the records of the British Museum and elsewhere, descriptions can moreover be found of the behavioural norms to be enforced by the guards with regard to the visitors of an exhibition. In addition to the physical distance to the exhibited object, a regulation to which the visitors are subject to this very day, the public is expected to practice a calm and quiet manner of movement and communication if it wants to look at an exhibition. When introduced, these norms were new and not infrequently cases were recorded in which the public did not 'behave' properly, usually uneducated members of the proletariat who 'had to' be shown the door. To this day, museums are places in which we 'behave' accordingly. We speak in hushed tones, we walk slowly, conduct ourselves in a respectable and 'civilized' fashion, having internalized the panoptic situation. In conjunction with the 'exhibitionary complex', 'behaviour' and 'appearance' also became decisive criteria which allowed access to be controlled and restricted. Exclusion from this new form of knowledge conveyance can therefore not be explained solely by the specific effect of the new lordly architecture or of the knowledge placed on show. Historical records provide insight into the fact that women and men of the proletariat were not too awestruck, too stupid, or simply too disinterested to take part in the new formations. Rather, as recipients of knowledge distribution they were only recognized if they behaved according to the new bourgeois norms: a paradox, in view of their social status. This subtle form of exclusion, as well as the supposed freedom to acquire new competencies, reproduced already existing social hierarchies on a wide range of social levels. The positive reference framework of the 'public' envisioned by the 'exhibitionary complex' comprises discrimination in its manner of addressing its recipients, as well as categorizations and designation practices which ascribe different people different social statuses. This definition of the public thus encompasses the idea of the counterpublic, which serve to create means of self-assertion and self-representation against the assignments of status implied by the visualization practices and related discourses.

02

The fiction of an art institution public and its conditions was historically created on a wide range of societal levels, in the design of the spaces, the exhibition technologies and the institutional discourses, even if the latter varied widely from institution to institution and developed into the widely differing approaches of the present day. In my opinion, even if the theoretical discourse today operates on the assumption of a large number of different publics, it still does not signify a denial of the consensus of the traditional concept of the public and its abovementioned exclusions, nor even a more precise examination of that consensus. Because to speak of a multitude of publics still does not mean to ask exactly what kind of a thing a public is, and above all, what constitutes an art public. Is it a place where we meet or which we walk through coincidentally, to see and hear something, does a community thus emerge within it, is it therefore already a political place, a place of participation and articulation? How, and with what methods, Michael Warner asks accordingly, can we examine a public? How do we know where the one begins and the other ends; to what degree can publics be multiplied and divided, and what does this diversification mean for the object negotiated within it and for the people addressed by it, or even participating in it or producing it, and how is it perceived differently by different people?[7] In the analysis of the concept of

06
According to Irit Rogoff, images determine a large proportion of our perception and our thought. What is more, since they appear in advertising, the media and art, they reproduce certain viewpoints and hierarchies, for example the image of the white Central European male as the rule. Despite the significance of her effort to identify the absences and deficits in the discourse of the visual, Rogoff attempts to claim a counter-position to the usual demand for inclusion by speaking out against a purely additive model, which merely incorporates "others" (women, minorities, homosexuals, etc.) into the visual canon. She not only fails to question the fact that these groups are thus re-established as minorities, but also the place and method of representation as a determining and controlling structure. In this connection, also see Irit Rogoff "Hit and Run — Museums and Cultural Difference" in *Art Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 3, Fall 2002, p. 63–78

07
Michael Warner *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York 2002

public, the American queer theoretician Michael Warner is interested in pointing out that publics evolve in practice and in context, and do not satisfy universal expectations but identification-related ones. In other words, the production of a public always goes hand in hand with specific subject positions, which are brought about in the process. With regard to gay and lesbian counterpublics, he asks to what extent they are capable of opening up new subject positions which reject the normativeness of attributions as lesbian or gay (i.e. as category of identification) and create new worlds corresponding to a singular in the plural. The Italian theoretician Paolo Virno likewise regards the chief challenge of the present to be the establishment of new forms of publics. In his book *Grammatica della Moltitudine* he describes the necessity of inventing publics, proposing that this is one of the central issues of politicization under post-Fordist conditions: "The shifting-to-the-foreground of fundamental abilities of human existence (thought, language, self-reflection, the ability to learn) can take on a disconcerting and oppressive character, or it can result in a new form of public, a *private public*, which establishes itself in a place far removed from the myths and rites of statehood."[8]

Historically speaking, since the beginnings of the conveyance complex of bourgeois art, there has also been, over and above the familiar artistic strategies, a tactical utilization of institutionalized spaces by artist groups, left-wing, antiracist and feminist collectives and consumers themselves. These tactics: for example the use of an art space for debates, meetings, workshops, film programmes, community projects, etc., have become active in the shadow of the public art market, its power of distribution and the bourgeois public, and, in terms of the concept proposed by Michel de Certeau, can be viewed as an attempt to appropriate hegemonic structures and reinterpret them, in the knowledge that they won't simply 'disappear.' This practice of alternative utilization in the sense of a counter-public has been observable since the early days of the modern era. The debates of the social movements, of feminism for example, were also conducted in the fine arts. In the late 1960s, for example, women discussed the issue of exclusion from and inclusion in art institutions and took a range of varying stances on the art-space context, its claims and antagonisms, its inclusions and exclusions and its power to constitute society. The feminist art movements of the 1960s and 1970s were known for their utilization of spaces for the establishment of new publics: publics outside the boundaries of dichotomous sexuality and capable of developing new forms of collaboration and cooperation. These activities came about partly because female artists were even more forcefully excluded from the official spaces of art than they are today, and partly because the underlying conditions of production and representation were recognized as being patriarchal and Eurocentric. In feminist organizations, spaces were established outside the art system and used for performances, installations and lectures. Another important aspect was group formation, an aspect dominated in the modern age by white men. The feminist groups tried out new working methods and concepts of public which contrasted with the abstract public of the exhibition space, for example in The Woman's House or the A.I.R. Gallery in New York and comparable projects. Artistic works took place as actions in the urban space, involving a new public, for example the performances by VALIE EXPORT or Adrian Piper. At the same time, female artists continued to use the exhibition in the 'white cube' as a form of communication and, in the course of the seventies and into the eighties, began to open it increasingly for everyday cultural and experimental practices.[9] The focus on specifically women-related subjects became central in the 1970s, but, like the feminist discourse in general, underwent a process of change. Feminist artists stressed not only identity issues ('we women'), but also macro-political discourses and non-identity-related issues. What was feminist about these non-women-related projects was their method: their emphasis on informal networks, on the formation of new publics and a collectively developed, embodied knowledge.

Against this background, the 'project exhibition' of the mid 1980s united several of the above-described debates and attempted to integrate the experience of alternative artistic practices into the exhibition work: the opening up of the art space for a non-art public, the collective production of new 'knowledge spaces', the self-assertion of social groups as opposed to their representation in a product, the use of the art space for theme-related discussions, and the establishment of transdisciplinary networks which could be active and productive in other areas of society as well, beyond the pure exhibition context.

The exhibition *If You Lived Here*, initiated and organized by the American artist Martha Rosler and presented at the Dia Arts Foundation in New York in 1989, can be cited as a paradigmatic example of this socio-spatial artistic practice. The relationship between public and private, between depiction and representability, were a central concern of Rosler's work. In the exhibition, she examined processes of gentrification and homelessness, not because that was a particularly scandalous topic, but because the gallery was located in a certain area of Manhattan in which an expulsion policy had been undertaken in conjunction with the upgrading of the district. The project thus addressed the neighbourhood itself and, with the means of exhibition, sought to intervene in a social process. The public was likewise assigned a new role, for, within the framework of a wide variety of accompanying events, it was involved in the process, whether as the new middle class

08
See Paolo Virno "Das Öffentlichsein des Intellekts. Nichtstaatliche Öffentlichkeit und Multitude" in Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig (eds.) *Publicum. Theorien der Öffentlichkeit*, Vienna 2005

09
The term 'White Cube' was comprehensively theorized by Brian O'Doherty in *Inside the White Cube*, San Francisco, 1986 (German edition: Berlin: Merve Verlag 1996). O'Doherty is a member of the post-war generation and lives in the U.S. He is a poet, artist, publisher, critic and political activist.

attempting to move into the neighbourhood or as artists who had their studios there and were requested to take a stance on the social conflicts. Rosler used the gallery specifically not to produce new representations of homelessness in the tradition of art forms such as socio-critical photography, opening it instead for self-help groups, critical urban planners and artistic projects, which intervened in the politics and production of homelessness. With these groups, three successive exhibitions on the subject of 'urban planning and exclusion' were collaboratively developed. Projects like *If You Lived Here* opened up the art space for debates, groups and themes that had previously had no access to that space, and cooperatively shaped the content with them. But the art space's potential to be assigned alternative utilization for the purposes of social intervention is rooted in its own origins. Critical topics were/are not introduced into the art space at random. Rather, its constitutive character for a certain form of knowledge and subjectivity is what is reflected in the criticism of the art space, and what made it so decisive for feminist cultural practices. The opening of the art space for other groups of the society and the involvement of widely differing players from the fields of culture, politics and science not only serve to reshuffle the disciplines with regard to hierarchy, but also permit a new mode of knowledge production, an aspect which was always of central importance to other feminist contexts as well. At the same time, for the very reason that the 'white cube' is artificial and has a 'public' character, the project exhibition creates a forum for these alternative ways of working.

The project exhibition as an artistic practice thus takes its place within the art discourses of the modern and post-modern eras as well as within the context of political and theoretical debates and struggles. To the same degree, it responds to the demands of feminist standpoints and gender-theoretical debates, as concerns the establishment and empowerment of non-dichotomously based subject positions, and to methodological issues regarding working conditions and collective authorship. As opposed to the practice of selecting artistic works for a group exhibition in an art space, the project exhibition takes an unambiguous stance and, rather than developing an illustration of a theme, develops its own theses, methods and formats. It establishes a discourse, a practice, which radically challenges the neutrality of the art space and of the related representation regime.[10] Exhibition projects in which I have been involved myself since the early nineties, or which I have organized (e.g. *when tekkno turns to sound of poetry*) went beyond linear communication structures, primarily in order to establish new forms of collaboration pointing beyond the actual site of the exhibition. On the one hand, these projects reflected the knowledge and body policies of the exhibitionary complex and reinterpreted its paradigms of depiction. On the other hand, a different process, usually dissociated from representation, took on central significance: the 'development' of the content within a framework of collective authorship. Even the spheres of private, everyday life, such as the reading of texts, discussions and group work sessions were themselves transferred into the public space, an approach carried out above all against the background of the feminist criticism of the normative concept of work and the criticism of the division of public and private. From 1996 to 1998 I worked in a changing team (Sylvia Kafhesy, Renate Lorenz, Rachel Mader, Brigitta Kuster, Pauline Boudry, Justin Hoffmann and Ursula Biemann) as an exhibition curator at the Shedhalle in Zürich, a venue that can be considered a paradigmatic space for this type of practice. It was no coincidence that, during that period, we were involved in major conflicts with the institution and the sponsors. The constantly recurring arguments included the viewpoint that the exhibitions were not concerned with art, but with an alternative university or a socio-cultural meeting place, or that the visiting public did not correspond to the image of an art public. In other words, assumptions informed by precisely the 'concept of public and art' upheld by bourgeois institutions. The social conflicts to which groups are subjected who have no means of representation and no access to the established knowledge spaces were simply ignored. The empowering function, which can ensue within the context of joint work on an exhibition project and events in which new subject positions and practices can become established, was not recognized as a value.

In contrast to the classical curatorial or scholarly manner of proceeding, project exhibitions of the past years have also involved people from a wide range of fields, both in the process of developing the concept and in the realization of the exhibition. What is more, these participants have been provided the option of changing their positions within these temporary contexts. Theoreticians and artists have begun to work together to develop theoretical and visual forms of articulation. Alongside the classical counterpublic strategy which became established in the 1970s, it was and is possible to try out new public, production and distribution models, using the conveyance format of the 'exhibition': models which take on the clearest contours in projects which transcended the boundaries of Europe. The communities that formed in the context of the respective projects (for example in *Kültür* in 1996–1997 or *MoneyNations* in 1998–2000) only came to exist in the process of the project development; the same was true of the related forms of communication.[11] *MoneyNations* conducted a communicative process with culture producers from Central and Southern Europe by way of the Internet and personal

10 As a format of artistic practice, the project exhibition also developed a new mode of presentation through the collaboration with various players from different disciplines. At the Museum für Gestaltung und Kunst in Zürich I worked with students, lecturers, artists and scholars to explore this mode of presentation in all comprehensiveness for the first time. In this context, artistic, design-related and scholarly traditions of 'exhibition' paved the way for a new mode of conveyance and intervention.

11 Also see the annual reports of the Shedhalle, 1994–1998, and the publications *Kültür* and *MoneyNations* as well as information available online www.moneynations.ch.

contacts. On that basis, it generated not only an exhibition, in the more classical sense, about discourses on EU-European border production and border crossing, but also a whole series of other activities. These included: a conference in which artists, filmmakers and political initiatives from south-eastern Europe participated, a seminar with radio producers from ex-Yugoslavia, a video producers' network and, most significantly, a mailing list which went on to facilitate the active exchange of information between antiracist projects, events and initiatives for a period of over four years. A kind of supranational community of artists, scholars and political activists thus emerged from the project. Thus, it did not merely serve to illustrate, but rather it generated a potential for new speaker positions and cultural practices in the sidelines of hegemonic discourses. The imagined public of the art space is not rejected as being 'alienating' and neutralizing, but becomes productive and re-interpretable for new micro-cultural and micro-political contexts. The developmentof a specific and particular narrative also makes projects like these into a kind of reference for the non-participants who have only 'heard about it'. Thus, in addition to the collective experience, projects like these even go so far as to chart an imaginary map of alternative cultural practices and ideas for transdisciplinary knowledge spaces, pointing beyond the symbolic space of the exhibition.

The art scholar Irit Rogoff therefore assumes that art no longer presents, illustrates, analyses or translates already existing knowledge using other means or media. Rather, art represents both a research mode of its own, as well as a means of 'knowledge production' in and of itself. "Art and visual culture are thus capable of producing new knowledge as well as new types of knowledge which can help us to gain a new perspective on important themes, for example 'terror' (...)."[12] Although Irit Rogoff endeavours here to describe a core aspect of the new form of cultural production, this assumption is as general as it is problematic, because it obscures the actual political context of the development. On the one hand, it is no longer possible to describe art as something uniform. The practices of the post-modern age have distinguished themselves from one another to the extent that, in addition to painting, photography, video installations, etc. there are also project exhibitions of the kind developed by artists themselves, and artistic works produced solely for these frameworks. And 'art' is a non-uniform production mode, ranging from the individual artist's artwork to various forms of collaboration between artists, or even cooperation between persons from different fields of knowledge. Moreover, not all of the 'players' involved in the representation possess the same social status. On the contrary, the format of the project exhibition, to which I refer explicitly as an artistic practice and not as 'art', shows how the struggles and protests of feminist, black and diasporic culture producers intersect with and complement the demands of their political movements. And it also testifies to the fact that a new aesthetic format cannot simply be explained on the basis of art-immanent argumentation, as Rogoff suggests. With the establishment of cultural discourses, feminist artists, theoreticians and activists provided the decisive impulses for new socio-spatial cultural practices. To envision now exploiting them, as the 'better' knowledge producers, for subjects like 'terror' does not exactly correspond to the self-empowerment they imply.

With this text I hope I have shown that feminist art practices and the antiracist perspective they generate (as theorized in the 1980s and '90s by women from the non-Western and diasporic context) emerged from concrete demands and social struggles which are increasingly concealed today in the reception of feminist art practice. That which operates today as a thematic exhibition, in which issues such as gender, area planning, economy and migration are treated curatorially, no longer has much to do with the feminist practice of the project exhibition. The purely representation-oriented thematic exhibitions neither question selection criteria and working conditions based on hierarchies and the division of labour, nor do they establish new publics and interdisciplinary accesses. They do manage to show works by artists presented as 'exceptional' in that they have 'made it' in the art scene, and even to include non-European artists, but at the same time they obscure the conditions under which the demands are still being voiced. And this is the case despite the fact that, within the art scene and the criticism of feminist art, a decisive discourse has finally become established. The focus on an alternative utilization of the art space, on the other hand, is indicative of the fact that, in that space, our image of the public was challenged and revised. For that reason, the antagonisms one brings upon oneself with the existing concepts of the art space's public are no excuse for not understanding this space as one in which new publics could be invented. On the contrary, it is precisely the artificiality, the stage character, the performative quality of the art space which is the prerequisite for opening it up to other forms, practices and meanings of co-ownership and participation, inclusion and exclusion, and adopting those forms, practices and meanings in practice.

Translated from the German by Judith Rosenthal

12 Irit Rogoff in Ursula Biemann (ed.) *Geografie und die Politik der Mobilität*, Zürich 2003, p. 33

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Julie Ault *Alternative Art. New York 1965-1985, A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective*, New York: The Drawing Center 2002

Tony Bennett "The Exhibitionary Complex" in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.) *Thinking About Exhibitions*, London/New York 1996, p. 80-112

Tony Bennett *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London/New York: Routledge 1995

Ursula Biemann and Marion von Osten (eds.) "Dispersion. Kunstpraktiken und ihre Vernetzungen" in *Olympe Feministische Arbeitshefte zur Politik*, No.19, 2003

James Clifford *The Predicament of Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1988

Sebastian Conrad and Shahalini Randiera (eds.) *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a. M.: Campus 2003

Douglas Crimp *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press 1993

Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.) *Thinking About Exhibitions*, London/New York: Routledge 1996

Linda Hentschel *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag 2001

Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press 1991

Ivan Karp, Christine M. Kreamer and Steven D. Lavine (eds.) *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press 1992

Sharon Macdonald (ed.) *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, London/New York: Routledge 1998

Timothy Mitchell *Colonising Egypt,* Berkeley: University of California Press 1991

Nina Möntmann *Kunst als sozialer Raum*, Cologne: Walther König 2003

Valentine Mudimbe *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1988

Brian O'Doherty *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, San Francisco: The Lapis Press 1986

Marion von Osten (ed.) *Norm der Abweichung*, Zürich/Vienna: Voldemeer/Springer Verlag 2003

Marion von Osten and Peter Spillmann (eds.) *MoneyNations. Constructing The Border. Constructing East/West*, Vienna: Selene Verlag 2003

Ruth Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (eds.) *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1999

Irit Rogoff *Terra Infirma. Geography's Visual Culture*, London/New York 2000

Irit Rogoff "Hit and Run — Museums and Cultural difference" in *Art Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 3, Fall, 2002, p. 63-78

Shedhalle Zürich (various authors) *Jahresberichte 1994-1998*, Zürich: Verlag der Shedhalle Zürich 1994-1998

Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (eds.) *Museum Culture, History, Discourses, Spectacles*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1994

Mary Anne Staniszewski *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press 2001

Paolo Virno *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press 2004

Michael Warner *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books 2002

Title of exhibition: *European Influenza*
Place: Romanian Pavilion, 51st Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy
Date: 12 June - 6 November, 2005
Curator: Marius Babias
Artist: Daniel Knorr

'WE WERE NOBODY. WE WERE NOTHING' – SOUNDING MODERNITY & 'MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT'

SARAT MAHARAJ AND GILANE TAWADROS IN DISCUSSION, LONDON, FEBRUARY 2005.

Sarat Maharaj:

In *Popular Music from Vittula*[1], Mikael Niemi gives us a deadpan rendering of 'everyday backwardness' at the Artic rim of Sweden. It is a pocket of murky life left behind in the forward march of the model social democratic state and its success story. What he touches on strikes a chord across the developing world: how to take the sound of 'backwardness', how to forge a lingo that can both give voice to it and go beyond the gag it imposes:

"We gradually caught on to the fact that where we lived wasn't really a part of Sweden. We'd just been sort of tagged on by accident. A northern appendage, a few barren bogs where a few people happened to live, but could only partly be Swedes. We were different, a bit inferior, a bit uneducated, a bit simple-minded. We didn't have any deer or hedgehogs or nightingales. We didn't have any celebrities. We didn't have any theme parks. No traffic lights, no mansions, no country squires. All we had was masses and masses of mosquitoes, Torndalen-Finnish swearwords, and Communists.

Ours was a childhood of deprivation. not material deprivation — we had enough to get by on — but a lack of identity. We were nobody. Our parents were nobody. Our forefathers had made no mark on Swedish history. Our last names were unspellable, not to mention being unpronounceable for the few substitute teachers who found their way up north from the real Sweden. None of us dared write in to Children's Family Favourites because Swedish Radio would think we were Finns. Our home villages were too small to appear on maps. We could barely support ourselves, but had to depend on state handouts. We watched family farms die, and fields give way to undergrowth…our school exam results were the worst in the whole country. We had no table manners. We wore woolly hats indoors. We never picked mushrooms, avoided vegetables, never held crayfish parties. We were useless at conversation, reciting poems, wrapping presents, and giving speeches. We walked with our toes turned out. We spoke with a Finnish accent without being Finnish, and we spoke with a Swedish accent without being Swedish. We were nothing."

The 'indices of underdevelopment' and 'monikers of modernity' Niemi chalks up have a quasi-sociological air, a tongue-in-cheek cumulative table of facts. He gauges 'developmental shortfall' through a stream of impressions and quirky, subjective scraps of association: a far cry from hard-nosed statistics or scientific method. The mode is introspective, in the shape of first person consciousness: a feel-think-know device for probing the world's stickiness, its sensations and intensities. It gives us a feel of how things tick from the inside. We are plunged into the lived experience of nonentity status, into the thick of 'zones of morbidity'. We can relate the mode to the thrust of Amartya Sen's critique that analytical approaches to development tend to treat the subject in rather narrow, quantitative, 'GNP terms'.[2] He argues that we should see rates of material improvement and progress, rising living standards, better conditions and resources as closely tied to the endeavour to engender and expand freedoms and rights. This is a key link if we are to grasp the drift of development and modernity 'from the inside', as self-understanding of the process on the part of those 'in the thick of it'. In today's interconnecting, globalizing world, tackling exclusion, the lack of rights and freedom cannot be put off to some time 'after basic development has taken place'. When individual participants begin to express and interpret their social and cultural wants, they are chipping in with how to shape development, how to orchestrate it rather than having it thrust upon them. But what sorts of communicative structure and art activity can contribute to this, to opening up self-reflexive mental, emotional, semantic dimensions both for voicing 'backwardness' and for stepping out of it? I wonder, Gilane, whether we might look at this in the light of your research as curator of the show *Faultlines* for the Africa Pavilion at the *Venice Biennale* (2002)?

Gilane Tawadros:

In addressing the keywords 'communication and development' in a global context, we need to distinguish between communications for and on behalf of a globalized capital economy and other types. The former tends to be homo¬genous emerging principally from financial and political power centres. Its forms are largely unilateral. Although they might be inflected with different accents, capital enterprises have been ingenious with inflecting communications so they can apparently speak to and 'fit in' with different spaces and places, they are nonetheless particular messages with predetermined outcomes within the global economy. Some art practices, on the other hand, create possibilities for another kind of communication: a space, in my view, about dialogue and exchange rather than something one-way. Contemporary art is not always clear-cut or transparent, nor is it homogenous or unilateral. For example, in Moataz Nasr's installation *One Ear of Dough, One Ear of Clay* (2001), the video piece depicts ordinary Egyptians in the street, hunching their shoulders. The gesture is repeated over and over by individuals of various ages, genders and social class, a colloquial physical gesture, a shrug that suggests: 'So what can I do about it? That's just the way it is.' The work comments on political apathy questioning why people with a history of political engagement are not as involved politically at this juncture. In his installation *Tabla* (*Venice Biennale*, 2003), a huge video screen depicting a drummer playing on a traditional Egyptian drum, or tabla, dominates the space. We don't see his face or head, just the tabla clutched between his legs and his hands beating out a powerful, continuous rhythm. The sound ricochets through the exhibition scattered with tablas of varying sizes, like a geographical map of the Nile Delta. It's deafening, relentless. You register the work acoustically before you read it visually, as the sound of difference. Arab music is about atonality and dissonance. But it's also a sound that takes over the space and overwhelms the viewer. There is a disparity between the single tabla with a sound that is distinctive and powerful and the reverberations from others that are connected to the main screen and which create sounds in response. The piece works on a number of levels such as the question of political agency, of how individuals are implicated in the political situations in which they find themselves.

Sarat Maharaj:

Nasr's *Tabla* seems to parallel a wider involvement of today's visual artists with 'high-decibel sound saturation'. Perhaps one way of making sense of this is to press the distinction you imply between terrains of communication and their archaeologies. From the 1960s, the spread of communications-consumerist culture: TV, radio, cinema, advertising, fashion, sport, transport, popular culture, commodity design, saw a burgeoning concern with the look of things right down to their micro-texture. The Situationists pointedly summed up this 'aestheticization' or 'grooming of the everyday' as 'the production of the spectacle'. The stakes were raised as reality came to be seen as the processed effect of digital simulation technologies. Had this somewhat stolen the thunder of artists if not upstaged the 'creativity' once associated with fine art? What kind of art was possible that did not simply mirror 'the spectacle' or become ensnared by it? We might also ask straight away whether this was an issue at all or in the same way for practitioners outside 'the developed world', beyond mainstream consumerist art-culture circuits? By 2000, satellite, cable, digital terrestrial TV and radio, dial-up internet and broadband services, mobiles, SMS, cashpoints, Nintendo, video games, iPods intensified visualization of everyday info-data flows. I call these sound-image economies 'retinal regimes' to connote sheer overload of images, sonic signs, visual representations mixed in with what Deleuze/Guattari spotlighted as asignifying systems. Could sound scan the visual, supplement it, if not short-circuit it in the face of its retinal condition? Sonic constructions, multiple frequencies, noise, sonic dirt vibes, inundations and interference become stuff with which to probe, if not shatter, the 'spectacle', to dispel its ambient muzak. As antidotes to info-spin-jabber they allude to other communicative wavelengths, alternative acoustic awareness. In *Popular Music from Vittula*, the sense of other possibilities is caught by the jarring, raw 'rockunrol' awkwardly eked out by stubby-fingered, speechless Niila and by the farm worker turned music teacher who had lost his fingers in an accident and now strummed the guitar with a thick, penile thumb. What they manage to croak out are painful spasms of release, of coming to voice, of prising open a chink in numbing 'backwardness'. By the 1980s, the term 'spectacle' tends towards an almost entirely pejorative, black or white connotation. With 'retinal regimes', in contrast, I hope to signal an oscillating positive-negative charge in the pervasive syntax or 'visual Esperanto' of the knowledge economy. Although the latter is billed as cutting across developed/developing barriers, beyond certain advanced centres its infrastructures are still sparse with patchy access. This is roughly comparable to the lack in the developing world of modern gallery-museum systems and art education-communications structures of the sort that are the staples of the developed world's art-culture industry. Nevertheless, practitioners have invented strategies through internet-new media domains. Sites and networks by Raqs Media Collective (India) or Open Circle (India) are 'adisciplinary' manoeuvres: almost ad-lib assemblages of info-images and discourses, experimental inquiry tools for social action, learning sessions, urban investigative tours that have a feel of the random walkabout and happening. Torolab's (Tijuana, Mexico) 'trans-border pants' designed with multiple-use pockets can be switched over according to citizenship status for immigrant or American usage: a ruse for embodying and inspecting the politics of belonging in the 'lab conditions' of the US/Mexico frontier. These are think-know-act projects that might not look like 'art' but in their open-ended semantic fission count as art. To pigeonhole them as 'developing world artwork' rather misses the point: they are art-communication ploys that question the norm of the airtight modern gallery-museum system whether inside the developed world or out.

Gilane Tawadros:

This goes back to whether by communication we mean a one-way conversation or a dialogue. Often, both in the arena of development and the art world, the developed world is seen as having opportunities and goods to offer and the developing world as the consumer who is potentially available in fantastic numbers. It's more complicated than this because the product, in terms of the artworks being made in the developing world, are packaged, taken back and presented to consumers in the developed world. Here, the artworks are framed in particular ways, which define and prescribe how they're read. This is often in narrow terms, either as part of a national or ethnographic discourse, or as illustrations of preconceived ideas of what the 'developing other's' creativity is about. But the critical point for me is that the work of contemporary artists within the African continent I did get to see, even if my range of evidence was somewhat limited, offered up many ideas, possibilities and points of engagement that I hadn't seen in the developed world. I came back to London, having travelled in Johannesburg and Cairo, for example, thinking, 'Here I am in this capital of the developed world where all this infrastructure exists, all these opportunities but much of the work I'm looking at appears empty.' It was lacking in the substance we are talking about. What is considered to be at the top of the hierarchy of communication worlds actually seemed empty of knowledge, however full it might be with information. They seemed more akin to global, commercial communications products. I found in Johannesburg and Cairo artists working with¬out infrastructure, in extremely difficult circumstances, without wider cultural or, in some cases, moral support, working in quite isolated spaces. Yet I found work that challenged me, that was not in any way aping Western practice but opening up new forms of artistic practice in making and communication. There are artists in both cities dealing with specific, local questions: they are by no means turning their back on the rest of the world. Nor indeed are they ignorant of the realities of being part of a globalized economy. They are making work that focuses on particular issues that undoubtedly resonate beyond these particular contexts. If anything, one's sense of being in a globalized economy (and artists' awareness of its implications) seemed heightened in Johannesburg and Cairo than in London or Helsinki.

Sarat Maharaj:

The global/local imbrications you touch on highlight why we should be wary of simply pitting them against each other. At the end of Apartheid, the focus was either on coaxing the local gallery-museum system to develop beyond received racial designations or on plugging into global circulation through events such as the 'Biennale'. After the second *Johannesburg Biennale* (1997) the 'global option' was scrapped. Under the 'local' umbrella, something like *Serafina II* (1999), a musical centred on HIV/AIDs awareness, backed by the Health Minister Nkosazane Zuma, but mired in controversy, was seen as the way forward. It was a follow up to the original *Serafina* (1989), a look at Apartheid around the time of the 1976 Soweto uprisings. Today this approach to creativity and development is perhaps sustained in Henning Mankell's projects where those affected by HIV/Aids write about themselves, about kith, kin and clan: an 'archive of the domestic' for the generations left behind.[3] As the 'global

option' of the biennale has spread across the developing world, it has tended to dispel what some artists often felt was the legitimating test posed by 'Venice' in its heyday. Though the biennale is sometimes treated guardedly as an import, it also functions as a global/local transaction site for regional idioms and concerns, as with Sharjah, United Arab Emirates or Kwanju, South Korea and Shanghai. If some governments use it as a mechanism for jump-starting local regeneration, others use it as a 'sign of modernity', of 'artistic open-mindedness' quite at odds with the restrictive political and cultural policies they otherwise operate.

Gilane Tawadros:

The capacity for some kinds of art to create spaces for reflection, for 'indirect' communication is vital, though 'indirect' might not be the correct word. Perhaps I should say art is not so much roundabout or circuitous as not completely transparent, not immediately legible, simply because the problems themselves, the issues and questions are not fully known, and the answers are also not known. What one needs is opportunity to reflect, to take time to pose questions without necessarily answering them. As you say, the logic of judicial processes, the agenda of political, social and economic requirements for communication militate against that kind of space and time. From this viewpoint, in the exigencies of executing change and of transforming society, art can often be seen as little more than an indulgence. When there are pressing issues facing the developing world, why should one spend time, energy and resources on what appears unimportant, which is not necessary in the way food, education, sanitation and water are self-evidently essential? The implication is that this 'indulgence' should only be afforded to society at a more advanced stage in its development. It assumes a strictly linear progression to social and cultural development, a hierarchical organization of priorities. However, the question remains: can social, political and economic transformation be delivered without knowing what kind of changes one wants to achieve and to what end in the name of modernity, without addressing the full lexicon of human needs beyond the physical and material.

Sarat Maharaj:

Globalization in full spate presses on us now the need to re-conceptualize modernity, transformation and development in terms of something like a 'recursive' model in which we get constant feedback on how matters 'upstream' affects development 'further down'. The model differs from earlier top/bottom approaches such as Walter Rodney's classic *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*[4] centred on unpacking abiding, exploitative colonial legacies at the heart of modernity. The implication is not that the North/South divide is no longer the principal fault line: it persists with grave inequalities. Development has yet to kick off in swathes of the South where IMF/World Bank prescriptions have thrown some economies out off joint while WTO rulings have buffeted others. But their plight is paralleled by another global dynamic where as some zones 'catch up', others 'fall behind' sometimes right at the core of the developed world itself. We have 'upcoming' quality of life alongside 'stagnating' ones or non-starters. Niemi at the Nordic tip of the globe, amongst others graphing this unevenness as 'backwardness', turns the classic North/South binary upside down: it is the relative South that is depicted as flourishing. Such symbolic inversions thicken the plot of the development story. They dramatize how globalization renders relations between developed/developing zones topsy-turvy and interdependent. It becomes less easy for 'modernity' to keep 'development issues' at arms length, as a problem elsewhere. We are 'in it' wherever we are. A sense of this seems to be missing in the cost-benefit treatment of the subject: a shopping list of what 'we' need to spend to put right the developing world malady 'out there', which is why this feels like a rather lopsided mapping.[5] Sen captures the 'thickening of the development plot' in more empirical terms by citing some surprising anomalies: for example, male longevity rates in South India turn out to be higher than those for African-Americans in the nucleus of the developed world. We might be inclined to brush this aside as an isolated glitch. But a pattern emerges once we relate it to concomitant tendencies: increasing obesity as shown up in 'Body Mass Index' research[6] and its potential for reversing longevity figures; ageing outstripping birth and fertility rates; psycho-morbidity and depression endemic to modernity; substance dependency often triggered by the fact that not only work but also play and leisure have become equally taxing regimes governed by a punishing performance principle; job loss in advanced sectors through outsourcing; environment damage. A host of problems seems to crop up 'after development has taken place' at modernity's high tide. At one end, we have parts of the developing world in circumstances of dire want with other sectors plugged into servicing the developed world at ever-higher levels. At the opposite end, the developed world itself seems beset with 'post-development blues': new forms of malaise and backwardness. Should we perhaps collate data on this jadedness as indices of over-development? At any rate, it cuts across all developed zones whether inside or outside the 'developed world proper'. The contemporary appears as an uneven, perplexing terrain of advanced development and its discontents. Here the modalities of art practice become indispensable probes for questioning not only 'development' but also life after it.

Gilane Tawadros:

What you say about the globalizing, later phases of the developed world are not so much described as a 'crisis'. They are raised as a question about what we mean by 'development' and its ends when developed socie¬ties are beginning to face new, huge problems. You suggest these might be indications that something is not quite right or, in any event, not quite right with a 'linear progress' mapping of modernity. This parallels whether art in the developed world is actually adequate to the task of generating other dimensions, as you say, of the temporal, the reflexive and critical, even non-utilitarian spaces beyond the culture-consumption industry. Why are these so diminished? It seems it's not only in the developing world where the relationship of artistic practice and social needs has to be looked at and interrogated but also in the developed world.

Sarat Maharaj:

The developing world presents searching questions to its advanced counterpart on all the fronts we are looking at: how to develop modern gallery-museum infrastructures without getting bogged down in the self-sealing art-culture industry; how to extend communications without becoming passive consumers of pre-packed communications commodities: how to 'do development' without ending up with 'development blues'. As developed/developing world entanglements grow, rates of translation across their lines rise rapidly churning up more difference, more variation. This counterpoints globalization's drive towards flattening difference: a demand for assimilation that can easily slide into the xenophobic as we see now in the North European democracies of 'tolerance'. With overlapping translation sites, creolizing tongues,

disjointed identities, the contemporary amounts to a difference-generating, disjunctive space. This is at odds with the even-keel regularities of the 'sphere of communicative action' central to Jürgen Habermas's formidably rigorous attempt to sound modernity. His concern throughout is with how to iron out differences, how to deal with what he would later call the 'inclusion of the other'. However, the 'dialogic exchange' he places at the heart of the communicative sphere boils down to a rather measured transaction between relatively similar cultural subjects. To count as serious players in the exchange, participants are expected to strip bare off all elements of difference. But can this be treated as so much extraneous baggage? The haphazard, messy, subjective everyday is pared down till we reach the rock bottom of a 'commons or universal meeting ground'. There the contenders can thrash out mutually agreed goals through rational deliberation and debate. However, the proviso that they must be 'sincere, authentic, responsible' is not only problematic from a theoretical perspective (Derrida). It is also a far cry from our present-day experience of the conditions of discursive exchange where simulation, camouflage and smokescreen are not so much aberrations as intrinsic components: perhaps it is the internet chat room of nicknames, aliases, hide and seek that sums up something of this polytonal communicative logic. If modernity is sounded in 'dialogic exchange' we see participants at their 'rational' best, on a steady cognitive wavelength. The welter of less transparent, non-discursive, non-rational somatic registers are brushed aside as so many 'memories of underdevelopment'. The contemporary 'translation-migration' Babel, however, presents a situation riddled with untranslatables, with the sense of epistemic non-fit, with unsquarable cultural differences and things teetering on the edge. It is shot through with an uneasy feeling of the 'radical other everywhere in our midst' but nowhere to be seen or heard. If the symptomatic figures here are the deterritorialized cases, the 'sans papiers, clandestini, illegals', it is the black hole of non-communicating communication of the 'irrational suicide bomber' that seems definitive. We are faced with a double-movement: a drive towards the rock bottom 'commons' beyond elements of otherness and difference: against this, a push towards an ever-mutating ground of difference, towards precarious 'planes of parley' where self/other ceaselessly invent a lingo for exchange to live in and through difference and multiplicity.

Someone points out in *Memories of Underdevelopment*[7] that instead of the 'developed/underdeveloped' distinction, we should take the sound of modernity with the starker terms of 'capitalism/socialism'. The thought is enmeshed in Cold War polemics but it now comes to suggest the need for alternative mappings, for a plurality of models of enlightened advancement, other than the apparently single-track sweep of corporate globalization. The film put the critical spotlight on the lead character Sergio's deep-freeze inaction, his disdain for ordinary people's crude manners, lack of taste, their 'backwardness'. Elena, the working class woman, sizes him up fairly quickly: 'You are neither reactionary nor revolutionary: you are nothing.' It is as if Niemi's musings at the Artic edge of the world forty years later come to echo her words giving them a biting, if less denunciatory though more cross-hatched import for our time.

-

01 Mikael Niemi *Popular Music from Vittula*, english translation Laurie Thomson, New York: Seven Stories Press 2003

02 Amartya Sen *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999

03 U*ganda Child Aid Project*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 28 Sep*tember 2004*

04 Walter Rodney How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, London: Bogle L'Ouverture and Tanzania Publishing House 1972

05 Bjorn Lomberg et al. *Copenhagen Consensus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004

06 WHO & International Obesity Task Force, 2004

07 Directed by Tomas Gutierrez Alea, Cuba 1968

EASY LOOKING – CURATORIAL PRACTICE IN A NEO-LIBERAL SOCIETY

UTE META BAUER IN AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIUS BABIAS

Marius Babias:

On the basis of your experience as curator of the *Third Berlin Biennial*, we'd like to discuss some general issues relating to curatorial practice today. I suggest that we talk more generally about criticism in relation to curatorial practice. The curator's work creates an echo in the media, by way of which the content and themes of the exhibition are communicated to a wider public. How do you see the relationship between curating and that wider communication? Is that communication also part of the practice of curating?

Ute Meta Bauer:

With regard to the curatorial problems that exhibitions raise and address nowadays, and I'm using the word 'exhibition' in its widest sense here, the dialogue between curators, artists and the public has moved forward significantly. In many cases I have received very different feedback and new interpretations of exhibitions from artists, not only those who were involved in the exhibitions, but also other artists who see, in the truest sense of the word, what questions an exhibition raises, what interrelationships are generated and what interpretations are made possible by the exhibition as a dispositive. Also, the present-day public expects more information than the public of the past. In contrast to the open-minded attitude of the artists and the visitors, my impression is that the critics are increasingly refusing to understand, and respond appropriately to, discursively designed exhibitions. They don't come with an open mind, whereas the public at large shows a real willingness to be responsive to newer approaches. Especially when faced with somewhat more complex contexts, possibly involving other fields, I suspect that the critics writing in the arts sections of newspapers, in particular, have problems of comprehension.

Marius Babias:

When I speak of 'communication' I mean the media on the one hand, but also, on the other, the accompanying programme, the marketing and the exhibition's overall communications apparatus. Does 'communication', thus defined, fall within the curator's scope of responsibilities?

Ute Meta Bauer:

Well, for instance in the case of the *Third Berlin Biennial*, I had decided not to hire a separate marketing and press agency on the outside, so to speak, which people generally do nowadays simply because the media machine that has to be serviced is so vast. Because of the effort involved, I can quite understand why people outsource the marketing and press work to agencies. But for one thing outsourcing is very cost-intensive, and for another, I don't want the content to be spoon-fed to the press in bite-size pieces by an outside contractor. Added to which, if you do outsource, it's very easy, in terms of content, to lose track of who is communicating what and to whom.

Marius Babias:

You are advocating total curatorial control, from the content of the exhibition to communication and marketing issues. In the context of the 'culture of debate', doesn't that smack of cultural hegemony?

Ute Meta Bauer:

No, not if it is clearly stated who is responsible for what. I regard myself as the artistic director, responsible for everything, right down to the details, and that includes the marketing strategy. In every contract I sign, I retain a right of veto over the sponsors. Past experience has taught me to insist on that. Among other things, I am concerned about the possibly rather old-fashioned concept of 'credibility', and one can never say that sponsors have no influence over the content, given that the public is made aware of the company's corporate identity at the very same time as it is experiencing the work on display. That's why I like to retain control over this myself.

Marius Babias:

Now a question on the concept underlying the contents of the *Third Berlin Biennial*, which set out to explore the relationship between art and society, in the widest sense, taking the Berlin subculture as an example: Did you not take into account that, in the conception of Berlin's marketing strategists, the biennial was meant to perform a very different function, namely to present a positive image of the capital rather than drawing attention to areas of conflict?

Ute Meta Bauer:

I would like to link this to your earlier question about 'the public'. It's time people accepted that there's no such thing as 'the' public: there are several publics who have different needs and different areas of interest, and each associate something different with art. One can try to figure out how these different publics can be reconciled with one another, but one could also argue that, in Berlin, for instance, the needs of this or that particular public are already being met through existing projects. The MOMA exhibition appealed to different publics than the *Third Berlin Biennial*.

For me it was important to be responding to the actual situation in the location where the Biennial was taking place, Berlin, and to get involved in areas that, in my opinion, are not given sufficient visibility in Berlin's major art institutions. I don't mean individual works or artistic concepts, but the questions and issues associated with those works and concepts. And for such issues there is most certainly a very heterogeneous public in Berlin; the question is only, whether it is identical with the one imagined by the arts sections of the newspapers. In this context you have to ask yourself who actually controls the media in Berlin. Because in fact it is controlled by a very few people nowadays, no more than two or three big publishing houses, which consequently enjoy a virtual monopoly. When an opinion-leader from one of these publishing houses takes a particular line, the other papers from the same stable won't oppose it. There are fairly clear hierarchies at work there: so much for the cultural hegemony that you accuse me of. The power that you attribute to me as a curator is very flattering, but in reality it is power that is exercised elsewhere, for instance in media reporting. As I say, where the principal opinion-formers lead the charge, the others meekly follow. This is a circumstance I find extremely alarming, which is why we need as many projects as ever: art exhibitions, for example, but also other types of cultural events such as

theatre and film programmes, which are committed to a critical discourse. That is one of the reasons why I curate exhibitions like this at all.

Marius Babias:

My next question concerns the dilemma in present-day curatorial practice: On the one hand it wants to open up a forum for debate, but at the same time it encourages the commercialization of the cultural field. How do you handle this double role?

Ute Meta Bauer:

Before studying at the academy of art I attended a grammar school with an emphasis on business and economics, which gave me a good grounding in business management and economics. After that, before starting my studies, I worked for SDR (Southern German) television, so I've long been familiar with all those issues about the public's taste and understanding. On the basis of that early training and experience I made a conscious decision not to adjust my professional life to harmonize with considerations of that kind. After all, one has one's reasons for committing oneself to a sphere of activity that could be described as a critical space. The range of content in German public television, for example, has been narrowed down more and more. From the early days until well into the 1970s, it was possible to create programmes with really fascinating and unusual formats, but then the possibilities, in terms of content, were steadily reduced: always on the grounds that the viewing figures were too low...

Marius Babias:

... so it was the tyranny of the ratings…

Ute Meta Bauer:

… Exactly! And why has the cinema, including the arts cinema, made such a comeback in terms of popularity? After all, for a while we were constantly being told that cinema was dead. The public isn't as narrow-minded as some people like to argue when they want to discourage higher-quality artistic productions. The assumption that only entertainment, sex, comedy or violence will achieve high ratings may well be correct, but the one doesn't preclude the other, as good films have amply demonstrated. It's a matter of how things are done; it's the endless diet of one-dimensional pap, allegedly pitched at the right level to appeal to the public that leads to intellectual and emotional impoverishment. Discourse-based productions are attracting larger numbers again, because people don't like being treated like idiots.

Another thing I find regrettable is that I'm accused, amongst other things, of demonstrating a lack of humour in my exhibitions. I have a strong sense of black humour; it's just a bit less obvious. You simply can't equate the superficial comedy-show humour which the media are so keen on these days with the subtle humour and caustic sarcasm that I prefer. Alright, so it seems the 'meaning of life' is not vouchsafed to everyone. And I can't bow to the pressure to offer something 'within the reach of everyone's understanding', whatever that means, if only because I myself am interested precisely in the things I don't understand. I feel like the Beastie Boys: In an interview they said something to the effect that in their lyrics they are not prepared to make allowance for the 'dumbest' listener, just for the sake of reaching him as well. And it's no coincidence that they made this comment to a journalist.

What is relatively new for curators is being confronted with that gigantic media machine and the internationalization that goes hand in hand with globalization. More than six hundred articles worldwide were written on the subject of the *Third Berlin Biennial* alone. That didn't happen with the previous Berlin biennials. This time even our website was translated into Chinese, in its entirety. So you're catering not only to publics in the location where the event is taking place, but to a range of publics in a range of widely differing cultural contexts. And the perception and reception of the works of art, the questions a project raises and the statements it makes vary accordingly. We have to bear that in mind these days; it's part of our job. Of course it makes a difference whether you're curating an international biennial or a smaller project aimed specifically at a local public: this determines what sort and size of media machine is set in motion and has to be 'satisfied'. Also it's no longer enough just to hold a press conference at the opening. The press wants to be told 'everything' well before that, and during the actual run of a biennial, or whatever, you have to be constantly supplying more information, otherwise you don't get any more coverage.

Marius Babias:

You advocate a model of curatorial practice aimed at creating a critical space, but for some years the zeitgeist has been hostile towards critical art. Is it not the case that bad times for critical art are also bad times for critical curators?

Ute Meta Bauer:

Yes, who would deny that? But I was surprised by the unanimous conservative backlash among the critics, their demand for 'l'art pour l'art'. In an American art journal I was accused of instrumentalising art for political propaganda. Certainly I do try to give the critical potential of art its due place within exhibitions. I was surprised, though, to see how some people in the field of scholarly research immediately saw parallels and possibilities for their own work when they looked at the form of communication achieved and the affinities revealed in and by the *Third Berlin Biennial*. This is not, of course, to be unreservedly welcomed. When, for instance, an architect like Rem Koolhaas and his Harvard students make a study of the informal sector in Lagos and the enormous flexibility and mobilization that develops there in a kind of self-regulatory process, you have to take careful note of who then profits from the results of the study, and which people from what sphere of activity suddenly start to show an interest. But art reporting is clearly lagging behind when it assumes that a critical discourse is problematic for the 'uninitiated'. Nowadays even commercial companies realize that they need to concern themselves with critical discourses. In his inaugural lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, the architect Eyal Weizmann, who co-curated the exhibition *Territories* at Berlin's KW Institute for Contemporary Art, presented excerpts from a video interview with a high-ranking military strategist of the Israeli army. The military are thoroughly familiar with current spatial discourses. They are evidently quite knowledgeable on the subject and are already incorporating their conclusions from these discourses into their military strategies: deterritorialisation in the place of linear structures; this was already apparent in Ariel Sharon's early settlement policy. The discourses put forward at the *Third Berlin Biennial*, which are by no means new, are widely known and are being utilised even by those against whom they are directed. And yet the arts sections of the newspapers are trying to take us back to the nineteenth century.

Marius Babias:

The reason why the military and private enterprise take an interest in 'critical theories' is so that they can make the military apparatus, or the creaming off of profits, even more effective.

Ute Meta Bauer:

Of course. But surely it's absurd that both the military and the capitalist enterprises understand the innovative potential of critical discourses and respond to them, while a lot of people in the art 'operating system' just keep going round in the same old circles. Of course it's not our intention to launch critical discourses so that they can be more effectively studied, commandeered and exploited for profit by those other interests. We need a continuous critical discourse, which has to be a 'common' one: by which I do not mean a consensual discourse. Otherwise I fear that we shall increasingly be faced with so-called 'parallel societies' and 'parallel worlds', or, which is worse, actually help to bring them about.

Marius Babias:

Careful! 'Parallel society' is a right-wing antithesis to 'multiculturalism'.

Ute Meta Bauer:

I know, but that doesn't mean that the concept shouldn't be considered and examined just as much as the concept of multiculturalism which, in my opinion, is equally problematic; the whole point is to examine the various concepts critically. In this connection I'd like to call attention to the idea of the 'class society', which of course has fallen rather out of fashion, but in the light of present-day developments in society is becoming much more relevant again. The trend to ever-greater privatization, the formation of elites and a simultaneous growth in poverty are just some of the key aspects here. And in art, too, we can't just naively crawl away and hide in a corner, neither as artists and curators nor as critics. We live together on one planet which is made up of very complex and interconnected systems, including, incidentally, the system of art, and we react to these systems in different ways; power and above all wealth are more unequally distributed than ever before.

Marius Babias:

An exhibition on the scale of the *Berlin Bienniale* is a social medium, and this gives it a social significance that far exceeds what can be achieved by, for instance, an exhibition in a gallery. As the curator of a major exhibition one is able to exert a certain influence; in connection with imagery and language one can generate policies that radiate into society.

Ute Meta Bauer:

Of course that's one reason why one does it, but the effect isn't really as far-reaching as all that: I only wish it were. I myself have a critical attitude towards major projects and biennials. I think that nowadays you make more of an impact with smaller projects with very specific aims, which has a lot to do with the fact that today's world is totally permeated by the media. To a large extent the popular mood is manipulated by way of the media. It's no coincidence that politicians behave very much like pop stars in the media, and these days even curators are under the same pressure to succeed as music producers or theatre and film directors. Nowadays you have to sell yourself as a person; you have to be either eccentric or 'surprisingly' normal. If you refuse to yield to this pressure to 'perform' for the media, or your personality doesn't come across well, then you don't get much press coverage. Another factor that shouldn't be underestimated is that, in this country, difference is still defined in terms of the classic parameters of social distinction, namely sex, 'race' and class. These are still very much in operation, and people are treated according to their backgrounds. Any one social class refuses to be dictated to by another, and vice versa.

When you say that as a curator one has a certain power of discourse, that's good to hear. We've fought and worked for that.

Marius Babias:

For a curator you've had an untypical career, in that it hasn't developed in a straight line. You started out as an artist, before empowering yourself to be a curator through a process of 'learning by doing'. How have the circumstances changed in the last fifteen years?

Ute Meta Bauer:

There are more venues for contemporary art than there used to be. That doesn't mean, though, that there is also proportionately more money for contemporary art, so the resources available for filling more space with more and more projects are actually reduced in real terms. It was in response to this development that the German Federal Cultural Foundation was established, elevating the status of culture by making it a responsibility of the state. The field of culture has expanded and become more differentiated, and cultural institutions have to share their public accordingly. In order to be visible nowadays, you have to offer much more, shout louder, be bigger or be very specific in what you do, and there is much more pressure to justify what you do. Another thing that has changed is that, fifteen years ago, there were no training programmes specifically for curators. The people who worked as curators were art historians or had a museum background; a smaller number came from other professions and usually worked on a freelance basis. But now there's a wealth of training available, and that has both advantages and disadvantages. So for me, teaching at an art academy, it's important to confront young artists with the problems of curating and to make them aware of the way power is divvied up in the world of exhibiting, questions about the design of the exhibition space and so on. Incidentally, my career is not very different from that of other freelance curators.

Marius Babias:

What qualities does a curator need nowadays?

Ute Meta Bauer:

There are people who are very good at dealing with both artists and their work and at generating public interest by using their own personalities as a medium for conveying the art. Depending on the institution or the locality, it's almost becoming a prerequisite that curators, too, should bring a certain charisma with them. In my opinion it's more important to know how to deal with art very precisely and, in consultation with artists, be in a position to consider all the issues that their works raise. You should be able to produce catalogues and publications yourself, and keep an eye on the kind of press coverage that your exhibition receives. The demands made on curators have greatly increased, not least because everything is produced at a faster pace. For instance, where an art institution might once have had a period of two or three years to develop an exhibition, that's rarely the case today. At least not where biennials, art galleries or art societies that show contemporary art are concerned.

Marius Babias:

Are particular qualities and skills in greater demand than before?

Ute Meta Bauer:

In art institutions, the call for anti-establishment practice is certainly not very great. But then it never has been, except perhaps in the early 1970s. But there have always been people, whether artists, curators or museum people, who have made subversive thinking an integral part of their work, and for whom that attitude was, or is, the very reason for their involvement in art and culture. And I hope this group of people will never die out. The capacity to think in ways that challenge the accepted norms, to reflect on what you do and what area you should devote your work and commitment to, and to see yourself as an autonomous subject of a critical civil society, is something that I feel is desirable for every individual, not just in the world of art. There's undoubtedly less emphasis on developing critical (self-) awareness nowadays; fundraising skills are higher in demand.

Marius Babias:

What is the basic model that underlies your work as a curator? How do you combine the different spheres: research, choice of theme, realization, production and marketing?

Ute Meta Bauer:

My work tends to be team-oriented. But by that I don't mean a grass-roots form of power-sharing; we work under too much time pressure for that. I do try to find out who's good at what, so that I can put together a team on that basis, as they do in film-making. I mention this to avoid any idealized misconception as far as hierarchies are concerned: there is a hierarchy, and as a 'control freak' and 'artistic director' I often claim the right to have the last word. For instance, when I work with the graphic designers who have to be able to service the whole communications apparatus, I like to explain the ideas and objectives of an exhibition to them in such a way that they can then communicate those ideas and objectives appropriately in the design of the exhibition and the system by which the visitor is guided through it. The design of an exhibition is just as much a part of the statement one is making as the exhibition itself, the accompanying events and the publications. I am open to suggestions and willing to let myself be persuaded. I'm not resistant to new ideas and concepts. In my collaboration with the participating artists and the team, lively debate is essential. Unfortunately we have less and less time for it, and that has a damaging effect on the projects.

Marius Babias:

In terms of the politics of identity, do you see curating as an act of 'self-realization', in that it is part and parcel of your career and your outlook and not 'alienated'?

Ute Meta Bauer:

Well, I would say that people have established who they are by the age of twenty. After that, the self-realisation phase should be over. I don't want to be forever circling around myself. But creating a political space, to demand scope for self-determination, is something that I regard as fundamental: and I mean a political space that one shares with other people, a space for a 'community of shared interests'. And I consider exhibitions, artworks, plays, newspaper articles, concerts, all of the forms and media of culture, to be a part of that, so that we ourselves remain alert in our thinking and don't get lulled into a state of complete torpor.

Marius Babias:

Approaching the issue from the point of view of the present crisis in work, the idea is gaining ground, even if it's not politically feasible at the moment, that future work must relate to the politics of identity. It must have to do with the individual, with his or her interests, abilities and wishes. From the perspective of work theory curating looks at first sight like an act of 'self-empowerment'.

Ute Meta Bauer:

In what quarters is that idea gaining ground? I would prefer to replace the term 'self-empowerment' with 'self-determination'. Certainly you have to empower yourself before you can achieve self-determination. Self-determination, in my view, goes a step further. It's a concept that has been shaped by many people, not only in the field of art, but above all in the world of work. The demand for self-determination as a reaction against the alienation of work on the factory assembly line derives from the workers' protest movement of the 1970s and actually originates with Marx. The producers of culture adopted those ideas. And the idea of autonomous art really has nothing to do with the claim that it seeks to be self-realising but, once again, with the concept of self-determination: artistic production that is no longer dependent on commissions from the nobility and the Church. Instead of "Don't bite that hand that feeds you", it's " Do bite the hand that feeds you".

The artistic terrain is, as always, a grey area with all the accompanying advantages and disadvantages. But after all, the field of art is so open that producers from other cultural spheres can cross over into it when they find themselves being forced to be more mainstream on their usual territory, in film or music, for instance, because of competition from the American cinema, financial pressure, media marketing, the need to achieve economic viability, etc. It is important to know whose territory we are on. The boundaries between art and the adjoining fields have become more permeable. Of course we still have the traditional means of conveyance to the public, such as exhibitions in galleries and museums; but nowadays very diverse artistic and cultural concepts exist side by side. Due to globalisation, questions of 'identity', whether personal, cultural or political, and the question of 'who is speaking to whom, and from what position', have become much more central.

Marius Babias:

It hasn't been all that long, just a few years, since 'independent curator' was a term of abuse. Museum curators and many artists shared a prejudice against independent curators, whom they regarded as 'meta-artists'. Now, however, such curators are no longer seen as upstarts, but are accepted as partners. Firmly incorporated into an all-embracing social image-making process, independent curators have nowadays become agents of a neo-liberal ideology of creativity.

Ute Meta Bauer:

Oh, really? The image of the curator as a meta-artist comes up with monotonous regularity at symposia. And in the meantime the neo-liberal tendency towards exploitation is to be found in all areas of creative expression. It's true that what happened to some extent to the role of the critic in the 1980s, when economic dependency would turn a

critic into the mouthpiece of a particular trend in art, is also happening now through the co-opting of curators. More than before, curators are being used by the private sector for its own ends: to put it brutally, they are being 'kept'. 'Independent' curators are undoubtedly still viewed with scepticism. As I said, at conferences you often hear the objection, specifically from artists, that curators are 'omnipotent' and make or break artists' careers. That's only true to a limited degree, and only in the case of a handful of well-known curators, the so-called 'global players'. On the one hand, the curators represent the 'guiding' standard, while on the other, there are complaints about their supposed position of power. What receives too little attention in this context is the complex network of relationships between dealers, collectors and museums, which is in far greater need of examination than the supposed opposition between artist and curator.

Marius Babias:

In the cultural sphere, curators and artists contribute to devising work models (self-organization, self-management, cooperation, etc.), which not only diffuse into society generally (one-person businesses, mini-jobs, etc.) but may also serve to grant cultural legitimacy to a process of economic redistribution.

Ute Meta Bauer:

Well, all those graduates of curatorship programmes need employment, after all. Of course, if you choose to, you can find a model there that can possibly be adapted to other professions and work situations. In the 1980s, at the time of 'appropriation art', conceptual art borrowed from advertising and adopted the philosophy and strategies of commercial enterprises. The different worlds observe each other and inter-react, 'diffuse', as you put it; everything is dependent on everything else, each side takes inspiration from the other, 'steals the other's clothes'; that's the normal way of things, and it can even possibly serve as a corrective. I don't believe that it is these models from the art world that are underpinning current social developments; art is simply too marginal an area to have that effect. The real cause is that there's just less paid work to be had. Certainly, in today's information age, the creative industries are a potential area of employment for art graduates, and it has never been more than a small minority that took the path of the supremely gifted 'artist', from art academy to gallery to museum. But in contrast to the present, those who didn't manage to establish themselves in the art market saw themselves as failures. Nowadays the opportunities for working and gaining acceptance as an artist are far more varied. I don't just see this as the neo-liberalist appropriation of art and artists, but as an extension of the concept of art. There have been changes in the artists' view of themselves and in what kind of achievement they find acceptable, and those changes are increasingly reflected in the curricula of art academies.

Marius Babias:

I didn't mean that as an accusation, but rather an attempt at an explanation. For me, there is obviously a problematic relationship between art and neo-liberalism at the level of picture and image production. In other words, art, where it provides positive images, is instrumental in glossing over processes of social reorganisation. Seen in that light, curators are playing a considerable role in the de-politicisation of the visual culture.

Ute Meta Bauer:

There is some truth in that, but it doesn't, by a long shot, apply to all of my fellow curators. I find it problematic when exhibitions use works of art to convey other ideas subliminally. I, on the other hand, am accused of being too politicized, too theoretical and of using the 'poor' artists for my own purposes. I regard the 'de-politicizing of leisure' to be no less problematic than all the forms of 'non-material work' that are associated with artistic practice. What in the music world is called 'easy listening', a type of music which I like very much, by the way, has now entered the art world as a sort of 'easy looking', where leisure time must be filled and all those supposed expectations: 'everyone has to understand it', 'it has to interest young people', 'Museums have to reach out to more and more people from all social groups' are totally at odds with the actual profile of their public, given that most museums are far too expensive for a 'working-class' or unemployed family. For certain social classes, a family visit to a museum has become quite unaffordable, so that museums can only reach out, a priori, to the better-off members of society. On the other hand, those 'workers' who do go to exhibitions know this perfectly well, and what they want is, as I've already said, to be challenged, not lulled to sleep. The two of us are proof of that, don't you think?

With thanks to Anemona Crisan, Yvonne P. Doderer and Renate Wagner.

Translated from the German by Judith Rosenthal

Title of exhibition: *First Story — Women Building/New Narratives for the 21st Century*
Place: Galeria do Palácio/Biblioteca Municipal Almeida Garrett, Porto, Portugal.
Date: 13 October to 16 September 2001
curated and designed by: Ute Meta Bauer
Contributors: Asterisk, Ruth Becker, Nina Cohen, Dyke TV, Maria Eichhorn, Christiane Erharter, FO/GO LAB, Gudrun Gut, Itsuko Hasegawa, LSD, Barbara Morgenstern, Regina Möller, Trina Robbins, Nicole Wolf, Women on Waves, womenspacework, Elke Zobl
Project management: Yvonne P. Doderer
Interpretation: Guiding System by Nina Cohen
Exhibition architecture: Harappas by Itsuko Hasegawa
Exhibition graphics: Susanne Schwarz

THE WHITE WALL – ON THE PREHISTORY OF THE 'WHITE CUBE'

WALTER GRASSKAMP

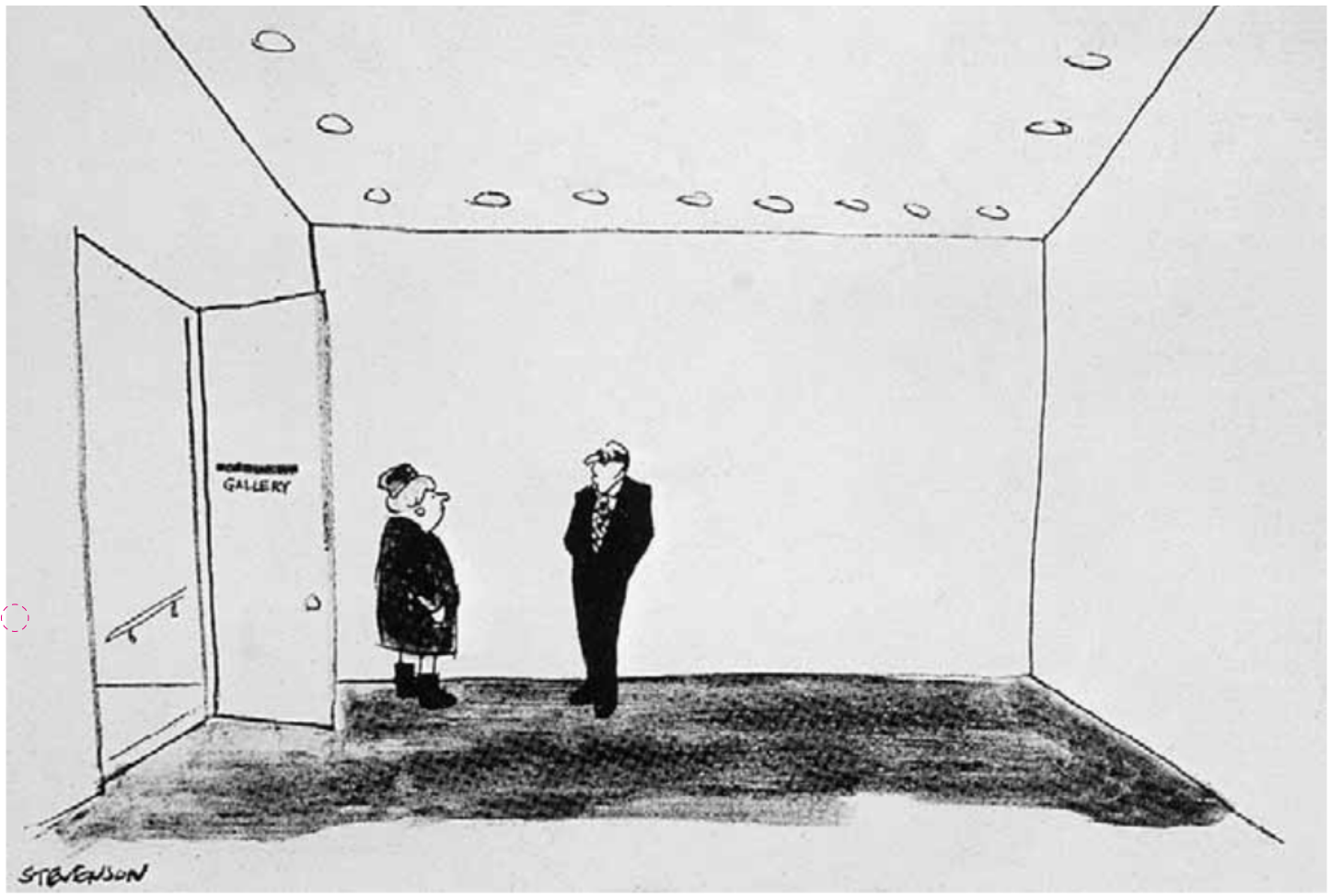
In a series of essays published in *Artforum* in 1976, Brian O'Doherty was the first to analyze the phenomenon of the 'white cube,' the most widespread display practice in the field of contemporary art. Nine years earlier, though, in 1967, James Stevenson, a caricaturist for The New Yorker, had already made the subject the butt of a joke. O'Doherty examined the strange and unreal qualities of the gallery 'cube', and the interaction between artists and the minimally articulated white exhibition space: conditions they had had to deal with since the 1960s at the latest, and to which they still respond with various strategies today. The book edition of O'Doherty's influential essays appeared ten years later, in 1986.[1] Since then, the expression 'white cube' has had an unprecedented international career as a synonym for a specific aesthetic formula. Not even the often-evoked notion of the indispensability of commentary in modern art, derived from Arnold Gehlen and popular since the 1950s, was as pervasive. Central questions regarding the *origins* of the white exhibition space and modern hanging methods remained unaddressed in O'Doherty's work, and since then art historians have looked at the issue only sporadically. Since the mid 1980s, however, serious attention has begun to be paid to the history of exhibitions; today, any monograph on a modern artist would be incomplete without at least some examination of the photographs of his or her early shows. Several publications have even been devoted to an overview of the developments and shifts in modern display practice, documenting its most important phases. As yet, though, these have only led to conclusions based on individual examples; they cannot therefore be regarded as providing a thorough and serious investigation of the historical background of the 'white cube' phenomenon.[2] Many questions have had to remain unanswered, and will continue to do so in the future, since the most important sources have one decisive and irremediable drawback: they are black and white photographs. One can deduct a certain amount of information from them, of course, but they can never offer any certainty regarding the colour of the walls or even the material composition of the surfaces. A light grey colour in a photograph may suggest white, but the nature of the medium makes it impossible to rule out yellow or even a pastel tone. The exact material of the wall-coverings is also difficult to determine. Contemporary written accounts are dispersed or inaccessible, while the known ones rarely mention colour. We might thus never know when exactly walls became truly and definitively white. The same is true of the second important subject O'Doherty touches upon, the question of when paintings stopped being displayed above and next to one another, filling the whole wall, and arranged in a single straight line instead. The slow but sure triumph of the single-row hanging can again only be reconstructed through photographs, which commonly show the details of individual rooms, but never the entire exhibition at once.

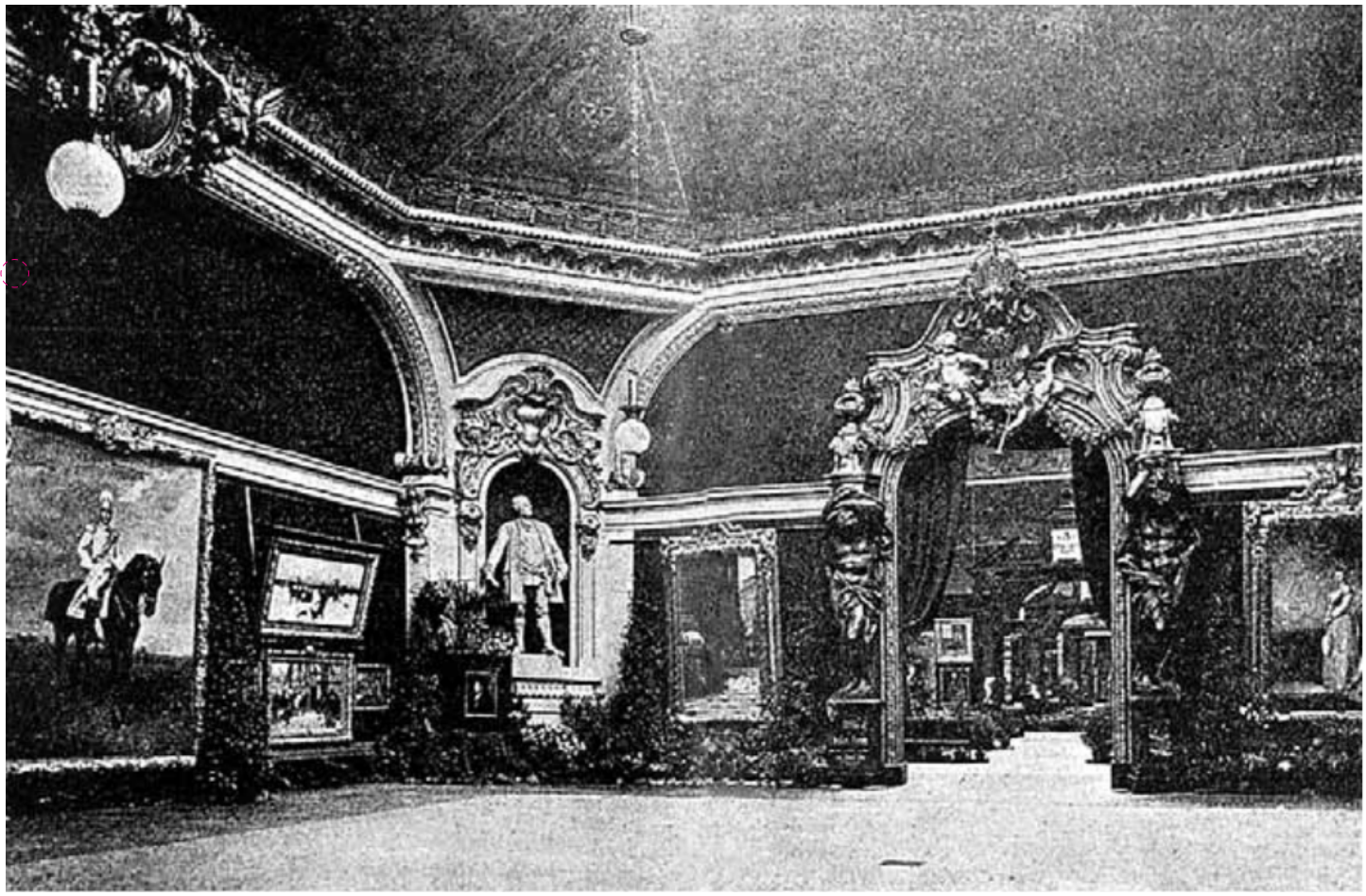
In the past, the material related to this theme could be found only in the most diverse sources; since 2001, however, Alexis Joachimides' dissertation and well-illustrated book have provided answers to many of the aforementioned questions for the years between 1880 and 1940.[3] His work deals with the museum reform movement in Germany and the origins of the modern institution in this period, and comes to a perhaps somewhat surprising conclusion, namely that it was German museums that prepared the way for the 'white cube' practice. His fascinating and well-researched volume treats a decisive chapter in the history of the 'white cube,' one that had previously been ignored by a whole generation of doctoral candidates in the field of art history. All aspects of the development are discussed, with a central focus on the German museum reform from the Wilhelminian period to the Nazi era, when many earlier ideas for improvement were actually implemented. Joachimides investigates the impact of living spaces and studios on the museum, as well as of provisional solutions and economizing measures, while the role of galleries is only touched upon. The book references the leading role played by the French Impressionists, for many years marginalized by German scholars, while at the same time neglecting the radical prototypes found in artists' exhibitions in Russia and Italy. The book's focus on Berlin, Munich and Dresden is plausible, and perhaps even unavoidable in such an enterprise, but as a result little attention is paid to the simultaneous developments at the *Kunstvereine* (art associations) and museums of the Rhine and Ruhr regions, which easily rivalled the metropolitan centres in the reception of modern art and the transformation of exhibition practice during these years. There is thus no mention of Karl Ernst Osthaus, probably the most strong-willed collector and museum reformer of the years in question, who installed his Museum Folkwang in Hagen in the modern manner at the turn of the century, nor of his interior designer, the architect Henry van de Velde. The influence of *Jugendstil* (particularly in its Berlin and Vienna Secession manifestations)

01
Brian O'Doherty *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Santa Monica & San Francisco 1986

02
See in particular: Lawrence Alloway *The Venice Biennale 1895–1968: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl*, New York 1968; Germano Celant *Ambiente/ Arte: Dal Futurismo alla Body Art*, Venice 1977; Germano Celant "Eine visuelle Maschine: Kunstinstallation und ihre modernen Archetypen", in exhibition catalogue *Documenta 7*, Kassel 1982, vol. 2, p. 19–24; Ekkehard Mai *Expositionen: Geschichte und Kritik des Ausstellungswesens*, Munich 1986; Nicolas Teeuwisse *Vom Salon zur Secession: Berliner Kunstleben zwischen Tradition und Aufbruch zur Moderne 1871–1900*, Berlin 1986; exhibition catalogue *Museum der Gegenwart: Kunst in öffentlichen Sammlungen bis 1937*, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen 1987; exhibition catalogue *Stationen der Moderne: Die bedeutendsten Kunstausstellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, Berlinische Galerie 1988; Walter Grasskamp *Die unbewältigte Moderne: Kunst und Öffentlichkeit*, Munich 1989, 2nd edition 1992; Bernd Klüser and Katharina Hegewisch (eds.) Die Kunst der Ausstellung: Eine Dokumentation dreißig exemplarischer Kunstausstellungen dieses Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt/Main & Leipzig 1991, 2nd edition 1995; Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.) *Thinking About Exhibitions*, London 1996, 2nd edition 1999

03
Alexis Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940* (Ph. D. Thesis Freie Universität Berlin 1996), Dresden 2001





Above: "This is the show, Madam." James Stevenson in *The New Yorker*, 1967.
Below: The Kaisersaal in the *International Art Exhibition of the Berlin Artist's Association*, 1891.

on modern exhibition techniques is treated in depth, but not in its wider European context. The internationalism of the art world in this period is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the development towards what we now consider the modern style of display took such an erratic course.

The book traces the roots of our modern notions to the museums of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when paintings were separated from both sculpture and the decorative arts, and painting galleries became the showcases for new presentation techniques. With colourful wall-coverings, sumptuous carpets and elaborate furniture, these galleries initially took their inspiration from aristocratic or royal settings, soon shifting increasingly towards the upper middle-class interiors of the *Gründerzeit*. Donors and patrons were courted with 'domestic' collection arrangements, where the various media were reunited in exuberant 'period rooms'. Wilhelm von Bode installed the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin in this manner, arranging the pictures, furniture and *objets d'art* as the art collectors he advised did in their own homes.[4] While commercial gallery owners clearly continued to take their cues from the homes of their clients until far into the twentieth century, artists themselves had abandoned the model of the overloaded collector's apartment for their sales exhibitions as early as 1870. Here the Impressionists led the way. Their installations were inspired by the studio or workshop, with the pictures hung in just two rows and with greater distance between them. The movement's spokesman, Degas, was content with twenty to thirty centimetres, but Paul Signac already appears to have demanded his paintings be hung in one row only in 1888. Even at the Impressionist shows, however, the walls were still covered with coloured fabrics, although the latter were increasingly monochrome. Grey seems to have been tone of choice as early as 1888, but in 1895 dark blue was also still considered.[5] Collectors and galleries of modern art may have worked to retard developments, continuing to rely on the model of the luxuriant Wilhelminian interior, but artists sought to free themselves of precisely this style of presentation. From 1870 onwards, modern principles of display can be said to have been generated from five specific arenas: *exhibitions organized by artists*, based on, among others, the model of the *studio showing* and the continuing presentation practice of *galleries* and *museums*, as well as *private collectors*. Later, a sixth was added: the highly influential *trade-fair* installation. These spheres naturally overlapped, and the evolution was non-linear. Museum presentations of certain artists could seem modern in comparison to general institutional praxis, even when they lagged behind what the artists themselves were doing in their own shows. And studios were not always the paradigms of sobriety and clarity one might expect, but could be even more overstuffed than many a *Gründerzeit* villa, as demonstrated by the studio of Hans Makart, whose working space was for a brief time even regarded as a *model* for domestic interiors. Recapitulating this chapter in the prehistory of the 'white cube' we can now see that there were several fundamental elements at stake in the debate: the wall and its material composition, i.e. covering, colour, and articulation; the floor and ceiling, as horizontal and connecting surfaces; *lighting*, both natural and artificial; the *decoration* of the space, from flower arrangements to armchairs to carpets; and finally the *artworks* themselves and their various dispositions, as well as their *frames*.

The exhibition spaces of the nineteenth century were ornate, colourful and luxuriant almost beyond belief; in any case, to today's eyes they seem more or less unbearable. A striking example of how the displays of the *Gründerzeit* must have looked is undoubtedly the Kaisersaal of the *Internationale Kunstausstellung des Vereins Berliner Künstler* (International Art Exhibition of the Berlin Artists' Association) as photographed on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary in 1891.[6] The art museums of the era were decorated with wall-coverings in velvet and other fabrics, and frequently with lively wallpaper as well; the most popular colour was a deep, strong red known as *Galerierot* (gallery red). Such decorative schemes are found even at the sober applied-arts exhibitions later in the century. At the same time, as in the Baroque period, the walls were entirely filled with pictures, with the larger formats hung above and the smaller works crammed together below, as if every square centimetre had to be used. The single-row hanging, with the works arranged at average height and the frames aligned along the bottom (or, more rarely, along the top) began to come into fashion between 1870 and 1900. By 1940 this style had become the norm, with the viewer's eye level marking the standard height. At the same time, the museum wall began to shed its decorative elements: monochrome coverings in grey or yellow slowly gave way to white; fabrics were eventually abandoned all together and the works hung directly on the 'naked' plaster. These phenomena are linked, although they did not originate in the same historical spaces and indeed need to be examined separately. The single-row hanging grew out of commercial and institutional display practice; the white wall, on the other hand, had its roots in interior design in general, not merely the design of exhibitions. It seems, in fact, that the most important impulse came not from museums and galleries, but rather from earlier and parallel advances in the design of private homes, factories and public buildings such as clinics, schools and, not to be forgotten, art academies. Although the two developments have different historical roots, it seems that the beginning and acme of their common triumph

04 Thomas W.Gaehtgens "Wilhelm von Bode und seine Sammler" in Ekkehard Mai and Peter Paret (eds.) *Sammler, Stifter und Museen: Kunstförderung in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Cologne, Weimar & Vienna 1993, p. 153–172

05 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940*, p. 115–119

06 Peter Paret *Die Berliner Secession: Moderne Kunst und ihre Feinde im Kaiserlichen Deutschland*, Frankfurt/Main, Berlin & Vienna 1983, p. 22

can be dated more or less exactly to the years around the turn of the twentieth century. In this period we find the first German examples of monochrome exhibition spaces in which the pictures were hung in a single row. Initially, the various Secession movements took up the Parisian example. In Munich, for instance, the new linear hanging system made it possible for low ceilings to be installed in the Secession's new building, as high ones were no longer necessary. Although embroidered Indian and Japanese silk wall-coverings continued to be used here, Berlin began to employ rough, coloured sacking in 1899, alternating per room between matt blue, matt green and dark red. The public, however, had little appreciation of these innovations, as can be gauged by the remark of one visitor, who saw in them a kind of 'harsh logicality'.[7]

The earliest example of the use of pure white walls in an art space (i.e. in a programmatically planned exhibition venue) is generally believed to have been at the Vienna Secession building, designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich (which he begun in1897).[8] Even there, however, the roughly plastered walls could not be left entirely unadorned, but were articulated with scattered but nonetheless rather domineering gold ornaments. Most of the rooms still exuded the opulence so typical of the late nineteenth century, if now in modernized form. The *lingua franca* was that of the modern applied arts, with the exhibition spaces designed not only to sell pictures, but also to attract potential clients interested in interior decoration and architecture. It was only around the turn of the century that the installations became more sober. At the Vienna Secession exhibitions of 1903 and 1904, for example, we find the walls simply framed with wooden slats, the floor to ceiling spaces in between left white, and the pictures hung in a single row. A new clarity had entered the exhibition space.[9] The new Viennese style conquered not only Germany but impressed also the rest of the world, thanks in large part to the *Venice Biennale*. It was here, at Gustav Klimt's 1910 one-man show, that these modern display principles were first introduced to an international public.[10] The Vienna Secession building had already garnered a Europe-wide reputation, and the Biennale, founded in 1895 and thus, at that time, rather young and without tradition, played an important part in spreading its message. The works of art on display came from around the world, as did the audience, who then took the innovations back to their own countries.

The only known photograph of the Klimt room, often reprinted, shows, in addition to the restrained ornamentation of a linear wall painting, the recognizable form of the single-row hang, with the works aligned along the top; only one picture is incorporated into the wall, a decorative constellation reminiscent of the exhibition spaces of the Vienna Secession. Even if the sparely articulated wall, separated from the floor and ceiling and along the joins with nothing but dark wood, was not pure white, the room indicates that within a decade the light-coloured monochrome wall and the single-row hang had been inexorably joined in the circles around the Vienna Secession. We do not know if any of the other rooms at the Biennale were installed in a similar way, although there is evidence of such arrangements in the following decades. It would be easy to assume, then, that all the earliest examples of this new display style were linked in one way or another with modern and contemporary art. Between the gold-and-white exhibition spaces of the Vienna Secession and the discretely ornamented Klimt installation of 1910, however, there was another, equally important station in Berlin: the famous and influential *Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst* (Centennial exhibition of German Art), which took place in the Nationalgalerie and included works of the period 1775-1875. The show was designed by the Jugendstil architect Peter Behrens, who displayed the works (at least partly) on plain white boards installed over the museum's own walls.[11] The display surfaces were decorated with graphic elements slightly more elaborate than those found later in the Klimt room at the Biennale; the rooms were accented by a draped ceiling; and the pictures were not yet hung in a single row.

Following the closure of the exhibition, the director of the Nationalgalerie, Hugo von Tschudi, retained the installation for part of the permanent collection, appropriately enough for the Impressionist pictures, which were shown on the upper floor.[12] This was an important revision; ten years earlier, just after being appointed, Tschudi had envisioned the Nationalgalerie in a very different way. At that time, he covered the walls of each room with coloured fabrics, alternating (among others) between dark red and gray, and had hung the Impressionists in the style of a domestic interior:

"While the works of the French Impressionists were hung over red wooden panels on walls covered in a striped fabric of pinkish yellow and light green, its upper edges concealed by a band of gold-tooled leather, the early nineteenth-century French landscapes and the Belgian history paintings in the connecting corridor were shown against alternating patterned and plain green, the fabric lengths separated from one another by a narrow yellow trim."[13] Given these backgrounds, it is no surprise the pictures needed conventional massive frames, if for no other reason than to separate them from the busy and colorful surroundings. In 1906, then, Tschudi seized the opportunity to preserve Behrens's design for the Impressionist installation, making the Nationalgalerie "the first museum to

07 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 122-127

08 Ekkehard Mai "Wiener Sezession 1902: Die Ausstellung als Gesamtkunstwerk" in Klüser/ Hegewisch *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*

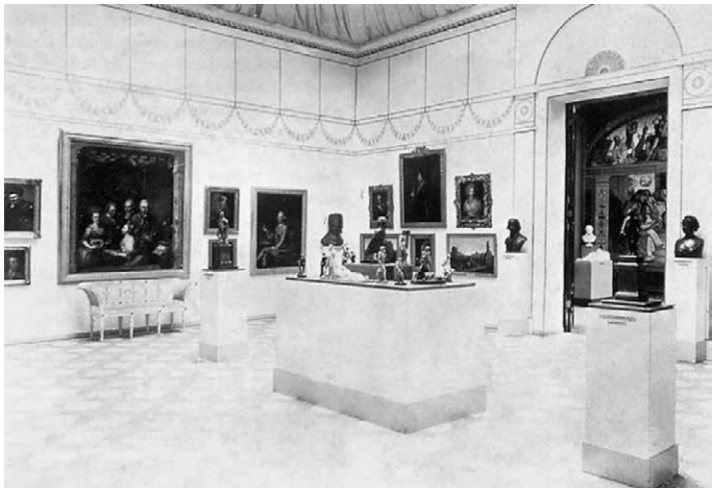
09 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 129-143

10 Alloway *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, fig. 21

11 Joachimides Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940, p. 140

12 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 140-157

13 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 151



Left: Exhibition of the works of Gustav Klimt, Venice Biennale, 1910.
Right: The Centennial exhibition of German Art, Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1906.

Left: The Impressionists Gallery, hung by Tschudi, Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1908.
Right: The *Sonderbund* exhibition, Cologne, 1912.

present its permanent collection against a white background" (Joachimides). Some of the wall-coverings on the lower floors were removed immediately; the rest remained until as late as 1922.[14] The innovation of the Impressionist rooms should not, however, necessarily be understood as a declaration in favour of a new display aesthetic; it seems it was adopted mainly for reasons of time and money, as Joachimides stresses. It is impossible to tell from Tschudi's own comments whether he conceived of the installation as merely provisory or as a kind of statement; whatever the case, it met with great resistance. It set the precedent for a debate on exhibition installation that would rage on into the 1930s and flame up again in the 1950s, and led to a clearer articulation of the positions for and against the modern style. While the *Jahrhundertausstellung* was so controversial that Emperor Wilhelm II hesitated long and publicly before even visiting it, the use of white walls for the display of parts of the permanent collection was rejected even by such artists as Lovis Corinth and progressive museum directors like Alfred Lichtwark.[15] Tschudi, whose collecting policies had been shamefully blocked by both the emperor and his court painter Anton von Werner, soon took up a post in Munich, where he installed the Alte Pinakothek in a rather traditional way using coloured wall-coverings. The use of different tones in accordance with the style of the works on display was regarded as particularly tasteful and elegant; nonetheless, here, too, there seems to have been a certain arbitrariness to the overall arrangement.

The first exhibition after the Vienna Secession and the *Jahrhundertausstellung* to employ white walls was the 1912 *Sonderbund* exhibition in Cologne, which was pioneering in many other ways as well. Installation photographs of the works of van Gogh and Edvard Munch show a loose single-row hang on walls covered in white: the colour confirmed by contemporary accounts.[16] Even here, however, the modern precept white wall/single-row hanging is not found in its purest form. Instead, we encounter a graphic and decorative combination of white walls and sparse dark lines, which mark the divide with the ceiling. Other installation photographs show that the works were still also sometimes hung one above the other.[17] Nonetheless, it appears that the new exhibition aesthetic began to take hold in the Rhine and Ruhr districts, areas extraordinary rich in Kunstvereine, modern art collectors, and museums, almost as quickly as in the metropolises. A useful source for the study of this phenomenon is the six-volume catalogue *Der westdeutsche Impuls 1900-1914*, with its numerous photographs of workshops, factories, schools, department stores, and trade-fair and museum displays.[18] Like Berlin, Vienna and Venice, this region contributed significantly to the triumph of the white wall and single-row hanging. Photographs of the Städtische Museum in Elberfeld, for example, where modern art from the von der Heydt collection was shown at a very early date, demonstrate that by 1913 works were hung in a single row, though on monochrome walls.[19] By comparison, the New York Armory Show of the same year was positively conventional, despite having made known to the world such avant-garde works as Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase: The show's pompous interior design was still clearly indebted to the nineteenth century.[20]

Reviewing this first phase in the development of our modern concept of exhibition installation with the help of known and verifiable examples, we may conclude the following: Prepared by the Impressionist critique of the nineteenth-century display practices, there emerged from the Vienna Secession the notion of the graphically articulated white wall. Combined, however, with decorative elements in gold and ornaments set into the walls, this did not yet represent a radical turning point. In Berlin, the *Jahrhundertausstellung*, with its rooms lit from above, became the springboard for a new aesthetic in museum practice. In the Klimt room at the Biennale and the *Sonderbund* show in Cologne, in contrast to the *Jahrhundertausstellung*, we find the graphically accentuated wall combined with the single-row hanging Tschudi had introduced in the Impressionist installation at the Nationalgalerie at the end of 1906. There could not as yet have been any question of mounting the pictures directly on the wall, and fabric and wallpaper continued to be used. Presenting the wall as it would have looked underneath such covering, as the pure plaster surface that would later become standard, would not only have been seen as impoverished and provisory, but also regarded as a provocation. It is no accident that the architects and artists of the 'modernist' movement (known perhaps somewhat confusingly in German as *Jugendstil*) were pioneers in the use of white walls in exhibitions.[21] Its protagonists, namely Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Henry van de Velde and Peter Behrens, as well as (somewhat later) Antonio Gaudi, had employed monochrome and white walls even earlier, not for the display of art but in various other kinds of interiors. In the United States, architects like Frank Lloyd Wright were already blazing the same trail, although their efforts remained relatively unknown in Europe, where the traditional architecture of Japan, with its empty surfaces and clear articulations, continued to exercise more influence than that of modernizing America.

In the search for the roots of the white rooms that finally put an end to the stultifying mania for decoration that had dominated the bourgeois living spaces of the nineteenth century, one must of course look to the Glasgow School of Art. Mackintosh had won the competition for its design in October 1896, and the building was completed around the

with thanks to Sabine Fehlemann, Städtisches Von-der-Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal

14 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 158, 173

15 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 158

16 A. Fortlage "Die internationale Ausstellung des Sonderbundes in Köln," in Die Kunst 28 (1913), p. 84, quoted in Ekkehard Mai *Expositionen: Geschichte und Kritik des Ausstellungswesens*; Wulf Herzogenrath "Internationale Kunstausstellung des Sonderbundes Westdeutscher Kunstfreunde und Künstler zu Köln 1912" in Klüser/Hegewisch *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*, p. 40-47. According to the same account, the walls were hidden behind a modern trade-fair installation system made of metal tubes, which was later used for other exhibitions as well.

17 In Herzogenrath's essay (see note 16), the photograph, reproduced on page 46, is captioned 'Prominenz im Raum 5 (van Gogh)'; In the catalogue *Alfred Flechtheim: Sammler. Kunsthändler. Verleger* (Westfälisches Landesmuseum Münster, 1987), however, the caption reads 'Jury der Sonderbund-Ausstellung.' It thus remains unclear whether the image illustrates the actual installation or a special hanging used only for the judging.

18 Exhibition catalogue *Der westdeutsche Impuls 1900-1914*, 6 vols., Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, Kölnischer Kunstverein Köln, Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, Museum Folkwang Essen, Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum Hagen, & Kaiser Wilhelm Museum Krefeld 1984

19 See the volume on Wuppertal, p. 79;

20 Milton Brown "Die Armory Show: Ein Medienereignis, New York/Chicago 1913" in Klüser/Hegewisch *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*

21 On the relationship between *Jugendstil* and Modernism see the chapter "Der Jugendstil, als Beginn der modernen Kunst betrachtet" in the present author's *Ist die Moderne eine Epoche?* Munich 2002

turn of the century (the east wing already in 1899). The rooms reserved for the director and teaching staff were entirely white. It is certainly no coincidence that the innovation was applied to precisely these spaces, which had previously been decorated as if they were drawing rooms, the walls covered in fabric or paper and articulated with wood panelling. In fact, the walls of the director's office were panelled, but the panels were painted white, as were the plaster walls of the staff rooms.[22] It seems, then, that before the new aesthetic began to prevail in exhibitions (which would have made more sense), it first conquered offices and meeting rooms. In the case of Glasgow, incidentally, the staff found their facilities less than entirely comfortable.[23] Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art created a sensation throughout Europe, and in 1900 the architect and his wife and collaborator Margaret were invited to exhibit at the Vienna Secession. Henry van de Velde in particular admired the Scottish innovator, and so it was no accident that, from the very beginning, he designed white hallways, stairwells and rooms for the Folkwang Museum in Hagen and also for the Großherzoglichen Kunsthochschule (Grand Ducal Academy of Art) in Weimar (from 1904).[24] The latter was highly unusual; barely ten years earlier, Gottfried von Neureuther had proposed colourful historicist-style ornaments to cover the hallways and staircases of his new building for the Munich art academy. It was only for lack of funds that these designs were never realized. This circumstance once again illustrates that a modern-looking wall is not always and necessarily a demonstrative statement, but may be the result of practical or economic considerations. Mackintosh, on the other hand, worked with monochrome, light-coloured walls even in private buildings following his work on the School of Art. These walls appear white in photographs, although not as harshly white as the cabinets and doors (Windyhill, 1900; Hill House, 1902–1904). As noted above, we need to be especially careful when drawing conclusions based on photographic evidence, even the most recent; one contemporary, for example, characterized Mackintosh's interiors as follows: “The cabinets are white, all other colors are pale, as if washed out.”[25] Still, one has the impression that here, in cloudy Scotland, bright and white walls triumphed not only in the hallways and corridors but also in the living rooms and bedrooms for the same reason we may assume they were so welcome in the School of Art, namely for their capacity to increase the amount of daylight.[26]

If one follows this particular lead, then the academy is not the only source to which one might trace the use of the white wall. Around this time as well, workshops and factories began to utilize white plaster or whitewashed walls, not only in order to take full advantage of the daylight, but also due to the increasing importance of artificial light for the industrialization process, which was beginning to conquer the night for the purposes of work.[27] Both academies and factories are therefore potential sources for the migration of the white wall into the domestic interior, but so are other functional buildings such as post offices, hospitals and schools. The fact that critics of the white exhibition wall occasionally spoke of a kind of ‘Lazarett-Ästhetik’ (military-hospital aesthetic) indicates that contemporaries perceived and understood the transposition. The development of the use of white walls in the domestic interior is, however, just as haphazard as that of the white wall used for the display of art. Many progressive architects continued to decorate their Jugendstil ensembles with wallpaper and wall paintings. Even in the work of one and the same designer we find white and dark-panelled, wallpapered and painted interiors nearly in tandem. Even van de Velde, and later many Bauhaus protagonists, tended towards the use of colour in private spaces, for example employing blue in the bedroom of the magnificent villa in Hagen belonging to Museum Folkwang founder Karl Ernst Osthaus. The desires of the patron undoubtedly played a role here, as they did in department stores and bank buildings, which continued to utilize massive wood or stone facings. If the studio aesthetic of the academy was Mackintosh's source of inspiration, it seems plausible that Peter Behrens's commission for the factory and offices of the AEG might have influenced his choice of white for the walls of the *Jahrhundertausstellung*. His installation, however, is more a late echo of the Neo-classical style, just as Jugendstil in general is more indebted to the historical fashions of the nineteenth century than scholars are often willing to admit. In any case, there was no attempt at a rapprochement between the exhibition and the studio or academy here; Behrens was clearly far more concerned that the rooms should appear chic and elegant.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, though, the ‘studio aesthetic’ increasingly became the norm, particularly in museum display. This aesthetic was of course not the bombastic one of Gründerzeit painters like Hans Makart, who sought to recreate the opulent and sumptuous ambience of the museum in his working environment; even Franz von Stuck regarded visually exuberant interiors as an entrepreneurial necessity and an integral part of the highly distinguished air of his villa. Clearly, if the look of the studio corresponded to that of the museum in this period, it was also because works created in such an over-decorated atmosphere could better hold their own in over-decorated exhibition spaces. By comparison, one can easily imagine that works created in a studio like that of Caspar David Friedrich at the beginning of the nineteenth century, depicted several times by his friend Georg Friedrich Kersting, could barely be ‘read’ in the lavish surroundings of the typical Gründerzeit museum. It was

22 Robert McLeod *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Architect and Artist*, London & Glasgow 1983, p. 64

23 William Buchanan (ed.) *Mackintosh's Masterwork: The Glasgow School of Art*, Glasgow 1989, p. 102; Buchanan also makes a claim for the interiors of Scottish castles as a possible model. Also of interest in the British context was the London exhibition site in Shepherd's Bush known as The White City, where in 1908 the works in the *Franco-British Exhibition* were displayed in pure white spaces; see Paul Greenhalg "Education, Entertainment and Politics: Lessons from the Great International Exhibitions" in Peter Vergo (ed.) *The New Museology*, London 1989, p. 74–98, fig. p. 85

24 Already in 1903 Karl Ernst Osthaus stated that he had “kept the majority of the wall and especially the ceiling white, in order to create more light.” The recent removal of later layers of paint at the museum in Hagen, however, seem to indicate that the original colour was rather yellow (with thanks to the director of the Bremer Kunstsammlungen Böttcherstrasse, Rainer Stamm, editor and annotator of *Karl Ernst Osthaus: Reden und Schriften. Folkwang, Werkbund, Arbeitsrat*, Cologne 2002; see p. 43).

25 Gabriele Fahr-Becker *Jugendstil*, Cologne 1996, p. 54

26 McLeod *Charles Rennie Mackintosh* (note 22), p. 64

27 Wolfgang Schivelbusch *Lichtblicke: Zur Geschichte der künstlichen Helligkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich & Vienna 1983

perhaps no coincidence, then, that Friedrich, like his friend Kersting, was one of the great 'rediscoveries' of the 1906 *Jahrhundertausstellung*. Even if we can never be one hundred percent sure that their pictures were actually displayed on white walls, this example demonstrates that it does do works good to be presented under the same optical conditions as those under which they were executed.

Simultaneous to and following the demise of the Makart-style studio aesthetic around the turn of the century, a radical move towards monochrome walls began to take place. These were probably not invariably white, light gray is often mentioned, and Max Liebermann's studio was bright yellow, but the new trend attracted much attention. Already in 1914 Karl Scheffler came to the conclusion "that the studio of the modern painter has unarticulated and plain, whitewashed walls."[28] The in-situ work photographs Constantin Brancusi made in the early 1920s were intended to point out the conditions under which his sculptures were to be viewed, and are further proof of the avant-garde's efforts to evade traditional display methods and to assert a more modern aesthetic of the studio.[29] Often mentioned in this context are the early exhibitions staged by the Russian Futurists and Constructivists, which featured light coloured and seemingly even pure white walls. An important example was the last Futurist exhibition, *0,10*, held in St. Petersburg in 1915, where the works were hung on greyish wallpaper, as would later be the case at shows of Malevich's abstract pictures.[30] There is no doubt, however, that the Russian Constructivist movement, with its preference for rhythmic, all-over hangings was the earliest among the various avant-gardes to entirely *reject* the principle of the single-row hang. At Ivan Puni's first Berlin exhibition, for example, the paintings were installed on doors, windows, the ceiling and floor.[31] These early Futurist and Constructivist exhibitions also represent an important stage in the abandonment of the picture frame. Here, the works were often hung diagonally, even in places where there was no question of accommodating a viewer standing at a lower level. These frameless abstract pictures quickly developed into spatial works, the so-called *prounen*, in which the canvas square dissolves only to reconstitute itself in three-dimensional form. This is the earliest instance of which it might be claimed that the conditions of the exhibition actually transformed the appearance of the work of art. This development became more radicalized as the efforts of the Constructivists and Futurists, as well as, later, many Bauhaus and De Stijl, artists began to tend towards freeing the wall of displayed paintings entirely in favour of understanding the pure or painted wall as a constructive element. Already in 1929, Wassily Kandinsky felt compelled to defend 'the bare wall' as an exhibition space for paintings.[32]

The extent to which the Russian rejection of the frame was a conscious aesthetic or an economic choice, and to which factories, workshops and other functional spaces played a role in the introduction of the monochrome wall, remains an open question. Here, too, one is tempted to assert that economics and time pressure had a hand in the decisions taken. Still, in the years leading up to the First World War, these manifestations were among the most radical in their promotion of a new aesthetic for artists' exhibitions: a development the museum could hardly afford to ignore. It was only under Tschudi's successor in Berlin, Ludwig Justi, and after the end of the Empire, that it became possible to work permanently with white walls at the Nationalgalerie, although initially only in a subsidiary location. In 1919 Justi succeeded in securing the former Kronprinzenpalais (Crown Prince's Palace) for the display of the contemporary collection. On the lower floors he hung the Impressionist pictures against the rather conventional existing tapestries, with the works arranged in several rows. On the third floor, however, reserved, among others, for the Expressionists and an impressive suite of pictures by Max Beckmann, the visitor was confronted with a pure white room and a single row of works, their bottom edges aligned. There can be no doubt that this was one of the first permanent museum displays to conform entirely to modern expectations.[33] Here, too, though, it remains unclear whether the installation should be understood as a true avowal of the new aesthetic or whether it was in fact undertaken merely as a temporary measure; temporariness being one of the conditions Justi was forced to work under until he was dismissed in 1933. After all, it was only shortly before his dismissal that the modern installation took on its definitive form. Later statements indicate that Justi was somewhat sceptical about the white wall, which he viewed as rather 'functional'.[34] Like Tschudi's Impressionist installation before, even otherwise well-meaning contemporaries criticized Justi's prototype of the modern exhibition space. In 1919, for example, Curt Glaser describes the upper galleries, with their "painted floors and paper wall-coverings (…)", as "modest (…)", a sharp contrast to the "more distinguished rooms below."[35] Oddly enough, Glaser fails to mention the most obvious reason for the introduction of the white wall: Although it was certainly possible to display framed Impressionist works against a colourful backdrop, there could be no question of such a setting for the Expressionist or abstract pictures, which could tolerate nothing but the most neutral mise en scène. Such incompatibility was undoubtedly one of the major reasons for the spread of the white wall in exhibitions and museum installations, as, inversely, this dissemination encouraged a more autonomous use of colour in modern painting, which no longer had to take into

28 Quoted in Joachimides *Die Museums-reformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums* 1880-1940, p. 212

29 Friedrich Teja Bach "Atelier Impasse Ronsin – Brancusi, Paris" in Klüser/Hegewisch *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*

30 Noemi Smolik "Letzte futuristische Ausstellung 0,10, Petrograd 1915 – das Ende einer Entwicklung" in Klüser/Hegewisch *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*; exhibition catalogue *Kazimir Malevich 1878-1935*, Russian Museum Leningrad, Tretyakov Galerij Moscow & Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam 1988/1989

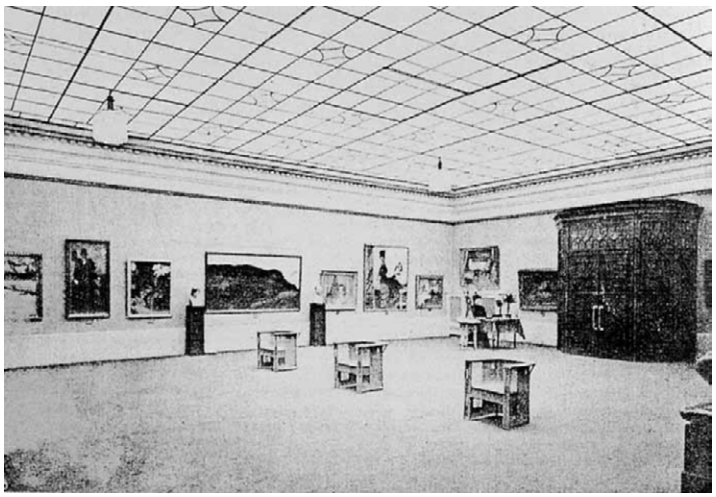
31 Celant Ambiente/ Arte, p. 21

32 Wassily Kandinsky "Die kahle Wand" (1929) in *Essays über Kunst und Künstler*, edited by Max Bill, Bern 1955, 3rd edition 1973, p. 129-132

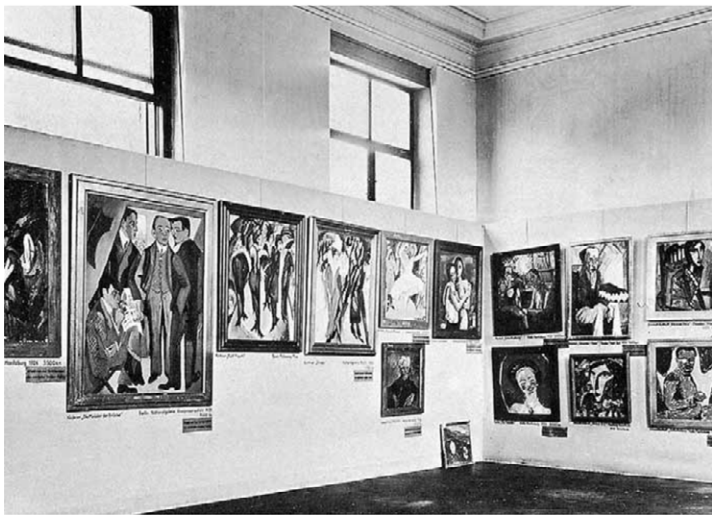
33 On the basis of the photographs, it is impossible to tell conclusively whether all the walls were white or only those in the rooms displaying the works of Beckmann and Feininger. While Joachimides (*Die Museums-reformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums* 1880-1940, p. 207) believes the latter is unclear; the numerous photographs in Janda seem to indicate the opposite: see Annegret Janda "Die Gemälde und Bildwerke der Expressionisten im ehemaligen Kronprinzenpalais" in exhibition catalogue *Das Schicksal einer Sammlung: Aufbau und Zerstörung der neuen Abteilung der Nationalgalerie im ehemaligen Kronprinzenpalais Unter den Linden 1918-1945*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/DDR, Nationalgalerie/ Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (West-Berlin) 1988

34 Joachimides, *Die Museums-reformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums* 1880-1940, p. 208, 210

35 Quoted in Janda "Die Gemälde und Bildwerke der Expressionisten im ehemaligen Kronprinzenpalais" p. 27



Left: The Crown Prince's Palace, 2nd Floor, with works from Beckmann.
Right: The Moderne Galerie, Munich, Upper Gallery, 1911.



Left: *Degenerate Art*, Munich, 1937.
Right: The House of German Art, Munich, 1937.

account the interference caused by busy environments. In any case, the white museum wall was also a prerequisite for the abandonment of the frame, once so indispensable for creating a separation between picture and décor. No research has yet been undertaken to discover when exactly this occurred. It was only once pictures had lost their frames that they could enter into the intimate symbiosis with the 'white cube' O'Doherty has described.

Even after 1919, the advance of the white exhibition space continued to be slow and erratic. In addition to El Lissitzky's *Kabinett der Abstrakten* (Abstract Cabinet), installed in the Provinzialmuseum (Provincial Museum) in Hanover, forming with its various wall-coverings an elegant presentation arrangement, and a stark contrast to the rest of the museum, which remained conservatively hung.[36] The year 1927 saw the exhibition *Wege und Richtungen der abstrakten Malerei in Europa* (Paths and Directions in European Abstract Painting) at the Kunsthalle Mannheim, which celebrated the white wall and the academy's white frame.[37] Outside the museum, too, development was gradual. Installation photographs of modern art exhibitions in conventional gallery spaces reveal the competition facing the light-coloured monochrome wall of the 1920s. Groundbreaking shows such as the legendary Dada-Messe (Dada Fair) of 1920 took place in rooms with darkly covered walls. In this case, the space belonged to a commercial gallery whose character was hardly exceptional. Galleries of modern art continued to follow the traditional pattern, among them that of the avant-garde dealer Alfred Flechtheim, whom Otto Dix painted in 1926 against a backdrop of green fabric, one of the few indicators of colour in the age of black-and-white photography. At the first exhibitions of the artists' groups *Brücke* (Bridge) and the *Blaue Reiter* (Blue Rider), which took place in 1910 and 1912 at Galerie Arnold (Dresden) and Galerie Thannhauser (Munich), respectively, the works were hung against a dark, although monochrome, wall-covering. Another Munich establishment, the Moderne Galerie, on the other hand, was lit from above and by 1911 seems to have been aware of both the brightness and single-row hanging of the Klimt room at Venice.[38]

The conflict between traditional museum presentation and modern display principles continued to occupy European professionals until well into the 1930s. Particularly interesting in this regard are the recently translated essays of Georges Salles, in which he pokes fun at an exhibition on French museology.[39] The debate intensified as books and magazines began to print works of art of all periods on white paper, 'framed' by nothing but a broad white margin. André Malraux's *musée imaginaire* increasingly competed with the real. At an international conference on museums that took place in Madrid in 1934 discussions arose around the concept of *simplicité de rigueur*.[40] One might have expected a conservative reaction to these developments on the part of the National Socialists; the opposite, however, was true. On the one hand, it is true that the installation of the Kronprinzenpalais was still considered so provocative that in 1933, when numerous paintings were confiscated, it was immediately altered. The new director, Schardt, appointed by the Nazis, painted the walls in "lacquered pastel tones or silver, using a method he himself had invented and tested (…) The pictures were hung a good distance apart against this fabric-like shimmering background." Installation photographs indicate that the single-row hang was very likely preserved throughout; by 1933 it was thus already considered standard.[41] On the other hand, the white wall likewise now became generally accepted: In both the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum and the main building of the Nationalgalerie the new directors, appointed by the National Socialists in 1933 and 1935 respectively, introduced the colour white.[42] Above all, however, it was the 1937 *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition and the *Große deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great Exhibition of German Art), held in the newly built *Haus der deutschen Kunst* (House of German Art), which in fact represent the final triumph of the white exhibition space.

One can hardly imagine a more different usage of the white wall than in these two shows. The 'degenerate' works were displayed in a rather provisional looking installation in the buildings facing the Hofgarten, hung against a light background, together with the large, headline-style 'labels' that were used to denounce them, transferring a modern pamphlet and newspaper aesthetic to the walls of an exhibition.[43] In the Haus der deutschen Kunst, on the other hand, the white halls and stone-clad corridors created an almost sacred feel, combining sober classicism with a modern museum aesthetic. Even today these spaces have proved their usefulness, surprisingly even for an exhibition of works by Frank Stella, the artist who, according to O'Doherty, helped give artistic definition to the 'white cube' idea. There are several factors that may explain the continued use of the white wall under these changed political circumstances. Joachimides sees in it an attempt by museum reformers to entice the new regime, assuring them that this style of presentation was more suited to the sorts of visitors they hoped to attract, not all of them members of the educated bourgeoisie. Even before the advent of National Socialism, the political spectrum of these men had been extremely broad, stretching from the 'völkisch' national-romanticist inclinations of Karl Ernst Osthaus through the intellectual elitism of Wilhelm von Bode to the social-democratic aspirations of Alfred Lichtwark. Perhaps there was also, however, a more specific circumstance responsible for

36 Compare the illustrations in *Museum der Gegenwart*, p. 32

37 Monika Flacke-Knoch *Museumskonzeptionen in der Weimarer Republik. Die Tätigkeit Alexander Dorners im Provinzialmuseum Hannover*, Marburg 1985; Beatrix Nobis "El Lissitzky 'Der Raum der Abstrakten' für das Provinzialmuseum Hannover 1927/ 28" in Klüser/Hegewisch: *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*; ill. in *Museum der Gegenwart*, p. 43

38 Helen Adkins "Erste Internationale Dada-Messe, Berlin 1920"; Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau "Der blaue Reiter, München 1911"and "Künstlergemeinschaft Brücke, Dresden 1910" in exhibition catalogue *Stationen der Moderne*; exhibition catalogue *Alfred Flechtheim*; Rupert Walser and Bernhard Wittenbrink (eds.) *Ohne Auftrag: Zur Geschichte des Kunsthandels. Band I*, München, Munich 1989, fig. p. 46 (Moderne Galerie, Munich).

39 Georges Salles "Der Blick" (1939), Berlin 2001

40 Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 243

41 Janda "Die Gemälde und Bildwerke der Expressionisten im ehemaligen Kronprinzenpalais", p. 65

42 *Joachimides Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 228, 234; it is impossible to tell from the photographs, though, whether the colour used at the Nationalgalerie was actually white.

43 Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau "Deutsche Kunst und Entartete Kunst: Die Münchner Ausstellungen 1937" in Peter-Klaus Schuster (ed.) *Nationalsozialismus und "Entartete Kunst": Die "Kunststadt" München 1937*, Munich 1987, p. 83-181, esp. p. 103; it is unclear why Joachimides (*Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880-1940*, p. 237) believes the walls of the Entartete Kunst show were dark coloured.

the Nazi adoption of the white wall, whose use the Italian Futurists had secured for themselves under the Fascist regime. Having abandoned their exhibition experiments with the methods and means of advertising and propaganda, the Futurists had already converted to the white exhibition aesthetic in the 1920s. Hitler had seen the both artistically modern and politically reactionary display of 'white' Futurism in 1934, when he visited the *Venice Biennale*, where, incidentally, the German pavilion had just been transformed into a new and sober exhibition space.[44] In any case, it corresponded to the functionalist, and thus also National Socialist, reinterpretation of Classicism to use white wherever, while in earlier phases, even that of Classicism itself, coloured walls had been the norm.

It seems unlikely that political considerations played a decisive role in the assimilation of the white wall by the Italian Fascists or National Socialists, however. For some time already there had been a more compelling argument to justify the use of monochrome colours and, eventually, pure white: It was considered the most neutral solution, the one that allowed maximum flexibility for hanging and re-hanging.[45] Once a provisional measure, the white wall now became a playing field for the museum, which increasingly came to see its installations as temporary. New acquisitions, new attributions and new attitudes towards art had devalued the static museum praxis of the nineteenth century, in which the coordinated presentation of paintings and colored wall-coverings had been viewed as more or less permanent. Now the museum was forced to capitulate to its own dynamism; the unrest of modernity had reached its precincts. Only twenty years after visitors, critics, museum professionals and above all modern artists had definitively *rejected* the white wall, it had nonetheless established itself and become standard, even, and especially, in Nazi Germany.

Internationally, too, the 1930s saw the triumph of the white exhibition space, particularly at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where in 1939 Philip Johnson designed the opening show in what came to be known as the International Style, following a positive response to the German reform movement by the museum's founders after 1929.[46] In the 1940s, Frederick J. Kiesler continued to experiment at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century gallery with various installation techniques reminiscent of the Surrealist efforts of the turbulent thirties, but most, although not all, leading American museums began to follow the modernist trend.[47] In post-war Germany, the white wall/single-row hanging constellation appears to have been standard, even in galleries, from the very beginning. Although undoubtedly an emergency measure directly following the cessation of hostilities, it soon became the universally accepted language of the commercial exhibition space. The first large-scale contemporary art exhibition of the time, *Deutsche Malerei und Plastik der Gegenwart* (Contemporary German Painting and Sculpture), organized by the Cologne Kunstverein in 1949 and held in one of the buildings on the city's trade-fair grounds, already followed the modernist trend. The choice of venue was no accident, as trade-fair architecture had made yet another important contribution to the triumph of the white wall, having inspired other kinds of experimentation in the 1920s, such as the Soviet press pavilion in Cologne, designed by El Lissitzky in 1928. This architectural typology also played a decisive role at *Documenta I* in Kassel, designed by Arnold Bode in 1955. Bode, an experienced fair architect, installed the reconstructed Museum Fridericianum in a manner that transformed what had been a provisory solution into a further manifesto of modern exhibition principles that was as trend-setting as the Venice Biennale had been at the turn of the century.[48] Whitewashed brick walls and lightweight building boards made of wood wool dominated, while sheer sheets of plastic foil covered the windows or offered further surfaces for hanging.

Bode was so committed to the idea of the 'white cube' *avant la lettre* that at *Documenta II* (1959) he even surrounded the outdoor sculptures in front of the ruins of the orangery with white walls open at the top, 'open-air white cubes', as it were. On the other hand, in 1956 the very same Bode hung parts of the historical collection of the Hessisches Landesmuseum (Hessian State Museum) in Kassel against light-coloured linen, a controversial decision that was later revised.[49] Covering the walls with fabric or wallpaper is of course a reference to the courtly past, but in museums it also has the advantage of absorbing sound, creating an unreal atmosphere still thought to be beneficial to the contemplation of art. The unfavourable acoustic conditions created by hanging pictures directly on plaster walls can be experienced in Oswald Mathias Ungers's Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne. In the post-war period, German museums continued to employ coloured wall-coverings and painted plaster in some areas, even while making use of the white wall for the display of modern art. The two presentation forms were seen as an excellent means of distinguishing older from more recent artistic trends. This was also true of the few museums that returned to coloured walls at a later date, a decision that prompted much debate, for example in Kassel in the early 1970s, in the Lenbachhaus in Munich and the Suermondt-Museum in Aachen in the 1990s, as well as in Ungers's Wallraf-Richartz-Museum at the turn of the millennium. The triumphal advance of the white wall in museums, exhibition venues and galleries in the postwar period remains a little-researched field.

44 Alloway The Venice Biennale 1895–1968, fig. 7; cf. also figs. 26 and 34 as well as the extremely useful essay "Allestimenti/ Exhibit Design" in *Rassegna 4/10*, June 1982

45 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940*, p. 227–233

46 Joachimides *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modernen Museums 1880–1940*, p. 246–249

47 Thomas Messer "Peggy Guggenheim *Art of this Century* – New York, 57th Street, Oktober 1942 bis Mai 1947" and Uwe M. Schneede "Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme, Paris 1938" in Klüser/ Hegewisch Die Kunst der Ausstellung

48 Walter Grasskamp "documenta. kunst des XX. jahrhunderts. internationale ausstellung im museum fridericianum in kassel, 15. Juli bis 18. September 1955" in Klüser/ Hegewisch *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*; Harald Kimpel *Documenta. Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Cologne 1997; Harald Kimpel and Karin Stengel *Documenta 1955: Erste internationale Kunstausstellung – eine fotografische Rekonstruktion* (Schriftenreihe des Documenta-Archivs), vol. 3, Bremen 1995

49 Peter M. Bode "Arnold Bode und die Kunst der Räume" in *Arnold Bode: Documenta Kassel – Essays*," ed. Stadtsparkasse Kassel 1987, p. 121, 125–129; Harald Kimpel "'Fest des Geistes' oder 'Sünde wider den Geist'? Arnold Bode und der Rahmenstreit von Kassel" in Marianne Heinz (ed.) *Arnold Bode: Leben und Werk (1900–1977)*, Kassel & Wolfratshausen 2000, p. 68–77

The white wall no longer corresponded to functional spaces as in the past but rather increasingly to the domestic interior, creating the impression that what we are dealing with is a specifically modernist phenomenon. Even if it remains unclear which type played the pioneering role, the domestic space or the art space, the ‘white cube’ always had its own historical momentum; it is intimately related to the general history of the display of pictures in interiors, even, and especially, when these were not (yet) understood as places for art. One may think, for example, of the bright and often white interiors of Protestant churches as represented by Pieter Saenredam and other Dutch painters of the seventeenth century. Spaces which, thanks to the Reformation, had lost their paintings and sculptures, but in which the few remaining decorative elements stood out in splendid, and very modern, isolation. Still more suggestive are the church interiors of the late Rococo, in which the formerly colourful plaster decorations were painted a neutral white, and paintings were surrounded by white plaster frames, thereby subduing the illusionistic effects so popular in the Baroque era. Whichever precursor one chooses to accept in church architecture, it seems obvious that the ‘white cube’ should likewise be understood as a sacred space, an outgrowth of the religion of art. Its ideological influence had significantly diminished since the Romantic era, but its influence on the presentation of its ‘cult objects’ clearly remains.

Within the history of the white wall, the reaction of artists to the new preconditions for the presentation of their works bears special significance. In this narrative, Yves Klein's exhibition at Iris Clert in 1958 is considered pioneering, although it is often forgotten that the artist's aim was to create a resonating space for the ‘immaterial’ International Yves Klein Blue that dominated the exterior wall and baldachin over the entrance and radiated into the room. A more nuanced history of the ‘white cube’ in artists' exhibitions thus also still awaits writing. O'Doherty's initial essay may have catapulted the subject into the limelight, but that was not the end of the story: In the same year, at the *Venice Biennale*, Germano Celant created another early historical overview with his section *Ambiente/Arte*. From Yves Klein to Gerhard Merz, the ‘white cube’, with its virtually emblematic components, has always been illuminated in a variety of ways; one of the last Turner Prize winner’s restricted himself to simply flipping the light switch on and off. The influence meanwhile gained by the experiments of contemporary artists with the conditions of the ‘white cube’ is evidenced by the way young art historians use the expression ‘Petersburg hanging’ as if it was a traditional term referring to a certain type of presentation in one of the Russian city's famous museums: the Hermitage, for example. In fact, the term was introduced by Martin Kippenberger, who coined it in the 1980s to describe his own exhibition praxis and in homage to the St. Petersburg Futurist exhibition *0,10* of 1915. His aim was neither to signal a return to Baroque hanging principles, nor to link himself demonstratively to the experiments of the Russian avant-garde, but rather to indicate the way he intended to use the gallery for the presentation of his entire new creative output. This would naturally entail a tightly packed hanging covering the entire wall, a stark contrast to the purism of the ‘white cube’. Kippenberger's coinage was also connected to his idiomatic use of the name ‘Peter’: A synonym for a brand of cigarettes (Peter Stuyvesant), Kippenberger used the name as a private and disrespectful suffix for those involved in the art world (‘Collector-Peter’, ‘Museum-Peter’), finally transposing it to his spatial sculpture installations.[50] These ‘Peter-Exhibitions’ were as turbulent as they were precisely staged parades according to the principle of the ‘flood’, which Fischli and Weiss had already used in their legendary show *Plötzlich diese Übersicht* (Suddenly This Overview). Kippenberger's ‘Petersburg hanging’ was also perhaps already a commentary on the ethereal notion of ‘contextual art’, which at the time had just begun its research into the conditions of modern ‘white cube’ exhibition practice, without, however, being able to escape it.

Translated from the German by Rachel Esner

50
With thanks to Max Hetzler, Berlin

Above: Contemporary German Painting and Sculpture, Cologne Kunstverein in the Cologne Trade Fair buildings, 1949.
Below: *Documenta 1*, Kassel, 1955.

ONCURATING.org

On-Curating.org is an independent international web-journal focusing on questions around curatorial practise and theory.

Publisher:
Dorothee Richter

Web and Graphic Design Concept:
Michel Fernández

Graphic Design Ninth Issue:
Megan Hall

Editors:
Marianne Eigenheer, (ed. ICE Readers)

Guest Editors Curating Critique:
Barnaby Drabble, Dorothee Richter

Translation from German:
Rachel Esner, Steven Lindberg, Judith Nigel Stephenson

Proof Reading:
Siri Peyer

Supported by:
The original publication was supported by Institute for Curatorship and Education, Edinburgh College of Art; and the research project "Exhibition Displays", Institute Cultural Studies, Zurich University of the Arts. The webjournal Curating Critique is supported by Postgraduate Program in Curating, Zurich University of the Arts.

BIOGRAPHIES

Marius Babias

Marius Babias was born in Romania, studied literature and political science at the Free University in Berlin. In 1996 he won the Carl Einstein Prize for Art Criticism. 2001–2003 he has been artistic co-director at the Kokerei Zollverein | Zeitgenössische Kunst und Kritik in Essen. In 2005 he has been commissioner of the Romanian Pavilion at 51st Venice Biennale and has curated the exhibitions *The New Europe*, Generali Foundation, Vienna and *Formats for Action*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin. In 2006 he has been co-curator of the Periferic 7 — International Biennale of Contemporary Art in Iasi (Romania). Since 2008 he is director of the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein(n.b.k.). Babias teaches art theory at the University of the Arts in Berlin. He has edited *Im Zentrum der Peripherie* (1995), co-edited *Die Kunst des Öffentlichen* (1998), *Arbeit Essen Angst* (2001), *Campus* (2002), *Handbuch Antirassismus* (2002), *Critical Condition — Writings by Julie Ault, Martin Beck* (2003) and *The Balkans Trilogy* (2006). Marius Babias is also the author of *Herbstnacht* (1990), *Ich war dabei, als ...* (2001), *Ware Subjektivität* (2002) and *Berlin. Die Spur der Revolte* (2006). He lives in Berlin.

Ute Meta Bauer

Since 2005 Ute Meta Bauer is Director of the Visual Arts Program, and professor, at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology, Department of Architecture in Cambridge/Boston, USA. Between 1996 and 2006 she held a professorship in Theory, Practice and Interpretation of Contemporary Art at the Fine Art Academy in Vienna and was the founding director of the Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo (2002–2005). She was part of Okwui Enwezor's team as co-curator of *Documenta 11* (1999–2002) and was artistic director of the *3rd berlin biennale* for contemporary art (2003–2004). In 2006 she curated the *Mobile Transborder Archive*, a scenario project for *InSite05* (artistic direction: Osvaldo Sanchez) in Tijuana and San Diego. She is chairwoman of the art advisory board for the Goethe Institute und member of the curatorial advisory board of the 3rd Yokohama Triennale (2008).

Roger M. Buergel

Roger M. Buergel is an exhibition organiser and author, he has two children. Curated exhibitions were *Things we don't understand* (with Ruth Noack, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2000), *Governmentality. Art in conflict with the international hyper-bourgeoisie and the national petty bourgeoisie* (Alte Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, 2000), *The Subject and Power — the lyrical voice* (CHA Moscow, 2001). *The Government* (with Ruth Noack, Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg; MACBA-Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Miami Art Central; Secession, Vienna; Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2003—2005). He was the artistic director of *documenta 12*.

Sarah Cook

Sarah Cook is an independent curator and currently post-doctoral (Leverhulme Early Career) fellow at the University of Sunderland, England, where she is the co-editor of CRUMB — an online resource for curators of new media art (www.crumbweb.org). From 2000 to 2006 she split her time between the United Kingdom and Canada, curating exhibitions (*Database Imaginary*, 2004; *The Art Formerly Known As New Media*, 2005; *Package Holiday*, 2005), organising educational projects, conferences and seminars, editing publications and managing artists' residencies in conjunction with BALTIC, The Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead) and the New Media Institute and The Walter Phillips Gallery at The Banff Centre (Banff). She has an MA from Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies in New York and in addition to her freelance curatorial work she has also worked at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and with office-based art agency Locus+ (Newcastle). She has lectured and published widely on art, new media and curatorial practice.

Barnaby Drabble

Barnaby Drabble is a curator and writer based in Zurich. Previously curated exhibitions include *Ein Zweites Leben* (Stadtgalerie, Bern, Autumn 2007), co-curating *Nothing to Declare* (Oberschwaben, Contemporary Art Triennial, Spring 2008), *I almost feel like doing it again…* (Zurich, 2004), *New Visions of the Sea* (National Maritime Museum, London, 2000–2003) and *Burning Love* (London, 2000). He works in long-term collaboration; with Dorothee Richter: *Curating Degree Zero Symposium* (Bremen, 1998) and *Curating Degree Zero Archive* (touring since 2003); with Hinrich Sachs as Drabble+Sachs *The City that never Sleeps* (Umea, 2004–2005), *Geneva Unplugged* (Geneva, 2003), and *Trademark Guerrilla* (Swiss Expo, 2002).

He completed his PhD research at the Edinburgh College of Art, and between 2000 and 2007 has taught and lectured on the topics of curating, contemporary art and cultural criticism at colleges and art-centres worldwide. In 2005, together with Dorothee Richter he established the Postgraduate Program in Curating at the School of Art and Design in Zurich. Today he is a lecturer at ECAV in Sierre

Marianne Eigenheer

Since 2003 Marianne Eigenheer is director of ICE, the Institute for Curatorship and Education at the Edinburgh College of Art. Between 1997 and 2007 she was professor at the State Academy of Art and Design in Stuttgart, in addition to various teaching engagements in Europe, the USA and Australia. Since 1975 she has worked on theoretical and curatorial themes in the area of art, architecture, cross-cultural research and interdisciplinarity. She is an artist whose work has been shown, from 1977 to the present day, in numerous national and international solo and group exhibitions, and is represented in many international collections. In 1980 and 1981 she received the Swiss national award for her work and in 2001 she received an artist's award from the Landis and Gyr Foundation, which included a residency in London. She now lives in Basel and London.

Beryl Graham

Professor of New Media Art at the School of Arts, Design, Media and Culture, University of Sunderland, and co-editor of the CRUMB web site resource for curators of new media art (http://www.crumbweb.org/). She is a writer, curator and educator with many years of professional experience as a media arts organiser, and was head of the photography department at Projects UK, Newcastle, for six years. She curated the international exhibition *Serious Games* for the Laing and Barbican art galleries, and has also worked with The Exploratorium, San Francisco, and San Francisco Camerawork.

Her Ph.D. concerned audience relationships with interactive art in gallery settings, and she has written widely on the subject for books and periodicals including Leonardo, Convergence and Switch. Her book *Digital Media Art* was published by Heinemann in 2003, and she is co-authoring with Sarah Cook a book on curating new media art for MIT (Cambridge, Mass.). She has chapters in the books *New media art: Practice and context in the UK 1994-2004* (Arts Council of England) and *The Photographic Image In Digital Culture* (Routledge). Dr. Graham has presented papers at conferences including *Navigating Intelligence* (Banff), *Museums and the Web* (Seattle and Vancouver) and *Caught in the Act* (Tate Liverpool).

Per Hüttner

Per Hüttner is a Swedish artist who uses curation as integrated part in his artistic practice, but has chosen to refute the title curator since his interest in questions related to curation lies purely in attempting to rephrase what the role of the artist could and should be.

In his artistic practice Hüttner investigates how change in our lives reveals human vulnerability. He does so by putting himself in vulnerable positions in public places and has through long research found that approaching questions of curation is a formidable way of doing so. The aim with his artistic practice is that art will become life and not a representation thereof. Hüttner was a co-founder and co-director at Konstakuten Gallery in Stockholm 1996-2001 and founder and director of The Hood Gallery in Los Angeles 2002-2003. Important solo exhibitions include *I am a Curator* at Chisenhale Gallery in London, *Repetitive Time* at Göteborgs Konstmuseum and *Xiao Yao You* at Guangdong Museum of Art in Guangzhou.

Maria Lind

Maria Lind was born in Stockholm in 1966. Since January 2011 she is director of Tensta Konsthall. 2005-2007 director of Iaspis in Stockholm. 2002-2004 she was the director of Kunstverein München where she together with a curatorial team ran a program which involved artists such as Deimantas Narkevicius, Oda Projesi, Annika Eriksson, Bojan Sarcevic, Philippe Parreno and Marion von Osten. From 1997-2001 she was curator at Moderna Museet in Stockholm and, in 1998, cocurator of Manifesta 2, Europe's biennale of contemporary art. Responsible for *Moderna Museet Projekt*, Lind worked with artists on a series of 29 commissions that took place in a temporary project-space, either within or beyond the Museum in Stockholm. Among the artists were Koo Jeong-a, Simon Starling, Jason Dodge, Esra Ersen. There she also curated *What if: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design*, filtered by Liam Gillick. She has contributed widely to magazines and to numerous catalogues and other publications. She is the coeditor of the recent books *Curating with Light Luggage and Collected Newsletter* (Revolver Archiv für aktuelle Kunst), *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: Collaborative Practices in Contemporary Art* (Blackdog Publishing), as well as the report *European Cultural Policies 2015* (Iaspis and eipcp) and *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* (Sternberg Press). She is the 2009 recipient of the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement.

Sarat Maharaj

South African born, Sarat Maharaj — Professor of History and Theory of Art, Goldsmiths College, University of London where he is now Visiting Professor — has written extensively on visual art as knowledge production, textile art, sound, cultural translation, difference and diversity. He is currently Professor of Visual Art and Knowledge Systems at Lund University, Sweden. He was the first Rudolf Arnheim Professor, Humboldt University, Berlin (2000) and Research Fellow at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht. With Hans Ulrich Obrist and Gillian Wearing he curated *The New Contemporaries* (1997) and with Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk *Optical.Retinal.Visual.Conceptual…* (Boijmanns van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2001). He was co-curator of *documenta 11* (Kassel, 2002). His recent work investigates consciousness, convergence of art practices and science in a series of *Knowledge Labs* (Berlin, 2005 and 2006). Since 2007 he is the Professorial Mentor, New Media Art, Banff, Canada.

Oliver Marchart

Since 2006 Oliver Marchart is Professor at the Universtiy of Luzern, 2001-2002 he was Scientific Advisor and Head of the Education Project of *documenta 11*. He lectured at different universities (University of Vienna, University of Innsbruck, Art Academies, Essex Summer School, University of Basel). Fellowships: Research Fellow at the Centre for Theoretical Studies, University of Essex (1995); Junior Fellow at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna (1997-1998); Fellow at the Columbia University Institute at Reid Hall and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (2005).

His research areas are political theory, discourse analysis, poststructuralism and art theory.

Recent selected publications: *Neu beginnen. Hannah Arendt, die Revolution und die Globalisierung* (Vienna 2005), *Techno-Kolonialimus. Theorie und imaginäre Kartographie von Kultur und Medien* (Vienna 2004), *Forthcoming publications: Post-foundational Political Thought* (Edinburgh) and *Ästhetik des Öffentlichen. Eine politische Theorie künstlerischer Praxis* (Vienna).

Ruth Noack

Ruth Noack is an art historian, she has two children. She studied art history, audio-visual media and feminist theory in the USA, United Kingdom, Germany and Austria. From 1990 she works regularly as a lecturer and writer in German-speaking countries, and since 1992 as an exhibition organiser. Since 2000 she has taught film theory at Vienna University, the University of Applied Arts, Vienna and Lüneburg University. Since 2001 she has undertaken a research project on the *Construction of Childhood*. Between 2002-2003 she was president of AICA (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art) Austria. Since 2005, she is a curator of *documenta 12*.

Exhibitions (selected): *Things we don't understand* (with Roger M. Buergel, Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2000), *Organisational Form* (with Roger M. Buergel, Galerija Skuc, Ljubljana 2002—2003; Galerie der Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig and Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg, 2003). *The Government* (with Roger M. Buergel, Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg; MACBA-Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Miami Art Central; Secession, Vienna; Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2003—2005).

Paul O'Neill

Paul O'Neill is a curator, artist, lecturer and writer, currently based in London. He is a GWR Research Fellow, and curated or co-curated over 40 exhibitions and projects that include: *General Idea: Selected Retrospective*, Project Gallery, Dublin (2006); *Mingle-Mangled*, part of Cork Caucus, Cork (2005); *La La Land*, Project, Dublin (2005); *Coalesce: The Remix*, Redux, London (2005); *Tonight*, Studio Voltaire, London, (2004); *Coalesce: With All Due Intent* at Model and Niland Art Gallery, Sligo (2004); *Are We There Yet?* Glassbox Gallery, Paris (2000) and *Passports*, Zacheta Gallery of Contemporary Art, Warsaw (1998). He was gallery curator at londonprintstudio between 2001-2003 and he is founding director of *MultiplesX*, an organisation that commissions and supports curated exhibitions of artist's editions, which he established in 1997. He is commissioning editor of *Curating Subjects* (De Appel & Open Editions, Amsterdam & London, 2007), *Curating and the Educational Turn, 2010* (with Mick Wilson) and teaches in Visual Culture at Middlesex University and on the MFA Curating programme at Goldsmiths College London. He writes regularly for many journals and magazines including *Art Monthly*, *Contemporary*, *The Internationaler* and *CIRCA*.

Dorothee Richter

Dorothee Richter, art historian and curator; Director of Studies for the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, ICS, at the ZHDK Zurich and publisher of On-Curating.org; prior to that Artistic Director of the Künstlerhaus Bremen; symposia on questions of contemporary art with the following publications: *Curating Degree Zero* — an international symposium of curators (with B.Drabble); *Dialoge und Debatten — on feminist positions in contemporary art; Im (Be_)Griff des Bildes* (with Katrin Heinz and Sigrid Adorf); *Die Visualität der Theorie vs. zur Theorie des Visuellen* (with Nina Möntmann); *Re-Visionen des Displays*, (with Sigrid Schade and Jennifer Johns); *Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique?*, Kassel (with Rein Wolfs), teaching: University of Bremen, Ecole des Beaux Arts, Geneva, Merz-Akademie Stuttgart; University Lüneburg, Zurich University of Arts. Initiator (with B.Drabble) *Curating Degree Zero Archive*, archive, travelling exhibition and website on curatorial practice, www.curatingdegreezero.org. Other editions: Curating Critique (with B. Drabble) editor of the web journal On-Curating.org.

Gilane Tawadros

Gilane Tawadros was founding Director of the Institute of International Arts, London in 1994-2006. During this period, she lectured widely on contemporary art, curating and criticism — pioneering publications debates and discussions around issues of contemporary art, identity, nation, migration and race. Her work has been influential in shaping understanding on „diversity and cultural difference" especially in the UK. She has edited numerous books, catalogues and talks and broadcasts on questions of cultural diversity, modernity, globalization and new media art. Her curatorial projects have been notable for bringing to visibility artists and art practices from outside the cultural mainstream and beyond the national space. She was curator of *Faultlines*, Africa Pavilion, *Venice Biennale* 2003. She is the Artistic Director and Curator of the *Brighton Photography Biennale*, United Kingdom 2006 and with Jens Hoffmann she was Curator of *Alienation*, ICA, London 2006.

Marion von Osten

Since 2006 Marion von Osten is professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Between 1999 and 2006 she was a research assistant and eventually professor for Artistic Practice and Theory at the School of Art and Design in Zurich. From 1996 to 1998 she was part of the curatorial team at the Shedhalle in Zurich and between 2003 and 2005 artistic director of Project *Migration* (with Kathrin Rhomberg) and *transit Migration* (with Dr. Regina Römhild). She places cross-disciplinary working methods and socio-political questioning at the centre of her work as an artist, academic and curator.

Selected publications: *Projekt Migration*, Cologne Kunstverein et al, Cologne: Dumont 2005; Marion von Osten (ed.) *Norm der Abweichung*, Zürich/Vienna/New York: Voldemeer/ Springer Verlag 2003; Marion von Osten/Peter Spillmann (eds.) *MoneyNations*, Vienna: Selene 2003; Justin Hoffmann/Marion von Osten (eds.) *Das Phantom sucht seinen Mörder. Ein Reader zur Kulturalisierung der Ökonomie*, Berlin: b_books 1999

www.k3000.ch/becreative
www.ateliereuropa.com
www.transitmigration.org
www.projektmigration.de

Gavin Wade

Gavin Wade is an artist-curator, serial collaborator and Research Fellow in Curating at the University of Central England based in Birmingham. He is a founding member and the director of Eastside Projects in Birmingham. His practice combines a number of strategies from developing structures within exhibitions for 'supporting' the work of others to a broader enquiry into utopian sites of/for art, resulting in projects merging fiction, public space and whatever else feels urgent at the time. Projects include: *Public Structures*, Guang Zhou Triennial, China (2005); *Support Structure Phase 1-6*, with architect Celine Condorelli, various locations (2003-2006); *Strategic Questions* (2002-ongoing) a series of 40 questions/projects in 40 publications inlcuding *The Interruptors: A Non-Simultaneous Novel* (2005); *ArtSheffield05: Spectator T*, a cross city project with Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum (2005); *Kiosk3: Merz Kiosk* (with Simon & Tom Bloor), Magazin4, Bregenz, Austria (2006) and *Thin Cities*, Piccadilly Line, Platform for Art, London Underground (2006-2007).